

## **Enrique Dussel's Philosophy of Liberation: Philosophical Reflections at the time of the COVID-19 Global Pandemic**

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### **Abstract**

In this brief philosophical exposé, I will narrate the events as well as my personal and eco-spiritual reflections pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic which began in Wuhan, China sometime in November 2019. The virus has spread sporadically across countries and continents wreaking havoc medically, politically, and individually as it claimed more than three hundred thousand lives and had virally infected more than four million of the global population. This phenomenon has led us to confront inevitable eschatological questions: Is this a sign of the end times? Will this efface the vulnerable human race? Will this disrupt the global economy as capitalism had collapsed worldwide? Do these events signal a new political era, perhaps the dawn of socialism and communism as countries worldwide are led to confront its own deficiencies and inadequacies? Which social and political systems and worldviews are efficient particularly in this age of globalization? What are our chances for human survival? These apocalyptic questions have led me to my reflections on Enrique Dussel's philosophy of liberation, particularly on his concept of Christian ethics and the moral theology of liberation. In so doing, the paper incorporates a holistic outlook on the pandemic viewing it in a global scale, and considers an all-inclusive interpretation on the pandemic that

ranges from the environmental, civic, cultural, political, and socio-economic concerns. I shall try to sew and patch the pieces together into a much wider, integrated, and comprehensive outlook that includes both the global and the peripheral human experiences.

**Keywords:** Ethics and Theology of Liberation, Eurocentrism, Decoloniality, Neoliberal Globalization, Ethics in the Periphery, Ecological Theology, Philippine Society, Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ)

*“Tayo ay nakasakay sa mundong naglalakbay sa gitna ng kalawakan. Umiikot sa bituin na nagbibigay-buhay sa halaman, sa hayop, at sa atin. Ang lahat ng bagay ay magkaugnay, magkaugnay ang lahat.”<sup>1</sup>*

(We are aboard a planet that traverses through space. Revolving around a star that gives life to plants, animals, and us. Everything is connected, all things are connected.)

## Introduction

In what follows, I will introduce the philosophy of Enrique Dussel and then apply his concepts in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, most particularly in the Philippine setting. Dussel is a revolutionary thinker who is less known in the English world. He is recognized as a prominent Latin American philosopher and historian, and one of the major figures of “decolonialism” along with fellow Latin American think-tanks, Walter D. Mignolo and Anibal Quijano, also with American sociologist, Immanuel Wallerstein. Decolonialism is a broad area of study that tackles issues of race, ethnicity, gender, and

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<sup>1</sup> I include here a seemingly off-topic reference for this essay but this simple quote above truly express the very core of the message that I want to convey in this paper. This is taken from folk-musician Joey Ayala’s song “Magkaugnay (Ang Lahat ng Bagay)” from the music album *Mga Awit ng Tanod-lupa* released under Universal Records. [The English translation is all mine].

geopolitics. Decolonialism seeks to question the seemingly universal status of the European or Western worldview, hence this growing intellectual movement thus critiques and investigates European epistemic themes and worldviews (Eurocentrism) that dominate in different and various cultures.<sup>2</sup> Dussel was born in Argentina in 1934. He took his undergraduate at Universidad Nacional de Cuyo in Mendoza province. And after receiving his degree in Philosophy, he continued his studies in Spain and in France, extending his interests to Theology, History, and Church History. He obtained his Doctorate in Philosophy at Universidad Complutense de Madrid, one of Spain's top universities, and his Doctorate in History at the prestigious Sorbonne Université in Paris, France. He also learned Hebrew and Arabic during his two-year stint in Palestine and Israel. Dussel is currently a Professor of Philosophy and Ethics in the Philosophy Department of Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (UAM) in México City. He lived as a political exile in Mexico after his escape during a period of military dictatorship in Argentina of which Dussel became a target of the growing political tension and violence, and where a group of right-wing supporters threw a firebomb at his residence. He himself suffered and was a victim of the system of exclusion to which his philosophy heavily criticized.

Dussel's important work on ethics is found in his book "Ethics of Liberation: In the Age of Globalization and Exclusion" published in English in 2013 (originally published in Spanish in 1998). Dussel argued in this book that the underlying aim of all morality and ethical practices is that of liberation, although "liberty" for the rich and of highly developed countries takes on a different meaning, which could refer to the "invisible hand doctrine" and "laissez faire".<sup>3</sup> For oppressed cultures and people,

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<sup>2</sup> See Enrique Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*, trans. Aquilina Martinez and Christine Morkovsky (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1985) 1-9.

<sup>3</sup> The "invisible hand" and "laissez faire" supports the unrestricted "free market" of neoliberalism which for Dussel was an offshoot of European modernity. See Enrique Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation: In the Age of Globalization and Exclusion*, translation edited by Alejandro A. Vallega; trans. Eduardo Mendieta, et al. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013), 358-9.

liberation could mean emancipation from the enslaving world-dominant system of neoliberalism, imperialism, and transnational corporatocracy. Following Karl Marx, Dussel believes that there are dominant discourses of morality, especially the kind of ethics that are associated with the Western and European modernity. For Marx, and as for Dussel, this kind of morality is imposed by the bourgeoisie to the oppressed cultures and peoples, a kind of top-down approach to morality.<sup>4</sup> Dussel's brand of ethics, on the other hand, seeks to liberate the oppressed, the marginalized, the suffering, and the poor from the clutches of the dominant civilization. The ethics of liberation is the ethics from the periphery, which is moving away from the dominant center – the center specifically pertains to the culture of Western and European modernity which is the seat of exploitation resulting from the capitalistic, imperialistic and colonial malpractices.<sup>5</sup> Surprisingly, Dussel finds Marxian socialist philosophy as compatible with Christianity.<sup>6</sup> In fact, Marx's popularly quoted statement on religion, when read on its full context, would really sound sympathetic to religion as the hope for a better world and as an affirmation of the reality of human suffering. It is the last sentence of this popularly quoted paragraph which is often emphasized and taken out of its

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<sup>4</sup> See Menelito Mansueto, "When Society Meets the Individual, Marx *Contra* Nietzsche: Antipodal Views on Society, Morality and Religion," *LUMINA: Interdisciplinary Research Journal of Holy Name University* 22, no. 1, March 2011, 148-51. <<http://lumina.hnu.edu.ph/articles/mansuetoMar11.pdf>>.

<sup>5</sup> Enrique Dussel, "World-System and 'Trans'-Modernity," in *Nepantla: Views from the South* 3.2. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002, 221.

