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The modern/post-modern period has been characterized by a relentless war against metaphysics. Although hardly himself a positivist, Richard Rorty affirms that "... the positivists were absolutely right in thinking it imperative to extirpate metaphysics when 'metaphysics' means the attempt to give knowledge of what science cannot know" (1). What is it about metaphysics that obsesses those who call it a waste of time, if not dangerous? Why do others engage in it with such passion? Metaphysics certainly represents the supreme chutzpah of the philosophical mind: to be able to think about Being-as-a-whole, or to be able to think as Being!

As human beings, says mystic and metaphysician Oscar Ichazo, we have an essential impulse to question our identity: who are we? what are we part of? what is our purpose? Metaphysics is an expression of a more general innate impulse toward unifying, toward connecting. Considered corporately, Ichazo declares, a civilization appears when a population discovers "the Unity" (2).

In this paper I consider some aspects of post-modern thinking, particularly in the writing of Martin Heidegger and Jacques Derrida, as contributions to contemporary metaphysics, even though metaphysics is what each in his own way is attempting to escape. At the end I briefly introduce a core component of the thought of Oscar Ichazo as an example of metaphysical thinking that promotes the transformative functions of traditional metaphysics while very consciously integrating a post-traditional worldview.

This drive toward discovering identity is expressed in various ways. When we are gathered in families, or in other sorts of collectivities, we conceive of our social gatherings in terms of what we believe our unity to be, for instance, as a creation of gods, or a God, i.e., in mythic expression. When no longer satisfied simply to see ourselves as part of a mythically grounded network or as part of another kind of story, e.g., a Heilsgeschichte, we turn to philosophy, especially metaphysics, to conceive of
ourselves as a “we” through reason. Metaphysics addresses the unity of Being manifesting as a universe, the internal question of the self-identity of personal consciousness, i.e., the nature of the “I”, the unity of humanity as a whole, as well as the unity of humanity with the world. The mystical quest, of course, is yet another response to our innate metaphysical itch, in which we may dissolve all barriers – physical and metaphysical, personal, social, and cosmic.

If our metaphysical impulse is primordially human, then what happens when we try to repress or to deny it? Much modern and post-modern thinking has been devoted to dismissing the kind of metaphysics that perceives our unity to be derivative of a transcendent order. However, as Heidegger has so effectively demonstrated, scientistic modernity has instead manifested its own return of the metaphysical repressed. But when Heidegger himself attempted to end metaphysics, he did not succeed. Derrida too conceals powerful metaphysical presumptions behind his disruptive readings of traditional and modern metaphysics.

*Metaphysics of presence, ontotheology, and logocentrism*

Martin Heidegger, Jacques Derrida and other post-moderns are important for contemporary metaphysicians, mystics, perennialists and esotericists in at least two related ways. First, they represent an important development in Western thinking away from scientistic materialism. Second, they have participated in broadening the focus of modern philosophical attention from outside – attempts to give philosophically proper accounts of how the world is – to inquiries about who it is that is making such attempts, and with what instrumentation. The turn of attention to the nature of consciousness, no matter how truncated the pre-understanding of consciousness, must be seen from a metaphysician's perspective as a step in the right direction.

Their attempts to evade metaphysics while refuting scientism are instructive for those trying to think metaphysically in light of modernity. Heidegger’s critique of metaphysics is powerful, even though his own thought constitutes a key example of what metaphysics looks like in a post-modern format. In fact, Derrida’s chief complaint about Heidegger is that he too remains entangled in a “metaphysics of presence”; i.e., he too absolutizes particulars. Derrida shares with feminist thinkers the understanding of the metaphysician’s “original sin” as idealist idolatry.

