REASONING AS ENGAGEMENT IN FAITHS

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ABSTRACT

Beliefs are founded upon the ultimate being as an ultimate cause or principle. Some claim that the ultimate being, God, emanates itself into many, other claims that God created the world out of nothing. Whatever one believes in, one thing is clear : the ultimate being reveals itself in a spatio-temporal world; in a heterogeneous and not in a homogeneous world. The consequence is : revelation is not only one. There are many different communities with their respective faiths. However, many are not aware of the contingency of their faith. They are trapped into absolutism and try to mold the world into the emporium of their true faith. Blinded by their isolated faith, some use any means necessary, including violence, to attain the highest ideal. The reasoning behind such attitude is

the instrumental form of reasoning combined with a high dose of encapsulated faith. This article explores the relation between faith, way of life, values and what kind of reasoning is appropriate in a world of multiple faiths.

Key Words:

•Religion •Faith •God Revelation Reasoning •Multiplicity •Contingency.

1. Faith and pluralism

1.1 What is faith?

What is really meant by the word 'faith'? If I say that I believe in God is it the same when I say that I believe that there are two molecules of hydrogen and one molecule oxygen in water? Is faith the same as a scientific belief? Roger Trigg denies such a connection in his book *Reason and Commitment.*[1] He claims that a scientific belief is a detached belief. Meanwhile, religious belief or faith is a committed belief. This means that religious belief is always followed by a commitment to action. It is a living belief, not just belief that is supported by reliable evidences.

Wittgenstein says that religious belief is not a belief in religious propositions. A proposition can be judged as true or false by reason in accordance to some objective measure. It has an epistemological content. However, religious belief does not have an epistemological content. It only has axiological content. It is nonsense to talk in terms of true or false concerning our religious beliefs. The only way to adjudicate between different religious beliefs is to adopt one and discard the others. A religious commitment does not entail a belief that certain things are true. A different religious belief has its own constituting and regulating rules. This means

that each provides its own criteria of truth, and it is impossible to stand outside to adjudicate between the different faiths.

Wittgenstein argument leaves us with a question concerning the role of reason in faith. If each faith has only practical impact and cannot be adjudicated independently from its conceptual scheme, reason is permanently prohibited to enter the realm of faith. The problem, nowadays, is that we witness the emergence of religious sects. If we cannot adjudicate reasonably, what can we say about a religious sect that endorses mass suicide as a welcoming ritual for the apocalypse? We need to assume that religious belief must have some propositional content that can be adjudicated rationally.

What is the nature of religious content? Is it metaphysical? People in worldly activities usually do not argue about the metaphysical component of their faith. Confucianism puts high value on filial relation, whether Buddhism can disregard it in expense of enlightenment. I believe the nature of religious propositional content is much more axiological than metaphysical. Since our understanding of the divine is always associated with some values that we must express devotedly. Hans Frei says in *Faith and Ethics* that religious knowledge has been shown (i.e by empirical theology) to be unique and this uniqueness has been shown to be due to the fact that it is a type of value knowledge or valuation – as indeed all knowledge probably is.[2]

Roger Trigg also says that faith is always connected with a way of life. It is not only a descriptive account of reality, but something that will make a difference to one's life as it will govern the way one reacts to situations. In short, it is a way of live in accordance to values that one's belief prescribes. Belief in such and such value must have truth-claim since if it doesn't why one bother to commit oneself into it. If I commit myself to Islam, for example, I have to belief that its values are true.

In the end, faith must contain two elements: belief and commitment;

the former is theoretical and the latter is practical. One cannot be without the other. Those who are committed to Christianity, must base their commitment on the belief that Christian values are true. It follows that a Christian also must believe in how God incarnated in human form to teach the values that lead to salvation. Therefore, metaphysics as well as historical contingency are involved in our belief. As a Christian, one must believe in the historical Jesus. He must believe that Jesus truly lived in such and such century within human history. However, the world of practical concerns is not a world of theory but a world of action. The clash is not that one believer defends his metaphysical belief against another. It is the clash of values. When reason is forsaken, it becomes a clash of fundamentalism.

1.2 Faith and value pluralism

Our multi-faith world is a multi-value world. We are confronted with value pluralism. Instead of one ultimate end, there are multiple ultimate ends. Fundamentalists ignore this reality. They think that their faith-based-value is the highest one. Globalization of values triggers this kind of attitude. Instead of trying to communicate and enrich their own values, they use any means necessary to universalize their own value. They are insensitive to the idea of value pluralism.

