

Human Hope: Utopia in a Postmodern World. A Preliminary Inquiry

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Immanuel Kant, upon initiating the critical period of his intellectual career, probed into the limits and possibilities of key philosophical questions with the interrogatories: a) What can I know? b) What must I do? c) What must I hope in? Religion is tasked to answer this final question whereas the first two questions are the domains of epistemology and morals respectively. To these two questions Kant dedicated two of his greatest works, published in his critical period, namely the *Critique of Pure Reason* [*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*] (1781) and the *Critique of Practical Reason*. [*Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*] (1788).¹ In his attempt to answer the third question, Kant did not write a major work. Kant spoke of God and religion in essays and lessons (or minor works with no pretense of definitiveness or of being systematic treatises)² and only in passing

¹ For a synthetic discussion of the context of Kant's critical philosophy within the spectrum of the German tradition of philosophizing, see: L. White Beck, *Early German Philosophy. Kant and His Predecessors*. (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1996), 469-501.

² For a succinct presentation, see: A.W. Wood, "Rational Theology, Moral Faith, Religion" in Several Authors, *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 394-416. Aside from the famous work *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* [*Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft*] (1793), we have at our disposal in English: I. Kant, *Lectures on Philosophical Theology*. A. Wood & G. Clark (trans.) (Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press, 1978).

P. Ricœur rightly proposes a theodiceal reading of hope within the framework of the third question as expounded by Religion in the Kantian opus *Religion Within the Limits of Pure Reason*: "A third motive of taking Religion within the

made mention of the third question (What must I hope in?) in the third major critique entitled the *Critique of Judgement* [*Kritik der Urteilschaft*] (1790), which verses on aesthetic perception and judgement, under the guise of finality.³ It is as if there can be no

Limits of Reason Alone as a philosophical hermeneutics has to do with the articulation of the thematics of evil, which inaugurates Kant's reflection on religion, and its relation to the threefold thematic constitutive of religion per se. In this respect, the existential-historical condition of evil constitutes the challenge to which religion brings the reply of an 'in spite of...', an 'even though...'. This tie between challenge and reply is the tie of hope, concerning which one well-known text of the *Opus Posthumum* says that it can be formulated as a question – 'What can I hope?' – that gives rise to the two questions that drive the first two Critiques: 'What can I know' and 'What must I do?' So we can consider *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* as an attempted philosophical justification of hope, by means of a philosophical interpretation of the symbolics of evil and of the text of representations, beliefs, and institutions that delimit the religious per se.

If the question 'What can I hope?' constitutes the central interrogation of the philosophy of religion, we can understand why the theory of radical evil, as a challenge, along with the theory of the means by which religion gives a reply to evil are so closely bound up with each other at one point that perhaps has not been sufficiently recognized... Thus the motifs of radical evil and hope crisscross throughout this work, with evil affecting the process of religion from beginning to end, while hope is affirmed as strictly contemporaneous with the irruption of evil. For this reason, one of the major motifs of Kant's philosophical hermeneutics of religion is to give an account, within the limits of reason alone, of this interweaving of the confession of radical evil and the assumption of means of regeneration. And consequently, to the extent that this interweaving is constitutive of the motif of hope, we can say that hope is the specific object of this philosophical hermeneutics of religion. It is a hermeneutics, not a critique, because the interweaving of the signs of evil and the signs of regeneration is itself a second-degree 'historical' phenomenon, one that combines the cultural historicity of positive religion and the existential historicity of the 'propensity' to evil. It is in this complex sense that the Kantian philosophy of religion can be called a philosophical hermeneutics of hope.", "A Philosophical Hermeneutics of Religion: Kant" in Idem., *Figuring the Sacred. Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*. M. Wallace (ed.) (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 76-77.

Writes Pedro Laín in his classical work on hope: 'El hombre es un ser que, por imperativo de su propia constitución ontológica, necesita saber, hacer y esperar, y todo ello dentro de ciertos límites y conforme a ciertas normas. Un hombre sin esperanza sería un absurdo metafísico, como un hombre sin inteligencia o sin actividad.', *La espera y la esperanza. Historia y teoría del esperar humano*. 2nd rev. ed. (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1958), 17.

³ Finality, according to Kant, is a guide for reflection. Thus, it exercises a similar function to that of the ideas of speculative reason. It helps man in thinking of reality in an adequate manner so as to satisfy man's speculative needs and demands.

systematic or major response to the question of hope. It is as if only a fragmentary or fragmented response is possible. Perhaps, the great Immanuel Kant, despite his talent for constructing a critical system, found the answer to this religious question of hope elusive in the sense that what is hoped for is something that we do not effectively possess at the moment. In other words, it is not possible to critically determine the limits and possibilities of our thematic.