Before addressing Heidegger’s metaphysics, we should acknowledge that he has exposed the ways in which some problematic features of traditional metaphysics carry over into modern scientism. Contemporary metaphysicians, especially of the traditionalist Perennialist school led by Schuon, have not accepted the significance of this continuity with scientism, having focu-
sed so intently on the chasmic differences between modern and traditional perspectives. Heidegger’s analysis of ontotheology is instructive for all of us who are metaphysically driven:

“When metaphysics thinks of beings with respect to the ground that is common to all beings as such, then it is logic as onto-logic. When metaphysics thinks of being as a whole, that is, with respect to the highest being which accounts for everything, then it is logic as theologic.” (3)

Heidegger refers here to our intellectual greed for explaining everything by constructing various sorts of causal genealogies as a way to establish a metaphysical unity among phenomena, however limited and whether or not its metaphysical basis is acknowledged. Theorized chains of dependent existence may be ontological and/or theological, and so pre-modern. Or they may be materialistic and/or scientistic. In either case, according to Heidegger, instead of providing an open conscious space for the unfolding of Being, we are preoccupied with fitting things into a chain of reasoning that constructs us and our world dualistically as subjectivity and its objects. One of Heidegger’s recommendations, then, is somehow to stop this intellectual aggressiveness.

Meditation has for millennia been used to expose the structure and functioning of the over-interpreting mind. Zen metaphysician (a delicious oxymoron) Nishida at one point quotes a poem: “From the cliff/ Eight times ten thousand feet high/ withdrawing your hand/ flames spring from the plow,/ World burns./ Body becomes ashes and dirt, And resurrects./ The rice rows are as ever...” (4) It is the mind hanging there, of course. And it can withdraw from its attempt to hang everything on its ontotheological structures simply by letting go. Heidegger and Zen similarly prescribe the cessation of the grasping, monkey mind as the path to reality. However, Zen recognizes the meditative practice necessary to achieve such a “seedless” state, and seems far more thorough about it than Heidegger (5). Nevertheless, Heidegger’s analysis of mind and language has appropriately attracted comparison with mysticism (6).

Derrida, the avatar of Deconstruction, joins Heidegger, it’s grandfather, in revealing dangerous tendencies in our thinking, as they tag various practices “ontotheology”, “logocentrism”, and “metaphysics of presence”. These three terms name slightly different paths to the same trap: whenever we attempt to thing Being constructively, we tend to idolize our thinking. In our attempts to encompass the totality of Being by thinking, we must provide organizing principles. For as Heidegger said: “every metaphysical question always accompanies the whole range of metaphysical problems. Each question is itself always the whole” (7).

To ask such a comprehensive question is to be drawn to seek a way to give an account, a logos, of the whole. Thus a particular question tends to pre-order the whole; the logos is pre-fabricated. This is logocentrism: the logos
we have made the center of our account inevitably hides the untidy pieces of experience which do not fit, which are not present, which are marginal. To espouse "metaphysics of presence" is to believe that what I think is real because reality is "present" to my mind, so that what is absent is ignored, is taken to be unreal. "Logocentrism, ontotheology and metaphysics of presence" name metaphysical egocentricities and ethnocentricities.

Logocentrism refers not merely to our abstract claims that all beings manifest or behave according to particular principles or laws and/or for particular purposes, but also to our tendencies to specify those principles that order and account for the whole. Believing that such principles can only be inductive projections of our opinions about why things are as they are, Heidegger, Derrida and a whole host of post-moderns would rather we did not engage in such discussions at all. Perennialists and other traditional metaphysicians believe that authentic metaphysical expressions are not "thought up", but rather are revelations of transcendental Intellect. Although I believe that not to ask such metaphysical questions is spiritually suicidal, still post-moderns are accurate in their criticisms of, and fears about, how particular answers to such questions have been used historically.

Ontotheology as metaphysical idolatry

Our idolization of our versions of metaphysical truths have concrete material and political consequences. Peter Berger tells us how religious institutions and practices serve as "sacred canopies" to justify particular social-political arrangements and practices. The same point must be made for metaphysical propositions. For instance, the hierarchical, male oriented metaphysical speculations that have characterized Eastern and Western pre-modern thinking have provided sacred intellectual canopies over very harsh, oppressive political systems.