First, we must differentiate value pluralism from ethical pluralism. Ethical pluralism is a thesis that there is no single ethical standard to which all principles of conduct must conform. According to ethical pluralism, a number of ethical principles are equally fundamental. Value pluralism goes beyond this. Originated from Isaiah Berlin's thought, it is a thesis that denies the existence of one super-value that can harmoniously integrate all other values. In other words, values can be in conflict and there is no rationally determinable answer to the question value should take precedence. The conflict between values is *inarbitrable*. The value of utility, for example, can be *inarbitrably* in conflict with the value of care, liberty or impartiality. There is

no way we can appeal to such super-value to integrate them. Berlin wrote in his major work *Four Essays on Liberty*:

> "If as I believe, the ends of men are many, and not all of them are in principle compatible with each other, then the possibility of conflict – and of tragedy – can never wholly be eliminated from human life, either personal or social. The necessity of choosing between absolute claims is then an inescapable characteristic of human condition. This gives value to freedom as Acton had conceived of it – as an end in itself [...]."[3]

Different faiths give birth to different value-schemata. There is no singularity in how people live, since faith is always related to ways of life. Instead of the universality of faith-based-value, there is a plurality of values. Some talk about the value consensus among different faiths. They, according to me, are building a castle in the sky. Reality bites. The world of practical concerns is the world of competing and even conflicting values. For instance, in the province of Central Java, Indonesia, there is a conflict between Islam and an indigenous. The Javanese local belief puts high value on aesthetics manifested in dances and other performance arts. Women wearing a dress called selendang, which does not cover the shoulders, perform these dances. However, some Islamic leaders claim that this violates Islamic values, which prohibit women to show some parts of their body. What happens is not a harmonious consensus between those two value systems, but an aggressive integration by Islam using the political apparatus. As a result, one religious tradition is becoming endangered.

Value pluralism is an axiological fact that needs to be carefully apprehended. A failure to apprehend this could lead to two extremes. One is totalitarianism and the other is relativism. When one believer tries to subordinate all values under one value-schemata, then the result is totalitarianism. Isaiah Berlin traces the roots of totalitarianism to the subordination of all values, desires, interests and ultimately all persons to a

single overriding goal: whether the goal is secular or religious. Fundamentalists have this kind of ideology in mind. They use instrumental reasoning for imposing their faith-based-value-schemata as the official one, regardless the heterogeneity of faiths. The value-schemata that they hold remain unexamined; and an enriching dialog with the other is never explored.

The other extreme is relativism. Value pluralism can lead into an anti-reason relativism, which means that the judgment of values can never be judged independently from one belief. Every belief has its own rationality. There is no overarching rationality that can objectively measure all beliefs. If two people disagree about some value-claim, they do not just have different reasons for their claims. They even disagree about what 'reason' means. This form of relativism is an obstacle to communication. Since a relativist can never engage in communication due to their success-oriented action. Under the header of multi-rationality, all communication by relativist hides what is truly real: instrumental reason. What they are trying to do is to impose their values by any means necessary. Still, their values remain unexamined behind the mask of relativism.

1.3 Beyond relativism

Globalization has its own irony: it strengthens sectarianism. Sectarianism itself is a religious attitude that denies the multiplicity of values by seeing their faith-based-value-schemata as the ultimate one. Alien values are *transvaluated* as evil by calling one's own values as good. Reason is not used to argue about belief. What is done is merely attacking alien values.

However, our multi-faith world should not be defined as a world free of reason. For example, God says in the Quran that He created the world in heterogeneity so man can engage in communication for mutual understanding. And communication presupposes reason. In communication one should not impose one's belief onto the interlocutor,

but, on the other hand, one should try to enrich oneself by remaining open to rational criticism. This means that one must use reason to explain one's belief and at the same time listen to the reasoning of his or her interlocutor. This way one's belief can be enriched and not encapsulated within the relativist cubical.

Can our faith-based-value schemata really be measured by an objective standard? Or is it merely an expression, as relativists claim, of one's tradition with its own unique rationality? It is then a question of objectivity of values. Are values only a subjective expression or are they objective properties that we can argue about?