I will not reflect for now on theological or theolocial hope. Instead, I will present an introductory reflection on human hope. My brief presentation, in this light, could be understood as a "pre-ambulum theologiae spei."⁴

MODERNITY, MODERNISM, POSTMODERNISM: UTOPIA, MÍMESIS AND POIESIS

Personally, I am not fond of the term "postmodernity" and its derivatives "postmodernism," "postmodern," etc. Aside from being a vague and more than ambivalent term with no definite meaning, it is indicative above all of man's finding himself in a dead-end. Thus, it is a term of "compromise." I am only forced by conventionality to make use of this term in this reflection. Many independent concepts had to be compromised in order to break the wall of the dead-end situation. At first glance, the term "postmodernity" implies an option of going ahead, when things are already untenable. However this is far from being the ideal option in order to move on.

The theme of our reflection suggests that the postmodern era is the "U-topia" (from the Greek: "ou" meaning 'not' and "topos" meaning 'place') or ideal place for human hope. But "u-topia" also means 'no-place' or a non-existent place.⁵ An utopia is an ideal, perfect,

⁴ P. Laín, "Prólogo a la primera edición" in Idem., *La espera y la esperanza*, 12.

⁵ The term "utopia" was popularized in the west with the publication of Sir Thomas More's classic first in Latin in 1516 and later on in English in 1551. In the words of Robert Nisbet: "Let us turn now to a notable example of still another form of ecological community, this time, however, an imaginary form, one that never became actual, that existent only in the fertile mind of its distinguished author, but that has been the inspiration of many a community since, whether actual or imaginary. More's Utopia is, apart from Plato's Republic, which is a very different kind of work in dominant theme, unquestionably the most famous pre-

absolute, consummate, model, but imaginary place. Given its imaginary nature, a utopia is not just merely a theoretical construct, but it is above all implicitly a challenge: the challenge to convert the "u-topia" into a "topos" or existing place or order. In view of this, I prefer to interpret our theme as a challenge. In this light, the reflections that follow, in the spirit of a Kantian critique, aim to set the terms and limitations for the possibility of the ideal of human hope within a postmodern context.

It is near impossible to formulate a precise definition for postmodernism.⁶ It is at once a slippery and somehow meaningless term, in the sense that it does not have a singular, clear meaning. Upon viewing the vast panorama, it can be deduced it is more profitable to associate postmodernism with an incessant plurality of stands, ideologies and worldviews within the context of a conscious or contrived separation from what is termed as "modern" (from "modo" or what is recent or just now). Modernity was said to have ended with the nineteenth century. This industrial century, characterized by the downfall of an old empire and the rise of a new one, was also understood as the complete overcoming of medieval, theocentric, pre-scientific and outdated models with scientific, definitive, liberal and liberated alternatives. As one literary critic puts it: "At the very least, postmodernism highlights the multiplication of voices, questions, and conflicts that has shattered what once seemed to be (although it never really was) the placid unanimity of the great tradition and of the West that gloried in it."⁷

sensation of the utopian community in the history of the West.", *The Social Philosophers. Community & Conflict in Western Thought*. Concise Ed. Updated. (New York: Washington Square Press, 1982), 164.

⁶ Cfr. for example: J.-F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992); H. Foster (ed.), *Postmodern Culture*. (London: Pluto Press, 1985); S. Connor, *Postmodernist Culture*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991); C. Norris, *The Truth About Postmodernism*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993); T. Docherty (ed.), *Postmodernism: A Reader*. (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993); D. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989); R. Appignanesi & C. Garratt, *Introducing Postmodernism*. (New York: Totem Books, 1996).

⁷ J. McGowan, "Postmodernism" in Several Authors, *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory & Criticism*. (Baltimore-London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 587. This same author contends: "In sum, postmodernism is best understood as marking the site of several related, but not identical, debates

The notion of modernity, above all, entails the overcoming of the old or outmoded with the new usually associated with scientificism or technologism. It is also associated with the idea of emancipation from class and institutional, especially ecclesiastical, impositions. The feeling of modernity was especially heightened within a triumphalist ambiance until the first half of the nineteenth century with the industrial age (as the age of scientificism and technology) and the age of enlightenment (or the era of reason and secular emancipation from theocentric, medieval and ecclesiastical models) wherein humanity entered an era of security, self-affirmation, self-glorification based on human rationality and effort. Modernity was the era of human greatness and hope in the face of the hostile challenges of nature such as diseases, epidemics and slow production with scientific, medical and technological inventions. It also meant freedom from theocentric or supernatural impositions, viewed as superstitious from a modern perspective.

In short, modernity, a term first used in the third century, was a break away from what was labeled as "traditional" or inherited or imposed and therefore, obsolete, antiquated, *passé* focusing on the totality of human achievements, constructs and inventions. It was the era of man's greatness.