Traditionalist perennialist ontotheologies understand the manifestation of Being as ontologically and noetically hierarchical. Societies which conform with such metaphysics will tend to be politically hierarchical. Plato's "republic", for instance, is a utopian inscription of Plato's hierarchical philosophy. Consider the social and political consequences drawn by Frithjof Schuon as he discusses:

"... the crucial problem of obedience, so essential in normal civilizations and so little understood in modern ones... Obedience is in itself a means to interior perfection, on condition that is it wholly bounded by religion... The subordination of women, children, inferiors and servants falls into place quite normally in the system of multiple obediences that makes up a religious society; a dependence with respect to another may be a hard fate, but it always has a religious meaning, like poverty..." (8)
For Schuon, of course, such a religious society is the only possible context for us to realize the fullness of human perfection.

Logically, of course, it is conceivable that a hierarchical metaphysics could be consistent with a politics that does not require “the subordination of women, children, inferiors and servants...”. The post-modern claim is, however, that historically such ontotheologies, by thinking the whole of Being as ontologically ordered in a chain of increasing subordination, have invariably supported political structures that place participants in a chains of increasing subordination. Similarly, we could investigate whether non-philosophically grounded mythologies and sacred histories that structure their “unities” in subordinationist fashion have also supported societies which are internally and externally repressive and exploitative. It is not obvious that traditionally patriarchal, repressive societies have manifested participants of such “interior perfections”, or that the rare religious geniuses that stud human history have appeared in societies “wholly bounded by religion”.

The Genesis stories that seem to subordinate Eve to Adam have supported the subordination of women to men in traditional – and contemporary – Jewish and Christian societies (9). Has the Christian hermeneutics that reads Christianity as the completion of Judaism supported the relegation of Jews to inferior status and their persecution in traditional Christian societies? Even if, as in the case of the Ashkenazic Pietists, a medieval Jewish mystical movement, persecution did serve for some as a spur to interior sublimity, what is justified thereby?

Mary Daly makes a powerful feminist critique of androcentric metaphysics as she discusses the traditional distinction that splits “being” and “becoming”, or in Schuon’s terms, Absolute and Infinity. Greek philosophers, she notes, are followed by traditional Western metaphysicians in their equation of “the good” with “true being”, defined as the already present, changeless Source and Goal of the whole process of becoming. Aristotle’s Final Cause, which seems to draw the process of becoming into the future, instead forecloses change: “The goal of every action... already is. The future is essentially closed.” (10)

Feminist philosophy and deconstruction share the “metaphysics of suspicion” which asks of any metaphysical proposition, cui bono?

“... if the male intellectual elite has been fixated upon a split between becoming and being, this in all likelihood reflects the situation of the elite, who benefit from a static, hierarchical climate and who would be threatened by total openness to the future. ‘Becoming’ then becomes domesticated under the reign of reified ‘being’, which can represent ‘things as they are’ to the consciousness of the privileged who want it that way.” (11)

This is a clear analysis of the moral consequences of applied ontotheologies. Although, as a formal logical principle, a moral evaluation of events may not invalidate metaphysical claims, the fault may lie with the logic ra-
ther than with the process of evaluation. That is, although our moral judgments on the particulars of experience cannot logically invalidate metaphysical schemata, such schemata claim to cover reality at all levels. The principle of "by their fruit you shall know them" surely has some place in our evaluations.

Heidegger gives extensive attention to modern ontotheologies, especially the ontotheology which manifests in technological thinking in which the Cartesian, scientistic ego tries to master everyone and everything. In fact, Heidegger's critique of modern thinking closely matches the Perennialists', although they come from very different positions. He argues persuasively with many others that the privileging of technological thinking results in the objectification of all things and people, i.e., of all manifestations of Being, for the sake of control. Buber's analysis of the "Ich-es" mode of being is a more potent presentation of the same point.

Feminist theorists have argued in a similar, although perhaps deeper, vein that at the root of the desire for mastery of nature manifested in technology and its thought processes, is man's desire for mastery over women, children, and all "others". And even Heidegger briefly absolutized the particular totalitarian messianism of Nazism. Again we find the continuity between traditional and modern ontotheologies in their support – intended or not – of political hierarchies.