John Gray defends what he calls objectivist value pluralism. He first differentiates value relativism from pluralism. Value relativism is the claim that values cannot be rationally assessed and must therefore be taken to have equal value. By contrast, however, pluralism is the claim that though there is a multitude of values and though these values might well be incommensurable, they really exist in some sense, such that one can be right or wrong in uttering propositions containing value predicates.

In response to Gray, Daniel Weinstock divides value pluralism into a radical and a moderate thesis.[4] The radical thesis claims that there is no way of knowing what values and combinations of values an objective value pluralism should recognize until different cultures actually take them up and embody them in their institutions and practices. The moderate thesis, in contrast, claims that we can come to some understanding of what values and combinations of values are independent of their actually having been taken up by particular communities and cultures. As a result, there must be a constraint on ways of life. Human nature can be considered a constraint.

There is sufficient ground to believe that values are objective and that we can use reason to argue about them. An example might help. Consider a red object. A red object tends to cause us to believe that the object is red. It is the property of the object that makes us believe that it as such and such.

However, objectivity does not depend on the location of the attributed property, or its supposed conceptual tie to human sensibilities. Objectivity depends on there being a systematic relationship between the attitude-causing properties of things and events and the attitudes they cause.

What makes our judgment of the 'descriptive' properties of things true or false is the fact that the same properties tend to cause the same beliefs in different observers, and when observers disagree, we assume there is an explanation. The same holds for values. If two people disagree about the worth of an action or an object, they must have in mind the same action and object and the same aspects of those actions and objects. The considerations that prove the dispute genuine – the considerations that lead to correct interpretation – will also reveal the shared criteria that determine the truth.

This is what presupposes a communication across faiths and values. Communication is conditioned by the fact that values discussed are not merely subjective expressions but objective realities that can be argued about. If not, there is possibility for communication. One does not want to be involved in communication if one knows that the interlocutor's argument is based on subjectivity.

A believer can use his or her own rationality to explain his or her value commitment to the interlocutor. No matter what, this believer is trying to say something to another believer. It is a movement out of isolation. It is what I call an epistemological delivery to the other. Reasons are not imposed but they are an invitation to the other to enrich one's own view. It means that it is also an invitation to be measured by his or her interlocutor's rationality. Rationality is not a hiding camp for apologists. It is an invitation for enrichment.

2. Faith and speculative reason

2.1 The spectrum of reason

Stephen Toulmin argues in his book *Return to Reason* how reason has lost its balance nowadays.[5] Reason, according to Toulmin, has played a central role in the speculative pursuit of knowledge for 2,500 years. Reason referred throughout history to the systematic and methodical treatment of any subject. It covered the range of inquiries that lent themselves to systematic investigation and debate. The role of reason in human activities was given equal consideration. No field of investigation or speculation was dismissed as intrinsically irrational.

However, from the mid-seventeenth century on an imbalance began to develop. Certain methods of inquiry and subjects were regarded as rational and others were not. As a result, some kind of rational favoritism emerged, which privileges scientific and technical rational inquiry. Instead of a free-for-all of ideas and speculations, a hierarchy of prestige was established, i.e. investigations and activities were ordered with an eye to certain intellectual demands. Issues of formal consistency and deductive proof came to have special prestige, and these issues achieved an air of certainty that other kinds of opinions could never claim. This imbalance is actually a reduction of how we understand reason. Reason has been reduced into scientific and technical notions. As a result, reason has been separated from *being*. It becomes reasoning *of* being that lost its primordial engagement with life.

Instead of one ultimate notion of reason, we have a spectrum of notions of reason. We are not dealing with the essence of reason, but the many faces of reason according to its use. The first use of reason is metaphysical, i.e. speculative reason. Speculative reason is used to seize the metaphysical or divine truth out of the multiplicity of worldly concerns. We are in fact capable of seizing divine truth since we have something divine within us: reason. It is based on an old epistemological principle: the same recognizes

the same. Guilson writes in *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine* that of all the beings God created on earth, only man is capable of belief, because he is endowed with reason, which is God's image within man.[6] Man is God's image inasmuch as he is a mind which by exercising its reason, acquires more and more understanding and grows progressively richer therein. In this notion, reason and the divine are not strictly separated. Reason, in this classical notion, has a divine origin. By cultivating reason to contemplate eternal or divine truth, we humans become more and more divine. Reasoning is not so much about contemplating *Being* but becoming a being.