The prefix "post" does not immediately denote the total breakdown or overcoming of modernity, but is, above all, a postulate as to the endurance of modernity. At the outset, "postmodernity" is not the total negation of modernity, but somehow its prolongation, at least in spirit (the spirit of being constantly modern or new). Postmodernity at first implies *aftermath*, *afterbirth*, *development* and even *continuity* of modernity. For some, it meant *denial* or *rejection* of modernity and modernism.⁸

among intellectuals in the last four decades of the twentieth century. These debates revolve around the relation of artworks to social context, the relation of art and of theory to political action and to the dominant social order, the relation of cultural practices to the transformation or maintenance of society in all its aspects, the relation of the collapse of traditional philosophical foundations to the possibility of critical distance from and effective critique of the status quo, the relation of an image-dominated consumer society to artistic practice, and the future of a Western tradition that now appears more heterogeneous than previously thought even while it appears insufficiently tolerant of (open to) multiplicity." Ibid.

⁸ R. Appignanesi & C. Garratt, *Introducing Postmodernism*, 4.

After the height of modernity, there was a brief interlude roughly labeled as modernism, which is "a comprehensive but vague term for a movement (or tendency) which began to get under way in the closing years of the 19th c. and which has had a wide influence internationally during much of the 20th c..."⁹ This movement was associated with avant-garde movements such as surrealism, formalism, symbolism, etc. "It is normal to associate the modern in art with a breakdown of the traditional decorum in Western culture that previously connected the appearance of works of art to the appearance of the natural world. The typical symptoms of this breakdown are a tendency for the shapes, colours and materials of art to lead a life of their own, forming unusual combinations, offering distorted or exaggerated versions of the appearances of nature and, in some cases, losing all obvious connection to the ordinary objects of our visual experience."¹⁰

In the ancient classical period as well as in the humanistic renaissance of the modern era, *mimesis* or imitation of nature was the norm for art. This entered into a crisis with the ghastly gargoyles of the middle ages and in the twentieth century forms of art such as cubism, expressionism, orphism, dada, surrealism, kinetic art, minimalism, etc. All these pointed out to a crisis of conformity or imitation.¹¹ During modernism, *mimesis* or imitation was replaced by *poiesis* or fabulation, which some have translated as creativity, modification or even distortion.¹² Modernity with *mimesis* under-

⁹ J.A. Cuddon, "Modernism" in Idem., *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. 4th ed. (London-New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 515.

¹⁰ C. Harrison, *Modernism. Movements in Modern Art*. (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1997), 9.

¹¹ For an authoritative overview of these trends, see: Several Authors, *Concepts of Modern Art. From Fauvism to Postmodernism*. 3rd ed. (London: Thames and Ludson, 1995). Also; N. Lynton, *The Story of Modern Art*. 2nd ed. (London: Phaidon, 1996).

¹² Professor R. Scruton has this interesting hypothesis as to the origins of modernism within modernity: "To mean 'modernist', as in 'modern art'. A modernist is *committed* to the modern age, believing that traditions must be overthrown or redefined in order to do justice to the new forms of experience. For a modernist it is intellectually, morally or culturally necessary to manifest one's modernity, to 'challenge' what resists it, and to pour scorn on those who take refuge in the values and habits of a superseded age. (Since these people are in short supply, a vast modernist industry is devoted to inventing them. They are the 'bourgeois',

stood truth in terms of the correspondence between the knowing subject and the known object wherein the form of the external object was reproduced by imitation or copying in the human mind which serves as a mirror. On the other hand, modernism and ultimately postmodernism shattered this totalizing mirror of imitation and picked up the pieces with *poiesis* necessarily entailing fabrication, invention and distortion. Modernism and postmodernity insisted on fragments instead of totalities; fabrications instead of copies.¹³ Thus, it is no wonder then that certain so-called "post-modern" thinkers resorted to fabrications or literary forms to express their fragmented thought. At this moment, we can recall the likes of Kierkegaard with his pseudonyms, Nietzsche with his appropriation of Persian religions, Unamuno with his poems, short stories and novels, Camus with his literary works, Sartre with his plays, Heidegger with his commentaries on poems, etc.

MODERNIST EPISTEMOLOGY AND SYSTEM: THE MODERN DREAM

At this point, I wish to propose the tentative thesis that post-modernism is the radicalization of modernism, which commenced with the shattering horrors of World War I and is heightened especially by the horrific atmosphere after 9/11 and its after effects. To be modern is to overcome or outmode the old tradition. Thus,

targeted in the writings of Sartre, Foucault, Habermas and Adorno).", *Modern Philosophy. An Introduction and Survey*. (New York-London: Penguin Books, 1994). Thus modernism is a consequence of modernity in itself, in its constant affirmation to be modernity. This is representative of an *aufhebung* or overcoming, inspired in the dialectical tradition in itself, of modernity with itself in the formation of a defined commitment to its own ideals, conventionally labeled as "modernism." Another option is to present the history of modernity as the history of human consciousness culminating in its most dehumanizing instance. See: W. Barrett, *Death of the Soul. From Descartes to the Computer*. (New York-London: Anchor Books-Doubleday, 1986). From a literary viewpoint in terms of decadence, see the interesting study of D. Weir, *Decadence and the Making of Modernism*. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995).