<sup>6</sup> I prefer the term Marxian to distinguish from the highly controversial Marxist philosophy closely associated with Lenin, Stalin and Mao Zedong. Dussel writes, "I belong to the group of thinkers who continue to relate at the beginning of the twenty-first century the theology of liberation to Marx's thought, because I participated (and still participate to this day) in a critical theoretical community that since the late seventies has been rethinking Marx out of other suppositions than those of "Soviet standard Marxism." I think that this Marx liberated of the Stalinist ballast will be the "classic" Marx of the twenty-first century, which is perfectly coherent with the Christian experience....What I encountered was the profound, prophetic coherence of Marx with the critical positions of the prophets of Israel, with Jesus, the founder of Christianity...." For further reading, see Enrique Dussel, *Beyond Philosophy: Ethics, History, Marxism, and Liberation Theology*, ed. Eduardo Mendieta (UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), x.

original context. Marx writes, "Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart (sentiment) of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people".<sup>7</sup> No doubt that in trying moments like the COVID-19 pandemic, the loving arms of God become our absolute refuge and strength, not just for the poor and the oppressed.<sup>8</sup>

Dussel's ethics of liberation challenges the prevailing system of globalization.<sup>9</sup> In highly globalized countries, the bad effect that the neoliberal system has caused is insurmountable. There is prevalent exploitation of the workers in the name of profit, the alienation of the labor force, the instability of the economy in the Third World countries, and the severely massive poverty experienced by its citizens. The relentless logic of capitalism and imperialism founded on profit and power has brought Europe into the concept of modernity. And this modernity has made globalization possible to happen.<sup>10</sup> Marshall McLuhan was right in saying that it is technology which is responsible for globalization to occur, reason for him to call the highly globalized world a "global village," because we could now easily reach out from one continent to another in just a matter of hours.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, SARS-CoV-2, which is the cause of

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<sup>7</sup> Karl Marx, "Introduction" in *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. <<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm>>

<sup>8</sup> See Enrique Dussel, *Ethics and the Theology of Liberation*, trans. Bernard F. McWilliams, C.S.S.R. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1978), 169-70.

<sup>9</sup> See Enrique Dussel and Eduardo Ibarra-Colado, "Globalization, Organization and the Ethics of Liberation," *Organization Articles* Vol. 13 (4), (London, CA and New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2006), 492-93.

<sup>10</sup> See Enrique Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation*, trans. Eduardo Mendieta (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996), 217-18.

<sup>11</sup> "After three thousand years of explosion, by means of fragmentary and mechanical technologies, the Western world is imploding. During the mechanical ages, we had extended our bodies in space. Today, after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned." See Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The extensions of man*. London and New York: Routledge Classics, 1964, 3.

the COVID-19 outbreak, had spread to different continents in just a matter of weeks and days. The highly advanced transportation networks that links countries and continents worldwide made it easier for the virus to travel so fast. For McLuhan, the planet is seemingly “imploding” or shrinking as peoples are drawn near to each other.<sup>12</sup>

I will argue further that the environmental destruction that is happening now on the planet is directly connected to the human transmission of “zoonotic diseases,” in this case, the COVID-19 which is allegedly having originated in bats and snakes. The environmental destruction of animal wildlife that is occurring on the planet is a subsequent effect of modern technologization. Our insatiable hunger and fetishism for newer and the latest electronic gadgets and technologies had brought unprecedented destruction to our planet as the demand for minerals and metals obtained from land-mining has insurmountably increased. Christopher Ryan Maboloc, a socio-political analyst based in Ateneo de Davao University, had quite similar analyses to this phenomenon in his three essays published under *Eubios Journal of Asian and International Bioethics*, which I equally consider, among other interesting authors, namely, Rogelio Bayod, Gerry Arambala, Karl Gaspar, and Fr. Dexter Veloso, as part of my references in this current essay. According to Maboloc, “Consumer culture has an impact because the way people lived has a direct link to the swift spread of the virus. People have lifestyles anchored on materialism. Modern technology and social media now dictate the ways people live. Most of us consume goods without regard for the

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<sup>12</sup> Of course, McLuhan was not exclusively thinking about the transportation technology alone, such as, the navigation and aviation system, but also of the telecommunication system that was available in his time, particularly, the television. It was very unfortunate that McLuhan was not able to witness the dawn of the Internet and the social media technology of this present generation, though he was sort of able to predict a “scientific revolution” of this kind which he called “automation” or “cybernation.” See McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 379.

environment. The environment, in this way, gets back at man for having neglected its intrinsic worth.”<sup>13</sup>

In the succeeding sections, I will narrate my personal observations during the COVID-19 lockdown and offer a philosophical reflection through the lens of Enrique Dussel's philosophy of liberation. I will first discuss my first-hand experience of the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) as well as the reported happenings during the outbreak which occurred globally and nationally, and then subject these events to some philosophical, eco-ethical and theological reflections, particularly through the lens of Dussel's philosophy of liberation, most specifically on his thoughts on Christian ethics and moral theology.

### **Life on an Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ)**

I spent my entire Holy Week and Easter in the year 2020 under the implemented ECQ somewhere in the mainland of Central Luzon whose population was under strict lockdown due to COVID-19 health and safety preventive measures. These underlying circumstances had given me a good opportunity to reflect on eco-spiritual concerns in the light of what was happening in the country. Despite the homestay, religious nourishment and reflections can still be accessed as church services are broadcasted online through television networks and social media sites. It is as if the spiritual nature of reality had triumphed over the material world as the economy had been practically paralyzed due to the imposed lockdown, whereas religious messages and praises are proliferating online, as well

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<sup>13</sup> Maboloc adds that “This pandemic, as a natural disaster, is attributable to man himself. China, being at the heart of a globalized economic order, is linked to every major country, if not all countries, in terms of the goods it sells. With the wealth it is creating, comes the ill consequences of a world that is virtually interconnected.” See Christopher Ryan Maboloc, “Globalization and consumer culture: social costs and political implications of the COVID-19 pandemic,” *Eubios Journal of Asian and International Bioethics*, Vol. 30 (3), April 2020, 77-78; and Aldrin F. Quintero, “Commentary on Maboloc,” *Eubios Journal of Asian and International Bioethics*, Vol. 30 (3), April 2020, 80-81.