Nevertheless, metaphysics

The recognition that all metaphysical expressions are limited is supported from two very different directions with different consequences. First, there are the critiques of the limitations of particular ontotheologies which we find in Heidegger, Daly and many others. Such critiques are radicalized by Derrida's deeper analysis of the slippery nature of language. His view is shared by many who have taken "the linguistic turn": our minds are constituted by language, and therefore we are so caught up in language, that through language we can never re-present reality, since neither our interior world nor our exterior world are ever present to us apart from language (12). This is a recognition of the limitations of the linguistic mind from an immanent, horizontal perspective, i.e., from a perspective that is conditioned by the belief that human consciousness cannot transcend its linguistic functioning, that language is foundational.

The other source of recognition of the limitations of any particular metaphysical expression is from the vertical, transcendental perspective traditional and Perennialist metaphysicians themselves: since Being has Its source in the Unmanifest (Godhead, En Sof, etc.) any essay to express the whole must ultimately run up against the limits of language, i.e., the apophatic. A spe-
cial characteristic of Perennial Philosophy, moreover, is its recognition of the multiplicity of metaphysical expressions, which are relative to particular traditions. More crucial is its claim that the determination of relative truth and falsity of metaphysical expressions is not a function of judgments solely internal to any given metaphysical system, any language, or any social network of linguistic praxis. The Truth being sought is the measure of all relative truths, an Absolute. The Unity toward which all metaphysics strives, therefore, is not local, but rather universal.

However, traditional and traditionalist metaphysicians who recognize the ultimate insufficiency of linguistic expressions do not therefore conceive of language as an inevitable trap. Although expressions of truth—philosophical, poetic, artistic, musical, etc.—are mere pointers at the moon (in the wonderful Zen image), nonetheless they do point, and some pointers are better than others. Such metaphysicians refuse, to put it in Derridean terms, to break the connection between all signifiers and all signifieds, especially the Transcendental Signified. As do many mystics, they recognize the symbolically ostensive—not representational—function of certain kinds of language. However, the truth of the communication is also a function of the level of exchange as well as its “content”. A Zen poet says:

"I don’t take your word
Merely as words
Far from it.
I listen
To whatever makes you talk—
Whatever that is — And me listen.” (13)

In discussing the Sufi poetry of Kabir, Linda Hess comments:

“We are arriving at a view of language in which truth is gauged not by whether the words are factual or logical, but by what sort of mind they come from, and what they do to the mind they touch.” (14)

There is agreement among those who include the apophatic among the possibilities of being and knowing that the representational power of language is limited and culture bound. They can understand, in fact, every example that Derrida gives of its inevitable misdirections. But as we see in Hess’s comment, that does not limit them to a consideration of truth as mere consensus, since truth is not a property only of linguistic expression.

Although we tend to idolize and grasp particular metaphysical conclusions, we are not thereby relieved of the obligation and necessity of thinking metaphysically. Huston Smith gives a bareboned definition of metaphysics as “a worldview that provides a sense of orientation” (15). Without such metaphysical grounding, we suffer metaphysical vertigo. Metaphysics, as it were, provides an intellectually mediated spiritual food that we need, for which we may starve, and in which we may over-indulge.

The food metaphor is apt for characterizing the position of transformative
metaphysics, especially as characterized by the Perennialists, traditionalist or not (16). Postmoderns, such as Derrida and neopragmatist Richard Rorty, hold that there are no *intrinsic* values appropriate for judging any linguistic expression. No matter what the intellectual food, its nutritive value is solely a matter of inter-subjective or subjective opinion. But those sensitive to metaphysical needs will hold that just as there are physical foods that nourish and others that don’t, no matter what the style of cuisine, and just as there are emotional foods that nourish (e.g., love and compassion) and those that don’t, there are intellectual foods that nourish and others that don’t—objectively.