¹³ One is reminded of the title and pragmatic and relativistic program of R. Rorty's seminal work: *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979). Recently, Rorty published a collection of introductory articles to his thought, *Philosophy and Social Hope*. (London-New York: Penguin Books, 1999).

modernism, as a reaction (or "ism") to modernity, and especially postmodernism is the overcoming of the already outmoded modern tradition. It is, in effect, a new modernity given that the old modernity is already outdated.

In modern epistemology, the knowing subject or man enjoys the predominance. One is reminded of Descartes's "cogito" and Kant's anthropological twist in terms of knowing, willing and appreciating the beautiful. Man, as a knowing subject, is above all the knower of the totality. From this knowledge of totality and given the predominance of the conformity mode of knowledge,¹⁴ man constructs a system or an intellectual world of harmonious elements with taxonomies, paradigms and norms. Man is capable of absolute knowledge, that is, knowledge of himself as knowing in terms of the absolute as Hegel would put it.¹⁵ The only logical result is the system or the intellectual construct, given man's absolute knowledge, of all reality as a coherent and ordered totality, wherein everything falls into place according to the dictates of man's knowing faculties.¹⁶ Thus, the subject-object relationship, according to the epistemological model of correspondence or *mimesis*, becomes a perfect equation. Objective reality (or reality outside the human faculties of knowing) becomes conformed to the order, arrangement

¹⁴ This means the predominance of the criteriological theory of knowledge which affirms the conformity of the knowing subject and the known object with one another. See: J. Dancy, *Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*. (Oxford-Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996); J. Dancy & E. Sosa (eds.), *A Companion to Epistemology*. Blackwell Companions to Epistemology. (Oxford-Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992).

¹⁵ A.V. Miller trans. *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1977). For authoritative commentaries, see; Q. Lauer, *A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. 2nd ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1995); M. Forster, *Hegel's Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit*. (Chicago-London: University of Chicago Press, 1998). Hegel wrote the *Phenomenology* as a prelude to the system. The *Phenomenology of the Spirit* was conceived by the author as *Wissenschaft der Erfahrung des Bewußtseins* or Science of the Experience of Consciousness. Experience (*Erfahrung*) is understood primarily by Hegel as a way towards absolute knowledge.

¹⁶ For studies on the Hegelian system, see: M. Alvarez, *Experiencia y sistema. Introducción al pensamiento de Hegel*. (Salamanca: Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, 1978); W. Kaufmann, *Hegel*. (New York: Doubleday, 1965); C. Taylor, *Hegel*. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975); P. Singer, *Hegel. Past Masters* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

and coherence of the human mind which, like a mirror, consciously captures or reflects objective reality in its totality in absoluteness. This subject-object relationship in Absolute or comprehensive knowledge becomes the system or the grand narrative of totality. This is can be said to be the summit of *mimesis* or imitation or of conformity. This is what I call the fulfillment of the modern dream.

HOPE IN MODERNITY, HOPE IN POSTMODERNITY: FROM THE DREAM TO UTOPIA

Therefore, human hope in modernity meant above all man's hope in himself as the constructor, guarantor, creator of the great systems, which have effectively taken over our notion of reality especially in the institutionalized forms of religion, works of art and culture and the state.¹⁷ We no longer speak of societies. Instead we speak of states. We no longer speak of belief or faith, but of religions or religious sects. We no longer pay attention to human creativity but rather to works or schools of art.

Modernity was an age of confidence, of hope in man and in his creations, in his systems, in the achievements of his reason or his rational faculties which all spelled totality or absolute totality in as much as it is knowable.¹⁸ Postmodernity means an overcoming of this kind of hope, of this hope in the grandeur and absoluteness of the systems of man's reason. I believe that philosophically postmodernism has its remote and implicit origins in the "masters of suspicion" in the darkest night of modernity which opened up into modernism especially with the advent of World War I in 1914. These masters of suspicion, according to Paul Ricœur, are Marx, Nietzsche and Freud.¹⁹ These thinkers, together with others, were

¹⁷ This is clearly the Hegelian triad of the objectivized forms of Absolute Spirit in the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*.

¹⁸ For an interesting study as to the survival of modernity in postmodernity from a cultural vantage point, consult: J. J. Sosnoski, *Modern Skeletons in Postmodern Closets. A Cultural Studies Alternative*. (Charlottesville-London: University Press of Virginia, 1995).