as on TV. In the previous years, I usually spend my Easter on expensive resorts somewhere in the provinces, but this year has given me an opportunity to save my allowances. This year could have been the same if only the transportation systems were not suspended. Both the minor transportation such as jeepneys and tricycles and the major transportations such as airlines and ships are strictly banned. Local and international flights from within and from without are prohibited and largely sanctioned. Travel was made impossible within that timeframe beginning March 11, 2020 until May 15, 2020 when the ECQ was moderately lifted after a series of successive extensions. I am very lucky to have been employed at this specific time-period as employers in the private sectors were given a government mandate to release salaries, midterm bonuses and 13<sup>th</sup>-month pay.<sup>14</sup> Unluckily, our brothers and sisters who depend on a daily wage basis, such as, the informal economy and self-employed workers, like small-time entrepreneurs, wet and dry market vendors, as well as the bus and jeepney drivers, had suffered greatly in this eventual crisis due to very limited food supply and of the basic goods and necessities, particularly in this poverty-stricken country, such as, the Philippines. Meanwhile, on the national scale, our country is forced to confront an impoverished public medical healthcare system that was a product of decades of government and citizen's neglect.<sup>15</sup> Hospitals are practically unequipped to address the pandemic due to a lack of trained personnel, as well as the lack of medical resources, such ranging from ventilators, testing kits, hospital beds and wards, medical masks and gloves, personal protective equipment (PPE), and other medical supplies.<sup>16</sup> In what follows, I shall try to

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<sup>14</sup> See Azer Parrocha, "Duterte to employers: Give 13<sup>th</sup>-month pay in advance," *Philippine News Agency*, March 17, 2020. <<https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1096852>>

<sup>15</sup> See Gerry Arambala, "Genetic engineering and social justice: A reflection on Amartya Sen's capability approach," *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics* 2020, 13-14. See also Maboloc, "Globalization," 78-79.

<sup>16</sup> See Rogelio P. Bayod, "Ethics of care and Philippine politics during the COVID-19 outbreak," *Eubios Journal of Asian and International Bioethics*, Vol. 30 (3), April 2020, 70.



breakdown into various categories the different ways in which COVID-19 had inflicted all of us on varying levels.

### **Emotional Distress**

I would like to begin on the psychological aspect by which COVID-19 had bothered us all. One may not need to be physically transmitted with the coronavirus to be bothered by it. But it may have inflicted us all on the psycho-emotional level. The news about the continually increasing number of those infected is enough to worry everyone so much. To have lived in the National Capital Region (NCR) where there is the highest number of infection cases in the Philippines is truly bothersome. This situation alone is enough for everyone to get worried especially with regards to the health and safety of their loved ones, including one's self. Considering that the nature of the infection is viral and contagious, this is truly terrifying and had caused each one to truly stay indoors for fear of the infection, regardless whether it was sanctioned by the government. One is made to choose between staying at home in hunger or staying outside at the risk of the infection. Everyone is in a dilemma between health and economics (in Tagalog, referred to as *buhay o pangkabuhayan*). It was not just a government mandate alone, but it is simultaneously a personal decision to care for oneself and dear loved ones amidst the threat of contamination. This is the same dilemma that our leaders, especially the public sector, need to consider in enforcing and implementing crucial decisions regarding matters of the economy and national interests, such as, in the implementation of lockdowns and travel bans.

Our healthcare professionals who are our front-liners in this battle against COVID-19 are likewise put into doubly stressful situations to care for themselves and for their patients. They put their own life and their family safety at risk in the form of humanitarian sacrifice, though some medical specialists are

offered a promising salary and incentive.<sup>17</sup> Being in this situation, front-liners are also prone to discrimination as people living near them took fear for their own individual safety.<sup>18</sup> Within their own immediate families, they also need to deal with the avoidance of close and intimate contacts with loved ones, especially to the children and elderly.<sup>19</sup> The same is true for the police and military, and other front-liners. Outside and inside the country, racial discrimination on Chinese nationals have proliferated. There was an increasing number of reported cases of discrimination and atrocities towards Chinese nationals, and so as with other Chinese-looking Asians.

Amidst lockdown, emotional anxiety may be dealt with through online guidance counseling. Online psychological consultation is made available by certain groups of people, both public and private entities. The government cannot be relied on in this aspect, as it is nowhere to be found when it comes to the emotional health of its constituents. At present, there is practically an absence of a government agency that caters to the psycho-emotional and the psycho-spiritual well-being of its

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<sup>17</sup> As of May 2020, the count already reaches almost two thousand health workers who are reportedly infected with the coronavirus in the Philippines, and 33 have already died, including 24 doctors and surgeons. "Of the total, 566 are doctors, 638 are nurses, 104 are nursing assistants, 66 are medical technologists, 32 are radiologic technologists, 18 are respiratory technologists, 14 pharmacists, and 237 are other employees of health facilities." See Bonz Magsambol, "PH health workers infected with coronavirus rise to 1,694," *Rappler*, May 01, 2020. <<https://www.rappler.com/nation/259637-health-workers-coronavirus-cases-philippines-may-1-2020?fbclid=IwAR2RzTmy2DKYjntqZuJl6RzFD0AMklOkofRqbxPWiSO7-u05CDanh3zFfb8>>

<sup>18</sup> See Ana P. Santos, "Attacked and underpaid: Medics in Philippines battle stigma, virus," *Al Jazeera News*, April 2, 2020. <<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/04/attacked-underpaid-philippino-nurses-battle-virus-200402010303902.html?fbclid=IwAR1tjkcblI85PQmCEpA-NIPhCxI6xRNn4iS9E-9FOZpgiojRaCQi27C233o>>

<sup>19</sup> See Al Jazeera News English, "Reports of anti-Chinese views in Philippines over coronavirus," *YouTube*, February 4, 2020. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8w61tigk0ag>>

constituents.<sup>20</sup> Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the government had operated a commendable suicide hotline.<sup>21</sup> However, there is a problematic issue of inaccessibility of these hotlines, especially when online counselors are already engaged to a certain caller, there is simply not enough online counselors to attend to the calls and listen to the woes of citizens.

On instances when mental and emotional needs could no longer be handled or addressed over the phone, the concerns must be raised to the barangay officials for immediate response. For minor problems, such as boredom, sleeplessness or insomnia, and other emotional irritation can best be addressed by turning your attention to rather more productive activities inside the house like physical exercises and yoga, or other creative activities and/or spiritual meditation, and spend personal and intimate interaction with family members such as doing the household chores together. Donating an amount through charity organizations could be another way to ease and lighten up the burden. On instances and moments like this, an intimate relationship with God and oneself can truly help to bring a person a peace of mind. Spiritual meditation is even more powerful within the ambiance of a natural environment and a resource-rich ecosystem. Thus, as stewards of God's creation, it is also a human call to care, nurture and protect the natural environment. Similarly, in Dussel's liberation ethics and liberation theology, every human being is called for to commune with one another, to help ease the suffering of another, and most

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<sup>20</sup> See Rogelio P. Bayod, "Recognitive and redistributive claims in COVID-19 Outbreak," *Eubios Journal of Asian and International Bioethics*, Vol. 30 (4), May 2020, 140-41.