Thus we return to Ichazo’s theory that humans have an innate need for orientation and unity, for a sense of purpose and identity, i.e., for metaphysics: “We are the only creatures who question their own identity. ... Identity... is a metaphysical proposition. ... Metaphysics... is a fundamental concern for all of us.” However, Ichazo makes a crucial qualification: “Philosophy in general, and metaphysics in particular, if they are not tools for the evolution of society, become merely expensive luxuries difficult to afford.” (17) He is in full accord with the traditional understanding of metaphysics’ transformative function. For “metaphysics is not merely a point of intellectual analysis, but an indispensable element of thought which can change our lives” (18). However, the state of the world is such that our practices and thinking must yield more than individual transformations. Metaphysics is necessary for the world-wide transformation of human consciousness required for our survival.

Nevertheless, our metaphysics must match our condition. Metaphysical “systems” correlate with or presume cosmologies, i.e., in our metaphysics, we think about the cosmos as being a certain way. In those cosmologies we situate our sociologies and anthropology. Ichazo observes that as our experience of our world changes, our most fundamental speculations about reality as a whole must also change. A metaphysics that cannot place coherently and evaluate appropriately our contemporary experience of our selves and our world in rapid, radical change, cannot serve its transformative function. The paradox of metaphysics that the linguistic turn of post-modern thinking shows us is that any linguistic expression, even of the eternal, is historically conditioned, a truth implicitly acknowledged by all apophasisms.

*Metaphysical critique of post-modern anti-metaphysics*

The recognition that traditional metaphysics operated with reality maps that do not match our post-traditional lived, embodied experience sparked much of the modern and post-modern revolt against metaphysics. On that
basis Heidegger and Derrida have aimed to rid us of metaphysics. However, as they pour out the metaphysical babies with the antiquated cosmological bath water, they remain entwined in their own ontotheologies. Neither escapes two modern and post-modern metaphysical assumptions which put such limits on their thinking that what they have produced cannot serve as the basis for the transformative thinking we require. First, in different ways, they both accept the post-modern dogma of the total linguistification of human experience. This, of course, constitutes their own variety of logocentrism, an obsession with language shared with so many contemporary Western thinkers. The other assumption is correlative: all being is temporal — and only temporal. As much as Heidegger and Derrida wanted to overcome or subvert Hegel, neither succeeded in that particular respect.

First, consider Heidegger’s entanglement with language. He made the “linguistic turn” in an astonishing way. Ontotheological thinking operates instrumentally or calculatively. When we think in these ways, Being is not allowed to reveal itself. As we have seen, Heidegger wants us to learn how to stop interrogating our experience, to stop questing for truth with calculative thinking. He recommends the total silence of the subject. Caputo, in comparing Heidegger’s thought to Meister Eckhart’s, says: “The silence...which Eckhart and Heidegger seek, is not merely the cessation of spoken words, but also the cutting off of all images, concepts, and representations.” (19) But that silence will then become the ground for another kind of thinking. The result of such silence will not be a vision of eternity or transcendence of the subject into some cosmic unity, but rather essential thinking.

Consciousness (Dasein) loses its “subject” quality by ceasing to produce those structures which separate it from reality. But Heidegger cannot imagine that the world could be “worlding” in a space cleared by human consciousness without language. For Heidegger, essential thinking is an echoing: «This echo is the human answer (Ant-wort) to the word (Wort) of the soundless voice of Being.” (20) Essential thinking is the world “worlding”, Being manifesting, in an authentic human format. Therefore, the World worlds only locally and temporally. Language is the house of Being, says Heidegger in a frequently quoted epigram ('). The implication of the metaphor is that houses and languages are constructed and inhabited at particular times in specific places. Being has no human dimension of eternity since human consciousness is Dasein, “being there — and then”. The utter ubiquity of language, its total constitutive function in the manifestation of human being is an enormous presumption.

Second, and directly related, is the other metaphysical assumption shared by Heidegger and other post-moderns: since Being can only be revealed inside language, inherently a socially and historically conditioned practice, Being can only be revealed to the mortal Dasein who has come to terms with the utter finality of death. Although all mystical paths, with or without
metaphysics, must integrate and neither repress or deny the inevitability of
death, Heidegger opens to the world not in the receptive silence he recom-
mends, but loaded down with his scientistic, modern pre-judgments about
dying. In fact, he argues that it is precisely our anxiety about our nothing-
ness that permits us to transcend our attachment to particular beings and
things.