¹⁹ P. Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy. An Essay on Interpretation*. D. Savage trans. (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 1970), 32-36. Also: G.B. Smith, *Nietzsche, Heidegger and the Transition to Postmodernity*. (Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996). Apparently, the term "postmodernismo" was

“suspicious” of the totalizing pretensions of modernity. They felt that they found themselves at the end of the age or in a dead-end situation and thus it was necessary to demystify the totality or pretensions to totality and its intellectual forms (systems) of modernity, brought about by the triumph of ontology or rather onto-theology.²⁰

“Postmodern” suspicion held that the ontological totality of systems was untenable, fragile and bound to disintegrate. The reactions to this totalizing were diverse. For example: Kierkegaard with his diverse pseudonyms affirmed that identity cannot be totalizing nor singular²¹; Nietzsche’s Zarathustra pronounced various discourses hinting that about reality there can be no singular discourse²²; Unamuno during his crisis period in Salamanca peeped into the well in the Dominican Convent of San Esteban and shouted “Yo” (or I) in order to hear the echoes of the plurality of the self²³; Freud showed that man the totalizer and systematizer was not a coherent totality but a divided one with contradicting tendencies (Ego, Superego, Id)²⁴; Wittgenstein after the rigid structure of the *Tractatus* chose to keep silent after reaching the limits of an idealized and tautological language, just like Nietzsche’s *Zara-*

first coined and used by F. de Onís, cf. P. Anderson, *The Origins of Postmodernity*. (London-New York: Verso, 2002).

²⁰ See: M. Heidegger, *Identidad y Diferencia / Identität Und Differenz*. Bilingual ed. of A. Leyte. (Barcelona: Anthropos, 1988); Idem., *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*. P. Emad & K. Maly trans. (Bloomington-Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994). For a theological “postmodern” critique of ontotheology especially in the Heideggerian light, see: J.-L. Marion, *Dieu sans l’être. Hors-texte*. (Paris: Communio, 1982); G. Lafont, *Dieu, le temps et l’être*. (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1986).

²¹ See: R. Bretall (ed.) *A Kierkegaard Anthology*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946).

²² See: F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra. A Book for Every One and No One*. R.J. Hollingdale trans. (London-New York: Penguin Books, 1966).

²³ See: M. Ofilada Mina, “La autognosis por medio de la mística frente al modernismo: Reflexiones desde Miguel de Unamuno” in *Studium* 36 (1996), 121-138; P. Cerezo Galán, *Las máscaras de lo trágico*. (Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 1996); M. Nozick, *Miguel de Unamuno: The Agony of Belief* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).

²⁴ See: J. Strachey (ed.), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. 24 Vols. (New York: Random House, 2001).

*thustra*²⁵; Heidegger spoke of the end of metaphysics in Nietzsche and in his latter period devoted his thought to commenting on fragments of poetry (Rilke and Georg)²⁶; Ricœur admitted that his philosophical approach was fragmentary²⁷; Derrida did not accept the existence of a singular and totalizing reading and instead proposed *diférance* (difference of readings and deferment of meaning)²⁸; Foucault, citing a text of Argentine poet Jorge Luis Borges, spoke of an endless means of taxonomy or mode of classification²⁹; Rorty spoke of relativism and pragmatism inspiring himself in Dewey, Wittgenstein and Heidegger.³⁰ Plurality meant disintegration of total and unilateral systems. It denoted openness, fragility and even mortality.

In postmodernity, instead of a total whole we are left with fragments and shattered pieces. Instead of discovering the Heideggerian formidable Being of beings we are faced with the other as Levinas puts it.³¹ Instead of systems that are the wages of our intellectual conquests and efforts, we receive gifts following the terminology of Marion.³²

²⁵ See: A. Kenny (ed.), *The Wittgenstein Reader*. (Oxford-Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995).

²⁶ See: M. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*. P.D. Hertz trans. (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1982); Idem., *Poetry, Language, Thought*. A. Hofstadter trans. (New York-Grand Rapids: Perennial Library, 1975).

²⁷ See: P. Ricœur, *Critique & Conviction. Conversations with François Azouvi and Marc de Launay*. K. Blamey trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

²⁸ See: J. Culler, *On Deconstruction. Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*. (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1982); D. Attridge (ed.), *Jacques Derrida. Acts of Literature*. (London-New York: Routledge, 1992).

²⁹ See: M. Foucault, *The Order of Things. An Archeology of the Human Sciences*. (New York: Vintage Editions, 1994).

³⁰ See the already cited works of this author in a previous note. Likewise: *Consequences of Pragmatism*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

³¹ See: A.T. Peperzak et al. (eds.) *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings*. (Bloomington-Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1996).

³² See: J.-L. Marion, "Sketch of a Phenomenological Concept of Gift" in M. Westphal, *Postmodern Philosophy and Christian Thought*. (Bloomington-Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), 122-143.