<sup>21</sup> I am referring to Hopeline Philippines, a mental health service agency formerly subsidized by the Department of Health (DoH) to offer a 24/7 suicide prevention hotline. However, upon the signing of Mental Health Law in 2019, the agency was turned over to a non-government sector (NGO) for funding. The Hopeline Project's hotlines can be reached at (02) 804-HOPE (4673), 0917-558-HOPE (4673), and 2919 (toll-free number for all Globe and TM subscribers). See Elijah Allen Macaspac, "DOH withdraws support to Hopeline after launching national crisis hotline," *Rappler.com*, June 27, 2019. <<https://www.rappler.com/move-ph/233994-doh-withdraws-support-hopeline-crisis-helpline>>.

especially, those in dire need of help – the oppressed, the poor and marginalized.<sup>22</sup>

### **Too Sudden or Abrupt Implementation**

The implementation of the ECQ was rather too sudden and abrupt lacking real physical and mental preparation from the individuals, private corporations, including the government sector. The Department of Health (DOH) was too lax and confident that it can handle the outbreak, reason that a lockdown or travel ban, and other restrictions was not initially been thought of, nor immediately recommended to the president. There was a refusal to believe in the enormosity of the problem. Our disaster preparations were crippled from this unknown and invisible enemy which has no known cure and which vaccines are yet to be discovered. From these underlying reasons, the enforced ECQ resulted to an immediate panic buying of alcohol disinfectants and sanitizers, face masks, and various supermarket goods. The very limited supply of goods has contributed to the anxiety of our citizens. But understandably, considering that time is of the essence in the decision-making, the abrupt or sudden implementation of the lockdown has become an undesired necessary action.

The timeline of events leading to the global spread of the virus would show that there was ample time to prepare and prevent the spread of the virus had only been our primary gates were locked earlier ahead. The Philippine president was not able to realize early on the peril that was about to come. Similarly, in the United States, the government was also heavily criticized for the late imposition of safety measures against the virus. For instance, the fierce critic of the US government, Noam Chomsky, lambasted US president Trump for his negligence citing that the Chinese government had already given a stern warning to the world by releasing to the World Health Organization (WHO) a

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<sup>22</sup> See Enrique Dussel, *Ethics and Community*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988), 7.

study conducted by Chinese scientists concerning the nature of the new coronavirus as early as the first week of January, but the US president mediocly responded by playing golf and instead continuing to defund many major US health services, such as the USAID Project.<sup>23</sup> The USAID Project is a scientific community that particularly takes charge in the identification and prevention of the spread of different viruses all around the globe, including China. Chomsky added that a potential global coronavirus pandemic like this one had already been insinuated about 18 years ago during the first SARS outbreak in 2002, but pharmaceutical companies and drug laboratories did not pay attention and instead were only interested in profits, thus focuses its endeavors on creating facial and body creams rather than finding a vaccine. Chomsky also noted that the US patents of most vaccines discourage many scientists to venture on such direction. He thus refers to patenting as a “neoliberal plague.” Similarly, Christopher Ryan Maboloc questioned the restrictive protocols of patenting as it prevented poor countries from manufacturing the drug or vaccines. Maboloc believes that future vaccines should be made accessible to the most vulnerable poor and the disabled.<sup>24</sup> In the same vein, Dussel consistently criticized the capitalistic and profit-oriented tendencies of what he termed as ‘trans’-modernity, which was originally founded on Western culture, and which resulted to the suffering and exploitation of the poor people in the periphery and the Third World.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Al Jazeera News, “Noam Chomsky: ‘Coronavirus pandemic could have been prevented,” *Al Jazeera News*, April 3, 2020. <<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/04/noam-chomsky-coronavirus-pandemic-prevented-200403113823259.html>>.

<sup>24</sup> Al Jazeera News, *ibid.* See also Maboloc, “Globalization,” 79. See also, Christopher Ryan Maboloc, “Who is the most vulnerable during a pandemic? The social model of disability and the COVID-19 crisis,” *Eubios Journal of Asian and International Bioethics* 30 (4), May 2020, 159.

<sup>25</sup> See Enrique Dussel, “World-System and ‘Trans’-Modernity,” in *Nepantla: Views from the South* 3.2. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002, 221-244.

## **The Vulnerability of Various Sectors**

If ever I will be asked to give a name to coronavirus, I would not name it as such. Corona is a term that suggests a majesty or royalty as it refers to a crown. Coronavirus does not deserve its name. It was named as such because of its club-shaped projections, like spikes. But these protein spikes meant death and suffering, like the thorny spikes in Jesus' head at the crucifixion. As of this writing, the death toll of COVID-19 casualties in the Philippines had surpassed 800, and the total number of infected cases is over 12,000 nationwide, mostly in Metro Manila and Cebu City. Being infected with SARS-CoV-2 would automatically put one into a life-and-death situation, and a potential carrier of the virus to subsequently infect many others. Lying on the hospital bed truly feels like crucifixion. Alone and isolated from immediate family and relatives. However, some people bravely ignored the risk of getting infected just to take care and to be with a close family member or partner. Parents will surely care for their children; sons and daughters for their parents. However, some others will despise you for fear of contamination. Truly, the pandemic is a time to be brave and to become a hero for another.

More so, the suffering will be intensified if we happen to lack all the means to survive. Due to the increasing number of infected cases, hospitals need to deal with infected patients simultaneously. Hence, they will need to utilize and exhaust all available resources. And due to limited availability of resources and personnel, there is a tendency for hospitals to attend only those who have a high chance of survival. Since refusing infected patients is illegal, they resort to being selective in order not to waste hospital resources. They might have known that this is wrong, but they do not have any choice. Some hospitals refused accepting patients even at a critical stage situation, most particularly when a patient is unable to give a down-payment. They resort to using the COVID-19 predicament as an excuse, citing the non-availability of hospital wards or rooms due to the

rising number of COVID-19 infections.<sup>26</sup> It would be a lot more difficult for hospitals to treat many patients all at once. The more people getting infected, the harder it is for hospitals to treat the patients. Even richer countries suffer from this dilemma as they run out of medical resources. Some of the hospital personnel also succumb to the disease by getting infected and due to fatigue after a 12-hour shift. We cannot afford to imagine the fate of the less fortunate and the less privileged. COVID-19 pandemic is truly a global catastrophe equivalent to a World War, though this time the battlefield is in the isolation wards. If well-off people have suffered from anxiety and stress from the community quarantine, how much more the less fortunate members of the Philippine society, with the very limited financial capacity for being a developing country, particularly its urban poor who have nothing at all, not even food and shelter, not even the immediate and basic necessities of life.