Reason is also used for practical concerns. What is meant by practical concerns here is not the same with technical purposes. Practical concerns are the worldly concerns how to lead a good live, and, at the same time, how to live together in a pluralistic world. Practical reason does not concern metaphysical truths, as speculative reason does. It answers the question how to act virtuously in a world of practical concerns. In an Aristotelian notion, reason is used to regulate our actions to find the median between two vices (either lack or excess). However, the main difference between practical reason and speculative reason is its embodiment in worldly concerns. Speculative reason is disembodied reason, practical reason, on the other hand, is embodied reason. Speculative reason asks man to escape worldly concerns to seize metaphysical or divine truth, while practical reason draws man to engage rationally within worldly concerns. Speculative reason is an upward movement, while practical reason is a downward one.

Meanwhile, the mid-seventeenth century notion of reason has reduced practical reason into a technical one. Instead of answering the question of how to live virtuously, technical reason only responds to the question of instrumental concerns. In short, it only answers what the most efficient means are to certain ends. As a consequence, the question of value remains unexamined. And values are reduced to utility. This has lead to, what Max Weber calls, an 'iron cage'. It is a human-made cage of technical reason, imprisoning us from the question of value. Today, the question of how to lead a good life is abandoned. Of course, technical reason has contributed to technological advancements. But, its contribution is only technical, and technological progress is indifferent to ethical evaluations. Technical reason makes us live economically but not virtuously.

2.2 The Augustinian perspective on speculative reason

Speculative reason has its root in Platonic criticism on sophism. Sophism claims that reason can only be used for furthering human interests. Reason can never unravel reality objectively, because our knowledge of reality is anthropocentric by nature. Plato, on the other hand, claims that reasoning is an intellectual enquiry which is not simply to advance theses and to give one's rational allegiance to theses which so far withstand refutation; it is to understand the movement from thesis to thesis as a movement toward a kind of logos which will disclose how things are, not relative to some point of view, but as such. The activity of speculative reason has its own *telos*: metaphysical truth. It can unravel this metaphysical truth or logos since it is itself logos by nature.

Augustine Christianized this notion of reason by saying that reason is God's image in man. This image of God must not be forsaken but must be used appropriately to understand God as the ultimate being. However, the fact that reason is God's image in man is not enough to understand God. The fact that it is God's image in man only leads potentiality to an understanding of Him. It helps us to understand God due its divine nature. However, it must be based on faith for confirming its goal. Reason's goal of understanding God cannot be initiated in a theological vacuum. It must be based on belief. The formula is 'belief that you may understand' (*Crede ut Intelligas*).

Augustine strongly holds that unaided reason cannot understand the ultimate truth, which is God. Its telos will be diverted if we do not start with belief. Of course, we can find the truth without faith. However, it is merely a truth like mathematical truth but not the ultimate truth. To arrive at the ultimate truth we need faith as the starting point. Faith acts as a navigator for our reasoning. Faith seeks but understanding that finds (*Fides quaerit, intelectus invenit*). It is faith that navigates our reasoning in order to find the true one.

Faith in God is necessary to reason on our main goals, because God is the ultimate source of truth. God is a kind of light that illuminates reason to bring about its divine potentiality and come to an understanding of the divine. Without illumination, reason as 'the eye of the mind' cannot see the ultimate truth. Just like Plato's prisoner that left the metaphorical cave and could see things clearly by the illumination of the sun.

Descartes takes a different stance. He sees reason as the being of humanity, which intuitively confirms ideas about physical reality, the self and the perfect being. Descartes does not take reason as potentially divine, but he takes the divine as an epistemological guarantee for right judgments. He reasons about God ontologically not to contemplate beatific wisdom but to justify man's knowledge of himself and physical reality. For Augustine, on the other hand, rational understanding of the divine gives the foundation for theodicy, which is an explanation of the origin of evil and discipline for avoiding it. Reason's understanding of God is not just for theoretical but also for practical rightness in our actions.

2.3 A halfway reasoning

In terms of practical concerns, speculative reason is a halfway reasoning. Reason's capacity to contemplate beautifying wisdom needs to be brought down to earth. Nevertheless, we live in a world of competing or even conflicting values. A speculative use of reason may find metaphysical or

divine truth, but what can it say about practical concerns? There is another kind of truth needed. This is not only truth about how to live one's life but also truth of how to live together harmoniously.