Postmodernity announces that gone are the days of the great, centralized and centralizing narratives and now we are left with the “suspicion of metanarratives’, those universal guiding principles and mythologies which once seemed to control, delimit and interpret all the diverse forms of discursive activity in the world... The postmodern condition, we are told repeatedly, manifests itself in the multiplication of centres of power and activity and the dissolution of every kind of totalizing narrative which claims to govern the whole complex field of social activity and representation.”³³ Ricœur tells us of the multiplicity of narratives.³⁴ Novelist Salman Rushdie, in his controversial work³⁵ which won for him Khoemeni’s fatwa, shows us a string of unrelated narratives in an attempt to be weaved together. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz instead of writing a treatise wrote memoirs which are incomplete and fragmented.³⁶ Human hope in modernity was hinged on the capability of man to create great narratives, called systems, to justify reality and its rules. With postmodernity, this object of human hope disappears and we are left with broken and varied pieces. Gone is the object of hope cultivated since the ancient times: that of great systems created by man. Gone too is the totalizing God, who was the postulate of modern man to explain the totality of the cosmos and was the moralizing God, who was the great witness, who saw man’s guilt and ugliness. This was the God whom the Ugliest Man in Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* killed and thus announced the new era wherein “God is dead”: “But he *had* to die: he looked with eyes that saw *everything* – he saw the depths and abysses of man, all man’s hidden disgrace and ugliness...The God who saw everything, *even man*: this god had to die! Man could not *endure* that such a witness should live.”³⁷ This god was above all the totality of all ethical and moral systems, wherein man put his hope to sustain the system in itself. With the disappearance of the modern object of human hope we are left with “a recognition

³³ S. Connor, *Postmodernist Culture*, 8.

³⁴ See his three-volume work: *Temps et récit*. (Paris: Seuil, 1983-1985).

³⁵ I am referring to: *The Satanic Verses*. (N.P.: Vintage, 1998).

³⁶ See: C. Geertz, *After the Fact. Two Countries, Four Decades, One Anthropologist*. (Cambridge-London: Harvard University Press, 1996).

³⁷ F. Nietzsche, “The Ugliest Man” in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 278-279.

of pluralism and indeterminacy in the world... a renunciation of intellectual hopes for simplicity, completeness, and certainty; a new focus on representation of images or information or cultural signs as occupying a dominant position in social life; and an acceptance of play and fictionalization in cultural fields that had earlier sought a serious, realist truth.”³⁸ With the disappearance of the object of hope, has human hope disappeared? And now we are left with the dissolution and disappearance of the modern dream and the appearance of utopia.

THE ALTERNATIVE OF UTOPIA, UTOPIA AS ALTERNATIVE: HUMAN HOPE, TELEOLOGY AND TRANSCENDENCE

Postmodernism is an occasion for us to learn a powerful lesson when it comes to our hopes and aspirations. As Gabriel Marcel puts it: “*speaking metaphysically, the only genuine hope is hope in what does not depend on ourselves*, hope springing from humility and not from pride.”³⁹ Hope is necessarily hinged on an object or a goal. The goal or object has defined the teleological or finalistic notion of hope ever since the days of Aristotle, eventually assimilated by Thomas Aquinas.⁴⁰ Modernity, with its systems, was the era of arrogant human self-sufficiency. It was the era wherein man constructed intellectually and even politically the object of all of his hopes. Postmodernity revealed the fragility of these objects, of these systems of hope. It is as if the rug were pulled from beneath the feet on which man has set firm his hope.

In this light, it can be concluded that human hope is utopian, a “no place” in postmodernity. This is one side of “utopia.” Instead I opt to present the other side of utopia, that is, the laying down of

³⁸ L.Cahoone “Introduction” to L. Cahoone (ed.), *From Modernism to Post-modernism: An Anthology*. (Cambridge-Oxford, 1996), 4. For a study on the epistemic consequences of this distortion of truth, see: M. Barrett, *The Politics of Truth. From Marx to Foucault*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).

³⁹ G. Marcel, “On the Ontological Mystery” in Idem., *The Philosophy of Existence*. (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), 19.

⁴⁰ I am taking into consideration the observations of J. Moltmann, “Christian Hope-Messianic or Transcendent? A Theological Conversation with Joachim of Fiore and Thomas Aquinas” in Idem., *History and the Triune God. Contributions to Trinitarian Theology*. (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1992), 95.

the foundations of what may be termed as the “impossible dream.” Thus, the “no place” (*u-topos*) must be creatively transformed into a “place” (*topos*) or a “possibility.” The fragility of the modern systems, taken as objects of human hope, eventually would mean disappearance. Thus, eventually, with the disappearance of the systems, the object of hope would disappear. Therefore, the traditional finalistic or teleological notion of hope would prove untenable. How can we hinge our hopes on an object that is in itself fragile and would eventually disappear? How could hope survive this ordeal? Hope by its very finalistic nature is in itself fragile. The object, though present, may not be available. Thus, hope is necessarily accompanied by uncertainty, by the state of expectation. Hope “is not an absolutely certain expectation, but accompanied by an element of uncertainty. Hope is always vulnerable and its close companion is fear. Doubtless, too, it is sometimes prudent to fear.”⁴¹ It is prudent to fear, as St. Augustine, since hope is proper for man as *homo viator*, as a traveler still discovering and fulfilling his destiny.⁴²

The solution does not consist in eliminating the teleological notion of hope, which makes hope centered on an object. The question of hope, especially in the light of the challenge posed by postmodernism, requires a re-examination not only of the object, but of the *very act of hoping in itself*. Hoping is not demanding for a specific outcome. Hoping is opening oneself up to the goodness of reality, to its best mode of fulfillment given our human situation.