The strictly implemented ECQ and physical distancing will have no impact to the urban poor who are mostly known for being “illegal settlers” on restricted squatter areas.<sup>27</sup> Most of these houses are made of used materials that accommodate families more than it can allow. This highly constricted environment yields them even more prone to the risk of contagion. What is even more appalling is the situation in jails.<sup>28</sup> At the course of ECQ implementation, those found in violation of the protocols are brought to sleep in the prison cells, yielding

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<sup>26</sup> See Llanesca T. Panti, “CHR: No justification for hospitals turning away patients,” GMA News Online, April 29, 2020. <<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/736139/no-justification-for-hospitals-turning-away-patients/story/>>

<sup>27</sup> See Marlon Patrick P. Lofredo, “Social Cohesion, Trust, and Government Action Against Pandemics,” *Eubios Journal of Asian and International Bioethics*, Vol. 30 (4), May 2020, 183.

<sup>28</sup> See Menelito P. Mansueto, “Dance Music and Creative Resilience within Prison Walls: Revisiting Cebu’s Dancing Prisoners,” *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy*, Vol. 5 (2), October 2019, 146-47. See also SCMP, “Over 100 inmates infected in coronavirus outbreak at jail in Cebu, Philippines,” *South China Morning Post*, April 22, 2020. <<https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/3081130/over-100-inmates-infected-coronavirus-outbreak-jail-cebu>>

many prisoners exposed to possible transmission of the virus.<sup>29</sup> Quarantine is a luxury for the rich but living hell for the poor and informal settlers.<sup>30</sup> In the US, rich businessmen spent their quarantine on luxurious pods, bunkers, mansions and hotels.<sup>31</sup>

It is of no surprise that the areas with a very high number of infected cases come from the urban and commercial regions, mostly populous cities, such as, Wuhan in China and New York in the U.S. With the urban lifestyle where you can find people constricted in the cafés, in the lobby of hotels and casinos, in the elevator of high rise condominiums, in the malls and disco pubs, it is very likely that from here you can acquire the deadly virus. Part of the ECQ implementation in the Philippines is the compulsory requirement that each family should have strictly only one person allowed to go outside the household to buy the necessities through strict monitoring of gate passes issued by each barangay. They impose this thru the issuance of color-coded gate passes, comparable to the odd-even scheme used for vehicles on regular dyas, that allows the bearer to buy groceries at a certain period or interval. The situation in urban places is very different from the rural areas, where there is fresh natural air with very spacious housing. In the province, anyone can survive by utilizing the garden in their backyards, an activity that cannot be done on cemented pavements; whereas in the cities, one will really need to go out to the supermarkets to buy the goods. Or maybe, in the province, one can spend a quarantine on the edge of a very thick forest of naturally meditative green trees where there is unlimited access to clean air and oxygen, or breathing the summer breeze on a white sand

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<sup>29</sup> HRW, "Philippines: Reduce Crowded Jails to Stop COVID-19, Release Low-Level Offenders; Prioritize Older and Ill Prisoners," *Human Rights Watch*, April 6, 2020. <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/06/philippines-reduce-crowded-jails-stop-covid-19>>

<sup>30</sup> See Rina Chandran, "From luxury hotels to camps, coronavirus quarantine varies across Asia," *The Jakarta Post*, April 1, 2020. <<https://www.thejakartapost.com/seasia/2020/04/01/from-luxury-hotels-to-camps-coronavirus-quarantine-varies-across-asia.html>>

<sup>31</sup> See Alanna Schubach, "The luxury bunkers super-rich survivalists buy for doomsday," *New York Post*, March 27, 2020. <<https://nypost.com/2020/03/27/the-luxury-bunkers-super-rich-survivalists-buy-for-doomsday/>>



beachfront, and whose companions are fireflies in the night and butterflies in the day that are very less likely to infect anyone with SARS-CoV-2.

The destruction of the environment is directly connected to the transmission of the virus from non-human animals to humans. Forcing animals out of their natural habitat will most likely cause them to be visible to humans and become easy prey for hunting. Human beings are intentionally destroying the animal habitat through excavation of mountains, mining and deforestation.<sup>32</sup> Taking care of the environment could also mean improving the quality of human health, not just biodiversity alone. Humans are certainly part of this natural ecosystem, so it goes back to us being affected by our own neglect of the environment. Many animal species are being threatened to become extinct. The more species there are out there, the safer we are from contamination. Wildlife animals have their own natural antibodies that can kill viruses before it can spread to humans. Healthier biodiversity prevents the spread of pathogens (virus or bacterium) thus it protects us humans from contamination of animal diseases.<sup>33</sup> According to a study, in every quarter of the year, a new infectious disease emerges in humans, and 74% of these diseases are transmitted from animals to humans, so-called "zoonotic diseases," like the infectious COVID-19. Hence, growing illegal animals from the wild to your own homes can be extremely dangerous to human health. Certainly, it is deforestation which made possible the contact of many wild animals to humans due to the destruction of their natural environment. On the other hand, animal breeding in bigger farms can also be another possible source of human transmission, allowing animal viruses to mutate in a form that could infect and harm humans.

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<sup>32</sup> See Christopher Ryan Maboloc, "Liberal environmentalism and global climate justice," *Eubios Journal of Asian and International Bioethics* 30 (3), March 2020, 55.

<sup>33</sup> See Richard S. Ostfest, "Biodiversity loss and the ecology of infectious disease," *The Lancet Planetary Health Journal*, Vol. 1 (1), E2-E3, April 1, 2017. <[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196\(17\)30010-4/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196(17)30010-4/fulltext)>

For these reasons, it is an ethical imperative that we humans should take care of the natural ecosystem. And not only that, a meaningful spirituality should also include taking care of God's creation, particularly the planet Earth which is our common home. Pope Francis's social encyclical *Laudato Si* expresses this similar point.<sup>34</sup> More so, the medieval theologian-philosopher Thomas Aquinas sees the wonderful universe, including the natural ecosystem, as a manifestation of God's constant and immanent presence in his creation. Dussel particularly blames the neglect of the environment to the neoliberal globalization preceded by the exploitation of the natural resources as influenced by Western modernity. Dussel's message is clear, there is a need to return the land resources to the original inhabitants of these lands – namely, to the ethnic groups and indigenous peoples – such as, the Amazons of Latin Americas and the Lumad peoples of Mindanao.<sup>35</sup>

### **Political Expediency**

The COVID-19 global pandemic is a very tough situation for the president to deal with. It can somehow be understood why there was a seemingly reluctance or hesitation to impose a lockdown as it can hugely affect the national economy in unimaginable ways. Being a close ally of China is one thing, but more than that the Chinese nationals are the second top visitors of the Philippine tourism industry, next to South Korea. Blocking the gateways could also mean preventing OFWs from returning to their homes, as well as for tourists being trapped from their destinations as hotels and resorts will also be closed. Our OFWs are huge contributors to the national economy as well through

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<sup>34</sup> See Fr. Dexter C. Veloso, "Caring for our Common Home: Examining Ethical Paradigms for the Environment," *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy*, Vol. 5 (2), October 2019, 18.