Mystical paths and traditional metaphysics also recognize the function of
integrating our awareness of death, but do not make anxiety about it a per-
manent fixture of consciousness. Rather for mystics the transcendence of
nothingness is a major, but intermediate, step in the process of realiza-
tion. In Heidegger's anxiety, the subject is not silenced, the fear of death is
not transcended; *Dasein* worries.

Heidegger is attracted to mysticism, especially to the thought of Meister
Eckhart and Angelus Silesius. But he finds their thinking too metaphysical,
for they remain "ensnared" in the distinctions between sensible and super-
sensible, between time and eternity, between the world and God. Rather, it
is the poet who becomes the model for essential thinking, for the poet thinks
through the body, responds to the needs of the time, and does not try to
escape time, to escape nihility. Authentic *Dasein* and essential thinking are
bracketed by nihility.

Kitaro Nishitani, of the Kyoto School, who so much wants Heidegger to
be right, nevertheless faults him for limiting "nothingness" to nihility which
he terms "relative nothingness". Whereas Heidegger dissolves the distinc-
tion between time and eternity by eliminating eternity, Nishitani argues that
"*Being* in time consists essentially in being obliged ceaselessly to be *doing*
something..." (22). By implication, Heidegger's desired silence is unavaila-
able to Being-in-time. Indeed, if Being-in-time is all that is possible to hu-
manity, then especially in secularized time, egocentricity is inevitable:

"*Within that [secularized] time, every function of life, as something that
is autotelic and therefore aimless, is given over to the unrestricted pursuit of
itself. It is here that the infinite drive, or what may be termed 'self-will', is
to be seen.*" (23)

Heidegger's contribution to both hermeneutics and to deconstruction was
to situate all human consciousness in time. Thereby, however, he blocked
himself from his greatest desire, to let the World world. He does not escape
the consequences of reducing eternity to infinity.

Derrida, similarly, dissolves the duality of "the one and the many" by
opting for the many when he instructs us about differance as the constant
movement of *Being*, ungraspable in any absolute way. Exterior reality and
internal awareness – our minds, our egos – are all ungraspable. There is no
self-identity, objective or subjective. As someone put it, not only can't I
step into the same river once, I can't even step into it once! Derrida points us
to the irreducibility of differences, of uniquenesses and the dangers of attempts to erase those differences conceptually. All attempts to unify differences in a conceptual schema, in an account, by a *logos*, he views with deep suspicion. His critique of consciousness has invited comparison with certain Buddhist understandings which are in their own ways antimetaphysical (24).

Post-modern expression emphasizes plurality and difference in response to the totalizing impulses of scientism, totalitarian politics and traditional monolatries. This impulse must be honored in a contemporary metaphysics. In more traditional framework, differences and uniquenesses seemed less grounded in theoretical and political expression. They can no longer be so easily subsumed. Derrida's language is filled with metaphors of fissures, deferrals, and differences, not connections.

A metaphysics that can handle the Unity of Being only by finally wiping out the many (e.g., some readings of Neo-platonism and Advaitan Vedanta) will fall into ontotheology. But thinking that one can handle the many only by wiping out the One (e.g., Heidegger and Derrida), gives us no metaphysical basis for connecting across our differences, as we must to survive. The One and the Many are not necessarily contradictory, mystics and mystically based metaphysicians claim. The metaphysical urge is to connect, not only to differentiate. There are post-modern metaphysics (25). But there are special requirements: our metaphysical model must, as well as affirm the reality of differences and uniquenesses, affirm connections across differences, realizing unities across differences in concept, in feelings, in politics.