As stated, without eliminating the teleological notion it is necessary to revise the act of hoping in itself. This entails starting with learning how to hope. It is necessary to methodologically focus first on the act of hoping instead of jumping immediately to the object. This may involve the cultivation of the act of hoping in itself without a definite or defined object. I repeat, the object of hope or the teleological notion is not eliminated. Instead, we put the object in a transcendental realm, in sort of a Husserlian methodo-

⁴¹ K. Pesche, *Christian Ethics. Moral Theology in the Light of Vatican II*. Vol. II. (Manila: Logos Publications, 2001), 66.

⁴² St. Augustine, *Enarratio in Psalm*, 103; *Sermo* 4, 17; G. Marcel, *Homo Viator*. (New York: Philosophical Library, 1962).

logical bracket. We must first have a radical cognizance of our immanent state, which is reflective of our very own fragility. With this radical cognizance, we learn that we cannot dictate destiny, but we can hope for the best possible world or result. We learn from postmodernity that both the hoped-for object and the one hoping are fragile. In the light of the situation, we have to cultivate hope. In doing so we truly become men. For hope is a virtue. It is that which establishes man as man (*vir* = man).⁴³ Hope aims for a transcendent object, that is, "difficult but possible to attain."⁴⁴ That which is difficult is that which is beyond the immediateness of human immanence.

In other words, we must train human hope to take root in its immanence and at the same time, it must strive, as an act, for what is transcendental. Albert Camus, speaking of Kafka, writes: "The more tragic the condition...the firmer and more aggressive the hope becomes."⁴⁵ In other words, when the going gets tough, the tough gets going. Because of its immanent groundedness and transcendental projection (with its transcendental object), hope is, in effect, a horizon⁴⁶ to be viewed existentially.⁴⁷ In effect, "hope

⁴³ St. Thomas Aquinas writes: "Respondeo dicendum quod per virtutem perficitur homo ad actus quibus in beatitudinem ordinatur, ut ex supradictis patet (q. 5 a.6)", *Summa Theologiae* I-II, Q. 62, A. 1, Respondeo.

⁴⁴ A. Bandera, *La Iglesia, misterio de comunión en el corazón del Concilio Vaticano II*. (Salamanca: San Esteban, 1965), 48.

⁴⁵ A. Camus, "Hope and the Absurd in the Work of Franz Kafka" in Idem., *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*. J. O'Brien trans. (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 99.

⁴⁶ I have taken into consideration certain points found in P. Ricœur's article: "Hope and the Structure of Philosophical Systems" in Idem., *Figuring the Sacred*, 203-216.

⁴⁷ "El hombre, en su fragilidad, descubre una inquietud permanente hacia algo que sobrepasa toda realización y posesión. Una experiencia de apertura que se hace 'apasionamiento por lo posible' (Kierkegaard). El ser humano se manifiesta así incurablemente utópico; extendido hacia lo que le sobrepasa absolutamente, nostálgico de algo, totalmente otro (Horkheimer). Esta pasión se puede juzgar inútil (Sartre), pero también orientación fundamental del ser humano no puede ser frustrado.", J.M. Mardones, "Esperanza" in Several Authors, *El Dios Cristiano. Diccionario Teológico*. (Salamanca: Secretariado Trinitario, 1992), 477-478.

is the name of the human spirit as conative openness to reality, as outreach in search of the meaning and value of life."⁴⁸

Modern man committed the error of placing his hopes in his own constructions, edifices or systems. The era of postmodernity showed that these great modern temples are nothing more than ruins where the winds of time blow revealing the space to be hollow and shallow. Modern man identified the transcendental God with the immanent human system capable of absolute knowledge as Hegel shows us in the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*.

It would be a facile solution to immediately propose theological (from God) or theological (towards God) hope, which, as St. Thomas stresses, has God for its object.⁴⁹ Theological or theological faith has the same object: God in as much as the substance of faith which is lived out in hope.⁵⁰ And together with charity, hope places the christian in the world however, this is no assurance that the christian would be satisfied or calm or contented in the world.⁵¹ In this light, "christian hope is the courage to be, to grow, to take risks in the midst of uncertainty and suffering."⁵² The *New Catechism* reminds us that "the virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it takes up the hopes that inspire men's activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of heaven; it keeps

⁴⁸ M.J. Scanlon, "Hope" in Several Authors, *The New Dictionary of Theology*. Reprint. (Pasay City: St. Paul Publications, 1991), 493.