<sup>35</sup> See David Martin-Jones, "Trolls, Tigers and Transmodern Ecological Encounters: Enrique Dussel and a Cine-ethics for the Anthropocene," *Film-Philosophy* 20 (2016), 67. See also Rogelio P. Bayod, "Communing with Mother Earth: Indigenous Way to Care and Manage the Ecosystem," *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy*, Vol. 6 (1), April 2020, 75.

their OFW remittances. With the economy being paralyzed worldwide due to the continuing lockdown amidst the virus threat, more OFWs would eventually end up going back to the country after losing a stable job. Government revenue will also decline in the absence of business operations due to the continuing lockdown. In the local economy, many also would eventually end up losing jobs as the market will need to recover. Due to the absence of operations, many businesses lose potential income particularly on spoiled consumable goods and expired stocks.

The problematic situation in the country is aggravated by the protests and the negative thinking of those from the political left and the administrative opposition. However, good humanitarian people and philanthropists also came out to help by organizing donation drives and campaigns. Some took advantage by hoarding products and selling it above the average price. Many others took advantage of gaining popularity in social media especially politicians who are hoping to gain leverage for an early electoral campaign. For example, the former senatorial candidate Jose Manuel Diokno who publicized unsolicited and untimely comments with regards to some human rights concerns on the ECQ implementation.<sup>36</sup> Also, the defunct Filipina singer Mystica who was known for her relentless attacks addressed to the president was later exposed by a fellow vlogger to have been using her Duterte antics only to gain a high viewership in social media platform, and subsequently earn financial benefit from such bewilderment.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> See Catherine S. Valente, "Duterte accuses Diokno, opposition, of black propaganda," *The Manila Times*, April 4, 2020. <<https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/04/04/news/latest-stories/duterte-accuses-diokno-opposition-of-black-propaganda/709573/>>

<sup>37</sup> See Joe Saballa, "Mystica breaks into tears as she apologizes to President Duterte," KAMI, April 13, 2020. <<https://www.msn.com/en-ph/entertainment/celebrity/mystica-breaks-into-tears-as-she-apologizes-to-president-duterte/ar-BB12yicy>>

## Globalization and Eurocentric Modernity

At this point, we shall now turn to the second half of this essay which shall tackle the philosophy of Enrique Dussel. The philosophy of liberation is primarily a protest on the status of human life that is hugely dominated by the logic of exploitation both in the political economy of the state and in the politics of the society that resulted to oppressive human exclusions and marginalization. For Dussel, it is the concept of modern capitalism brought about by Western imperialism as propagated by European modernity which is the root cause of this social ill. At the peak of modernity, so-called European civilizations, such as, the Spaniards, the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the Englishmen (The West) pushed for conquest on countries on Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin Americas (The Global Periphery) and subjugated its people, land and its natural resources which financed the Industrial Revolution. For Dussel, this is the birth and origin of globalization which was the root cause of all the technological domination, of capitalism and of global imperialism.<sup>38</sup>

In the Philippines, indeed, there is something wrong in the way we push for progress, development and nationalism. We encouraged people to work abroad outside of the country (hence, we push for the use of English, in lieu of the native dialect and mother tongue), and even to the extent of having them serve as slaves to other nationals. We do not rather encourage them of productive activity back in the province, such as responsible farming, animal agriculture and aquaculture. People would less likely think of remaining to stay, for example, in the naturally resource-rich Mindanao, or in any province, and prefer instead to go to Manila to have a photo for Instagram at the fake Venice river at BGC, Taguig with its chlorinated water where there is barely any fish at all. There are a lot of insensibility and insanity going on that globalization has brought

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<sup>38</sup> See Enrique Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of "the Other" and the Myth of Modernity*, trans. Michael D. Barber (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1995), 19-21.

to us. We desire for lonely tall buildings and sky-crappers, instead of real cooperative community spirit in the villages. We replaced the rich fertile soil and forests with cemented pavements, and that made mankind even more hungry, much worst is to excavate the mountains for golds, silver and other minerals to be used as raw materials for technologies that gave us pornography, or technologies that made our children indifferent, lazy and antisocial for playing only cyber and mobile games. Our ethnic folks and natural inhabitants in certain areas such as ancestral domains are even dispersed, displaced, and assassinated for this greedy land grab. The European civilization that was introduced to us has brought us more into peril than good.<sup>39</sup> We pushed for the method of awarding land titles to individuals, instead of to the entire community or villages. This method has only created more gaps and widens the economic divide. Greed and the overproduction of food for the purposes of profit, money and surplus is what is killing this world and its natural environment. Westerners hypocritically brought us this "opium" which is religion because at the same time when they introduced and enforced this "opium," they also gave us catastrophic invasion and suffering, and endless misery and pain which they themselves have caused us as they plunder our rich natural resources. Marx was certainly correct in saying that "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world."<sup>40</sup> I believed that these very rich religious missionary congregations who are the descendants of the Spanish friars in the Philippines should be the ones to initiate in the return of stolen lands, which they still owned up to now, to the poor and landless farming communities. And up to now, many of these farmers continued to till the land which they do not own.

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<sup>39</sup> See Rogelio Bayod, "The Future of the Environment and the Indigenous Peoples of the Philippines under the Duterte Administration," *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy*, Special Issue, December 2018, 232.

<sup>40</sup> Karl Marx, "Introduction" in *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. <<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm>>

Meanwhile, there has something to be done to decongest Metro Manila and improve its overpopulated cities, polluted atmospheric condition, seafront and rivers full of garbage and chemical waste, the highly congested highways and high-rise quake-danger zones, God forbid not! Locally, we need also to battle against our own demons that plagues this country. For instance, there is a pervasive Manila-centered approach to development that shows an underlying bias on the affairs of the national periphery, most particularly on the underdeveloped Mindanao, which is the home of the Muslim south and the Lumad peoples. There has been a century-old "Manilacentrism" that pervades giving unequal development in different parts of the country regardless of its huge contribution in the national coffer. If ever the COVID-19 pandemonium would reach the unequipped and low-budgeted hospitals in the remote provinces, God forbid not! It would really be a total disaster.