*The meta-logic of metaphysics*

Modern thinking, from Kant through hermeneutics, has recognized what generations of meditators always re-discover: our behavior is a function of how we think about our situations. Ichazo claims that primordial to our thinking is logic – the rules, implicit or explicit, by which we claim to think correctly, validly about our experience of our interior and exterior reality, i.e., the manifestation of all being. Modernity has brought major shifts in the way we experience the world, and so our logic no longer matches our experience (26). For that reason, Hegel embraced dialectics, another logic, which provides a consistent, intelligible way of thinking if reality is taken to be a conflict driven process which is both material and ideal. Hegel rejects Aristotle's formal logic because he rejects Aristotle's static, substantialist metaphysics and therefore all thinking which has such a metaphysics at its foundation.

Ichazo, arguing that dialectics too fails to match our experience, introduces another logic which he calls "trialectics" or "the logic of unity". It
comprehends the fundamental nature of Being or Creation as a lawfully manifesting relational process of one unmanifest Source. What it shares with Aristotle’s formal logic and Hegel’s dialectical logic is its claim that it matches the way things are, or rather, the way things happen. Whereas Aristotle’s logic comprehends eternity and Hegel’s comprehends change, i.e., the reality of time, Ichazo’s logic unifies both: “It must be demonstrated that the eternal and change are one solid process, not different or contradictory, but unified.” (27) Manifestation, originating in Void, is a process of energy or consciousness mutating lawfully, harmoniously and cyclically from one point of relative stability to another, harmoniously, without contradiction. The laws of trialectics describe that process of evolution and return. Many calls for “new thinking” have been made, but usually, as Heidegger and Derrida demonstrate, with the proviso that it be non-metaphysical. That is, responding to the hubris of the scientistic claims, the post-modern mind proclaims the human inadequacy to match external reality — or internal reality. Ichazo’s new logic may make possible metaphysical thinking that comprehends the world presented to us by both science and mysticism. Any given world view, of course, provides a different view of identity. As he points out, if difference and movement are understood as lawful, cyclical manifestations of a unitary purposive process, then identity — our sense of ourselves in purposive process — must be something quite different from what is presumed by formal logic or dialectics: “Identity here means to identify our process and where we are in it. That is identity for us, our location in the process.” (28)

The metaphysical question that post-modernism goads into emergence for our time is, how do we unify across our differences without dissolving those differences by an ontotheological sleight of hand? One way in which Ichazo deals with the problem of expressing the unity of the manifold manifestations is by a critique of Aristotle’s formal logical principles of identity, contradiction, and excluded middle. Consider the implications of believing what seems self-evident, that A = A. Because we buy into the belief that only what is identical can be equal, we get caught in various errors such as, men can only be equal to men; Christians can only be equal to, i.e., qualified for, heaven; a woman’s place is at home, etc. In sum, to be different is to be un-equal (29). A perspective of the world that reasons without benefit of the laws of identity, contradiction and excluded middle enables very different ways of thinking about the non-duality of male and female, Christian and Jew, rich and poor, Israeli and Palestinian, etc.

The post-modern response is to reject the formal logical principle of identity, or what comes to the same thing, to make identity utterly changeable, resulting in the many expressions of “non-foundationalism” in philosophy, theology, literature, architecture, music, therapy, etc. But post-modern thinkers thereby also sacrifice any foundation for equality. Willy nilly, they
void logic and reason as if that move were the cure for totalitarian ways of thinking.

Ichazo’s logic may help us see a possible world which recognizes its profound connectedness, its unity. This implies the necessity of differences to connect. Ichazo talks about “the deep realization [...] that unity is needed and that the normal differences in such a huge society mean enrichment rather than problems and misunderstanding” (30). His logic is profoundly processual and relational. A such, it proposes, for instance, that everything is a manifestation of the same energy, or consciousness and is the result of other interactive manifestations. Manifestations are generated by the patterned, repetitive circulation of energies which connect polarities of difference. For example, couples have possibilities for generating (i.e., channeling) children, love, inspiration, etc., without losing their “selves” in each other. They can evolve into a unity without either or both merging, without one canceling the other out, and without the necessity of struggle mandated by dialectics. Every manifestation has its limits and its time and its necessary network of relationships. This seems to be a presentation of the Buddhist doctrine of “co-dependent origination” in a precise, measurable way. Ultimately, the purpose of this logic is to engage the mind to lead consciousness to evolution and thus to enlightenment.