⁴⁹ "Sed spes est virtus theologica habens Deum pro obiecto.", St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, Q. 18, A. 1, sed contra. See the excellent commentary of T. Urdanoz, *Introducciones y comentarios al tratado de la esperanza de Santo Tomás. Suma Teológica.*, II-II. Vol. VII. (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1959), 475-639.

⁵⁰ "Since the object of hope is identified with the object of faith, inasmuch as faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen (Heb. 11.1), the articles of faith and the definitions of the Church with respect to the object of faith, also indicate the object of hope.", S.M. Ramírez, "Hope" in Several Authors, *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*. (Washington, 1966), 133.

⁵¹ F. Ruiz Salvador, *Caminos del Espíritu*. 5th ed. (Madrid: Editorial de Espiritualidad, 1998), 272.

⁵² B. Häring, *Free and Faithful in Christ. Moral Theology for Priests and Laity*. Vol. 2. Phil. Ed. (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1985), 398.

man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude."⁵³

The alternative in the light of all these is to reconstruct our utopia of hope by revising our hopes, by shifting our gear from the object to the act itself, to the act of learning how to hope. The first step in learning how to hope consists in establishing the axiological difference between what is immanent from what is transcendental and not identifying both dimensions with the system. Postmodernism can never reduce hope to an irrational feeling. True hope, with its transcendental projection, is always a "rational feeling."⁵⁴ From here, we can learn to hope. This necessarily also means to purify our notion of God. Our notions of God, most of the times, are linked to our caprice, desires, personal projections, personal expectations, personal utopias. This is especially evidenced by the excesses of popular religiosity.

We have to, in the expression of Edward Schillebeeckx, "let God be God."⁵⁵ We must not manipulate Him, confuse Him with our greatest aspirations and achievements and effectively "rob" Him of his transcendence. *It is imperative to acknowledge that there is an abysmal difference between who God really is and our images of Him.* We must purify our notions of God, enter into a

⁵³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. No. 1818. I am following the definitive ed. (Manila: ECCE-Word & Life Publications, 1997.)

⁵⁴ P. Ricœur, *History and Truth*. C.A. Kelbey trans. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1965), 12.

⁵⁵ "That God is experienced as dark light implies that the infinite God is not exhausted in his interpersonal relationship to men and women, even if he calls this relationship to men and women, even if he calls this relationship to life in an absolutely free way, with a freedom which is identical to his own absolute being! In this sense he is at the same time impersonal and more than personal. However, the fact that we have to deny a limited individuality to God's personhood has consequences both for his divine identity and for his personal relationship to men and women. The interpersonal relationship between God and human beings is not to be envisaged on the model of two persons who in their limiting and limited individuality stand over against each other and encounter each other as finite beings. God does not know this limitation: in the I-thou relationship between God and humankind God himself includes the human I.", E. Schillebeeckx, *Church: The Human Face of God*. J. Bowden trans. (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1993), 100.

mystical dark night, and realize that God is beyond all our caprices, expectations and concepts.

FINAL REFLECTION: WAITING TO HOPE

This new utopia for human hope would necessarily involve a constant reminder of our limitations. This constant reminder highlights the greatness of human hope as it opens itself to the wider horizon provided by theological or theological hope. But for a change in attitude on hope, it may be necessary to wait.⁵⁶ We have to wait for man to learn how to hope by recognizing the distance of transcendence from our finite and culpable immanence. From this immanence, we cannot dictate, but we must wait for the benevolence of reality to fulfill its metaphysical promise of goodness to all beings. This goodness is the self-perfecting act of nature to fulfill itself and never frustrate itself. The words of Simone Weil contain a great lesson for us: "This universe where we are living, and of which we form a tiny particle, is the distance put by Love."⁵⁷

Given the fragmentary and fragile nature of these reflections, it is my hope that this rather introductory presentation would stimulate others to continue reflecting on this interesting topic. And I wish to close with a poetic or creative fragment from Miguel de Unamuno:

"pues para algo nací; con mi flaqueza,
cimientos echaré a tu fortaleza
y viviré esperándote, ¡Esperanza!"⁵⁸

Translated roughly:

"I was born for a reason, and with my weakness,
I will lay the foundations of your stronghold
and I will live waiting for you, Oh hope!" □

⁵⁶ See the play of words between "espera" and "esperar" in P. Laín, *La espera y la esperanza*.

⁵⁷ S. Weil, *Waiting for God*. E. Craford. (New York-Gran Rapids: Perennial Library, 1973), 127.

⁵⁸ M. de Unamuno, "Rosario de Sonetos Líricos, CXX, 2º" in Idem., *Obras Completas*. Vol. VI. (Madrid: Escelicer, 1966), 409.