Encouraging more investments in the provinces could also help decongest Metro Manila as more job openings and opportunities will be available for the citizens away from the national center. This is also in line with the president's call for a federal shift in the government which aims to develop the provinces that had been neglected by the national government for years. After the gradual lift of the quarantine, the provinces where there are only a few cases of COVID-19 transmissions that have been recorded could be a better place to recover from this pandemic.<sup>41</sup>

## **Dussel's Ethics of Liberation**

Dussel traces the history of dominant morality from the history of the modern colonial world which was founded on Western exceptionalism, racial discrimination, sexism, patriarchy and gender discrimination, and the power difference

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<sup>41</sup> In line with this, President Duterte signed Executive Order No. 114, known as, *Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pag-asa Program* (Return to the Province, New Hope Program) which aim to enhance robust and sustainable development in the regions and improve the quality of human life in the rural countryside..

of societies in Europe, and which was extended over to their power objects – the peripheral colonized world. Side by side with the oppressive nature of colonialism, capitalism, and imperialism, Dussel, following Walter D. Mignolo, also takes account into his ethics of liberation the historical distribution of power in what he refers to as "geopolitics."<sup>42</sup> Thus, this new ethics of liberation arises out from its own geopolitics in the world of the oppressed and the marginalized, most particularly in the peripheral colonized world. Hence, for Dussel, geopolitics is an ethical, economic and political issue. Dussel writes, "My purpose is to lay the basis for new horizons of strategic and tactical reasoning grounded in the metaethics of liberation. These reflect complex processes of articulation among the victimized billions of the world system...." Hence, Latin America, as well as Africa and Southeast Asia, being in the periphery in the history of power distribution given by the Modern "world-system" has in turn become a new "privileged" site of 'reason' of the new ethics of liberation. Thus, on this account, Dussel charges the History of Western Philosophy as being highly "Eurocentric" from its initial stage of Hellenistic origin (Hellenocentrism) up to the German Idealism of Hegel, and even to the Frankfurt School Tradition of Critical Theory.

Dussel took the challenge of creating a new narrative of emancipation from what he refers to as the "crisis of Modernity" whose grand emancipatory narratives ignore the suffering of the peripheral world that sits only as mere "spectators" rather than as potential agents of transformation. It is therefore the negation of western modernity which will give way to the possibility of a new ethics of liberation. Thus, Dussel transfers the locus of the struggle to the "victim/s" (the "other") of oppression brought by the Modern "world-system." The "victim" is outside of the system, the transformation could not come from the inside of the oppressive system, but from the "outside" against the system. Here, it is good to note at this point that Dussel's formulation of

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<sup>42</sup> See Walter D. Mignolo, "The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 101 (1), Duke University Press, Winter 2002, 64-66.

an ethics of liberation is not the formalistic kind, but instead of a materialistic interpretation of morality. Formal ethics is the characteristic of the dominant morality of the bourgeoisie, a top-down approach to ethics. Dussel's ethics of liberation is the ethics from below, the ethics from the periphery, the ethics of the oppressed and the suffering. For Dussel, it is life, instead of reason, which is the better foundation of ethical value. In the personal level, the ethics of liberation invites the moral subject to feel and embrace the struggle, the pain and suffering of the oppressed creature, the peripheral "other." It invites us to encounter the outcast, the excluded, the stranger, the poor, those whose lives are in the peripheries, and who lived on dire and desperate conditions – to empathize with the "other."

### **Dussel's Theology of Liberation**

The theology of liberation finds a biblical support in the words of St. Luke, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he had anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he had sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised...."<sup>43</sup> For Dussel, Jesus represents as the symbol of the "other" – Jesus was the poor, the excluded, the stranger. Jesus is the symbol of human suffering and a victim of exclusion. But at the same time, Jesus also represents the hope of the poor and the oppressed. Jesus was the poor who took care and showed compassion to the poor brethren. Jesus is the broken, bruised, and wounded healer and deliverer. He truly understands human suffering because Jesus himself was a victim.<sup>44</sup> With these concepts, Dussel embraces Christian Marxism in its twofold communistic and religious sense.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Luke 4:18, King James Version.

<sup>44</sup> For Dussel's religious thoughts and reflections on Jesus as the "bread of life for the poor," see Enrique Dussel, "The Bread of the Eucharist Celebration as a Sign of Justice in the Community," in Dussel, *Beyond Philosophy*, 44-45.

<sup>45</sup> See Dussel, *Ethics and Community*, 47.



For Father Gustavo Gutierrez, another liberation theologian whom Dussel has closely followed, liberation is identified with salvation from sin, and salvation refers to the twofold “communion of men with God” and the “communion of men among themselves.”<sup>46</sup> So anything that would estrange man away from this twofold relation towards God and towards fellowmen is a form of alienation from God, from others, and from oneself.<sup>47</sup> Hence, any form of domination that alienates man from himself, from God, and from others is a form of exploitation and sin, and the only way to liberate from such bondage to sin is to restore faith and communion with God and with fellowmen, particularly with the poor, the oppressed, and the exploited.<sup>48</sup> The concept of alienation as a form of exploitation and sin was drawn from Marx’s critique of the capitalist mode of production that resulted to the social estrangement (*entfremdung*) of the worker from his own self, from others, and from his own humanity.<sup>49</sup> Thus, communion and human fellowship is necessary to overcome this social estrangement.

### **Bayanihan amidst COVID-19 pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic that reached the Philippines has allowed us to see our faith in humanity restored by the golden hearts of Filipinos who put into priority the welfare of others thru the spirit of cooperation, love, and camaraderie by caring and sharing for the other in the distribution of relief goods and

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<sup>46</sup> See Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, ed. and trans. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1973), 149.

<sup>47</sup> See Enrique Dussel, *Towards an Unknown Marx: A commentary on the Manuscripts of 1861-63*, trans. Yolanda Angulo, ed. Fred Moseley (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 23-30.

<sup>48</sup> See Gustavo Gutierrez, “Eucharist and Human Fellowship,” in Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 148-261.

<sup>49</sup> See “Estranged Labor” from the First Manuscript in Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. Martin Milligan. <<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Economic-Philosophic-Manuscripts-1844.pdf>>

other needs. Aside from the public sector, many private individuals took their initiative to help and contribute in the alleviation of hunger and the providence of the immediate needs, such as giving milk and diapers for infants, medicine for the elderly, and free food and transport to medical frontlines. A noteworthy example are those people who refused to receive the basic goods and necessities allotted for them just to give priority for others who are in most need due to dire poverty.<sup>50</sup> In truth, the majority of the Filipinos are kind and generous. We have seen this several times in moments of catastrophe and disaster in which Filipinos are united in cooperative heroism (*bayanihan*) for others. In the call for national solidarity the government policy addressing the COVID-19 pandemic was titled as “Bayanihan to Heal as One Act.”<sup>51</sup> The Filipino spirit of the “bayanihan” perfectly portrays the Christian fellowship that Dussel wanted us to imbibe, a selfless compassion and dedication to the welfare of others, particularly, the poor, the oppressed, the vulnerable, and the needy.