This is a metaphysical model analogous to that presented for the same transformative purpose in the mythological symbolism of the Sefirot in Kabbalah, in the mytho-philosophical speculation on the Chinese yin/yang symbol, as well as in the rituals of Asian tantra. The truth of Ichazo’s metaphysics, like any other philosophy whose function is transformative, cannot be merely theoretical, as Perennialists correctly insist. The realization of truth is inherently connected with a path of spiritual realization, so that the metaphysics that matches our planetary needs is a “realized” metaphysics, like that of the Philosopher returning to the cave, but not in Plato’s formal logical universe. Heidegger and Derrida do not ground their thought in such practices, but are rather tied to Descartes and Husserl as models for “meditation”; Ichazo’s logic is integrated into an intensive, structured mystical path.

Nevertheless, the most transformative metaphysics abstracts; it is the finger pointing at the moon. While the Tao Te Ching begins by saying “the Tao which can be languaged is not the true Tao”, that is only the first line. The Kotzker Rebbe, a Hassidic master, likened the task of spiritual realization to filling a barrel full of holes with water. “We are commanded to pour, not to fill”, he said. Derrida is right: all our barrels are full of holes. And the Kotzker is right: without the water we cannot live.

Sheldon R. ISENBERG

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NOTES


(2) Ichazo, founder of the Arica Institute, has not published through the conventional academic organs. Two books and several very complex articles constitute his public record in metaphysics, so far. He is currently working on a complete presentation of his theory. See Oscar Ichazo, Interviews with Oscar Ichazo (New York; Arica Institute Press, 1982) and Between Metaphysics and Protoanalysis: A Theory for Analyzing the Human Psyche (New York: Arica Institute Press, 1982). Several important articles in The Arican, published by the Arica Institute (150 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10011) contain thorough, dense analyses of various aspects of the Arica theory and system of meditation.


(5) Heidegger’s thinking about silence has spawned many comparisons with mysticism and especially Zen Buddhism. Most helpful for reading Heidegger from the perspective of Zen is Keiji Nishitani, Religion and Nothingness, trans. and intro. by Jan Van Bragt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982). He is especially helpful in sorting out Heidegger’s limitations from a Buddhist perspective, but also from a mystical perspective in general. John Caputo’s comparison of Heidegger with Meister Eckhart and Angelus Silesius performs a similar function in a very different way for the Western apophatic tradition. Cf. The Mystical Element in Heidegger’s Thought (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1978).


(9) Carol Meyers argues well that early Biblical materials – including the Eve stories – reflect a much more gender balanced situation than later, monarchical and post-Biblical Jewish traditions. Nevertheless, it is clear that the stories about Eve were generally used to model and justify patriarchal structures. See her Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).


(11) Ibid.


(15) “The View from Everywhere: Ontotheology and the Post-Nietzschean Deconstruction of Metaphysics”, in Ruf, ed., Religion, Ontotheology and Deconstruction (op. cit.): 43. This excellent essay provides a less charitable treatment of Post-modern thinking about metaphysics from a traditionalist Perennialist perspective.


(18) Ibid., 24.


(20) “What is Metaphysics?” cited by Caputo, 167.


(23) Ibid., 235 f.


(25) Besides the perennialists and traditionalists already mentioned, there is a huge literature on Whitehead and “process philosophy”. In addition a growing list of metaphysicians attempt to integrate the qualities of pluralism and non-commensurability of cultural conversations into their systematic thinking. The variety of modern metaphysics warrants a study of its own. See Robert Neville, ed., *New Essays in Metaphysics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987) for a fascinating sampler.

(26) Between Metaphysics and Protoanalysis, passim.

(27) Between Metaphysics and Protoanalysis, 92.

(28) Ibid., 93.


(30) Interviews with Oscar Ichazo, op. cit., 115.