### Overcoming the Political and Colonial Subconscious

Here in the Philippines, there are many naysayers even though the government is doing its best to address the needs of its citizens. We choose to focus on the negative things rather than showing appreciation for the blessings that we have received. We need to begin the “decolonization” within our very own selves. We need to transform the world by believing in our potentials. We need to stop degrading our own capabilities. We

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<sup>50</sup> One example is the municipality of Sadanga in Mountain Province where, at the peak of the lockdown, and as one community thru their mayor, they decided to rely on their own ethnic tradition where the “kadangyan” (those who are in a better situation having economic surpluses) would take care of the “kailyan” (kins and neighbors in need). So, the *kadangyans* in each barangay opened their *agamangs* (rice granaries) for the entire village. See Felisa Daskeo, “Igorots Coping Amidst COVID-19,” *The Igorot Digest*, April 7, 2020. [https://theigorotdigest.blogspot.com/2020/04/why-igorots-could-survive-crisis.html?m=1&fbclid=IwAR3WiGZTMzqNQkpa6VG7NQIcqZ8JKwHH3KSx1t4EEG3MMUKkxzb\\_GooErMA](https://theigorotdigest.blogspot.com/2020/04/why-igorots-could-survive-crisis.html?m=1&fbclid=IwAR3WiGZTMzqNQkpa6VG7NQIcqZ8JKwHH3KSx1t4EEG3MMUKkxzb_GooErMA)

<sup>51</sup> Republic Act No. 11469.

need to think and work as one community, as one people despite political differences. Bro. Karl M. Gaspar, for example, has shown several character traits of ethnic leaders or chieftains based from different Lumad communities of upland territories in Mindanao.<sup>52</sup> We Filipinos can learn that we have lots of positive traits worthy of emulation. We should learn to appreciate each other and stop the "crab mentality."

Our education system in the Philippines is very much patterned to the Western way of life. Every parent would want their children to be a good conversationalist in English, neglecting the relevance of our mother tongue which is the language of our ancestors and elderly folks. For this reason, it creates a huge gap in the transition of traditional communal values towards our children. Sad to see that most of us neglect to value our own unique traits and have focused instead on our material possessions. We neglect to value the social history of our own peoples, and their heroic lives. Thus, if we are going to use the Western lens in evaluating the state of philosophy in the Philippines, for example, we fall short to the criteria because we are using a different foreign standard to another paradigm or to another group of people who have a different set of social history, culture and colorful traditions.<sup>53</sup> Our education system in the Philippines is not only Eurocentric, but it is also "Manilacentric," for there is an utter disregard, for example, of the environmental knowledge-systems and value-systems of the peripheries, such as, the worldviews of the Igorot, the Mangyan, the Aeta, the Lumad, the Badjao, the Eskaya, the Maranao, the Tausug, among many other ethnic minorities in the Philippines. There is a looming danger for philosophical inquiry to be reduced merely as an intellectual exercise and a highly professional too formalistic and academic activity, rather than as a lived and shared meaningful experience of the Filipino people,

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<sup>52</sup> See Karl Gaspar, "An Attempt at Dissecting the Presidency of Rodrigo Roa Duterte: A Very Personal View," *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy*, Special Issue, December 2018, 4-8.

<sup>53</sup> See Emerita S. Quito, *The State of Philosophy in the Philippines* (Manila: De La Salle University Research Center, 1983.) 12-14.

whose communal life and traditions are filled with lots of sentimental and historical value. Philippine education must show compassion to the destitute and the marginalized, particularly, our indigenous peoples who are deprived of formal education as evident in the deliberate absence of educational and learning institutions in the remote mountains and barangays, as capitalist exploiters would prefer that ethnic groups would be illiterate and unable to defend for their rights. We demand therefore an all-inclusive treatment of academic learning in the Philippine higher educational systems and institutions.

The COVID-19 pandemic had served as a catalyst for reflection of our capabilities as one nation as we face for the major changes of our usual ways and embrace the new normal as we move on with our social lives. Human beings are wired to survived, we can surpass this pandemic as we have surpassed many trials and challenges as a nation before. It has been in the neuropsychology of the human brain that we are built to survived. We need more social connectivity at this juncture, physically distant but not necessarily “socially.” The more that we need each other for support at this moment of crises. There is a bigger social responsibility to reach out to others. We must not confine ourselves to our own inadequacies but realize the great things we can do for another. We must learn to be positive to restore our sanity and survive this pandemic. We need to show compassion to the less fortunate people and “most vulnerable” sector of the Philippine society.<sup>54</sup> We need to help even without the presence of a camera and the publicity of social media.

## **Conclusion**

Reflecting on the philosophy of liberation of Enrique Dussel, the paper looks at the COVID-19 global pandemic as a crisis of culture and civilization on its bigger and wider outlook.

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<sup>54</sup> See Maboloc, “Who is the most vulnerable in a pandemic?” 160.

For Dussel, and as for Maboloc, the “crises of modernity” is brought forward by the phenomenon of globalization through the irresponsible thrust on modern technologization. Through this pandemic, which is both a national and a global crises, brought about by the phenomenon of the COVID-19 disease, it was shown that the highly capitalistic, imperialistic, individualistic and neoliberal economic and political model patterned from the Western civilization is found a massive failure to address the global pandemic. This same model is aloof to the plight of peripheral countries, such as the highly terrorized countries in the Middle East, poverty-stricken countries of the Latin Americas, Africa, and Southeast Asia. To surpass this pandemic, there is a need to nurture our spirit of camaraderie as one people, one human race. Therefore, we need to take care and value the planet Earth. We all live in just one and the same planet despite our different skin colors and personality. There is also a need to reach out especially to the most vulnerable in spirit – the poor, the sick, the elderly, the neglected, the abandoned, the marginalized. Above all, we need to conscientize the wealthy owners of businesses and investors of corporations to recognize the value of the environment and to put the people’s safety and prosperity as their top priority, and make them realize to give importance on the welfare of their consumers as well as of their own employees. Also, to develop reforms that prioritize the value of the whole community above the interests of the few elites and opportunists. Hence, the paper examines the Philippine social reality and suggests some important factors that need to be reconsidered in our task to recover from the social effects of globalization and modernization to the most-treasured values of human civilization.<sup>55</sup> The pandemic has made us realize that there is a

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<sup>55</sup> I owe these philosophical reflections very greatly from my colleagues in Letran-Manila, namely, Mr. Moises Jusoy and Mr. Jerry Imbong, who introduced to me the thoughts and moral theology of Enrique Dussel, particularly his concept of Christian ethics. I am very glad to have known these revolutionary comrades from the political left who are very humble and dedicated fellows, and who exerted so much effort to liberate our countrymen from the social and political bondage and injustices that plagued our society. Shalom to all social revolutionaries! Special thanks to

dire need of a different economic model, one that is even more caring, communal and humanistic, and recognizes the value of each and every individual human being, and recognizes the vulnerability of the sensitive planet.

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