Aquinas claims that we reason theoretically to and about that ultimate end which is the *arche* of practical enquiry and reasoning, but from *arche* it is by practical reasoning that we are led to particular conclusions how to act.

Kant also plays an important role; he concretizes reason. His major contribution is his critique on metaphysics by limiting the scope of reason. He claims that reason can only operate in the realm of the phenomena. He criticizes the medieval way of philosophizing, which forces reason to reach realities beyond the phenomena. The only justification for doing that, according to Kant, is not ontological but ethical.

We use reason to argue about God, but not God *an-sich*. Reason is for practical concerns, according to Kant. We argue about God as a regulative idea that gives a teleological sense in the world; and this sense is necessarily needed by morality. Kant's second critique is his concretization of speculative reason.

Kant offers then the notion of the highest good. The highest good is the coming together of duty and happiness. It is an unconditioned condition to which all other conditioned goodness of all good things must be judged. By this concept, Kant brings back the divine into the realm of reason. God is one of the postulates of practical reason in order to keep the notion of the highest good. Kant claims that only postulating the existence of God can solve the perfect integration between the good will and happiness. Man is not the cause of nature and his will is therefore unable to ensure that nature metes out the happiness he deserves through fulfilling his duty. However, the existence of the relation between the good will and happiness is postulated as necessary by the moral law and by the requirement that we should seek the achievement of the highest good. It means that the moral law must postulate the existence of a supreme cause of nature, which can

bring about the required correspondence of the good will and happiness, which would otherwise not exist.

Kant solved the problem of the highest good by putting God back into the realm of reason, i.e. practical reason. However, Kant's practical reason answers only questions on how to lead one's life. Kant's God is a Christian God, which His divine imperative of treating another as oneself became secularized in Kant's ethics. The question how to live in a multi-faith and multi-value world remains unanswered. Kant's practical reason only prescribes one certain action for each situation. It is a moral duty to act in a certain way and not in another way, which is implied in the categorical imperative. He disregards the value of care or utility as alternative ones. Kant's practical reason is hiding a value commitment which is historically contingent. The value of duty is based on a humanist culture, which originated in the Greek, and emphasized by Judeo-Christianity, tradition.

The main problem of Kant's practical reason is that there is no space for conflicting values. The categorical imperative, as the practical reason's imperative, works in any situation whatsoever. It imposes a value of obligation without considering other values. As a result, Kant's practical reason is inapplicable in todays multi-faith and multi-values world. Therefore, Habermas' revision of Kant's practical reason and Taylor's notion of the strong evaluator are a breakthrough.

3. Faith and practical reason

3.1 Hutchenson and Hume on practical reason

The term 'practical' in practical reason has many senses. First, the capability to act impartial and to transcend one's self interest; second, the capability to act in such a way to achieve the ultimate or true good of humanity; and third, the capability to act on the basis of calculations of the costs and its consequences.

This third sense of reason has its roots in the Sophist notion of reason as a tool for furthering human interests. The main concern of practical reason in this sense is only to find the best means for a prior end. The end itself is not questioned. It is judged by desires only. Practical reason focuses only upon the most efficient way to get there. Scottish philosophers, like Hutchenson and Hume, also bring up this sense. These Scottish philosophers made an epistemological break with the classical notion of practical reason. The classical tradition sees reason prescribing to the passions in the light of knowledge, which it affords concerning the true end of humanity.

Hutchenson's notions of practical reason rest on three major theses. First, it is a sense and it is that sense to which we apply the term 'conscience', i.e. a sense making of particular objects, which elicit a specific type of approval and disapproval. Second, it is a moral sense, which makes us aware and moves us to act according to the laws of nature. Third, it is sense of perception of those objects that cause pleasure and pain, but the objects themselves are not to be identified with those pleasures and pains.

Based on these theses, Hutchenson's notion of practical reason is instrumental. We do not reason about ends, ends are approved or disapproved by human desires. Hutchenson maintains that reasoning is a power of reflecting on, and comparing and judging of means or subordinate ends; but there is no reasoning concerning ultimate ends. We, according to Hutchenson, prosecute the ultimate ends by some immediate disposition, which is always prior to all reasoning; no opinion or judgement can move us to act if we do not have a prior desire of some end.

Hume follows Hutchenson's line of thought by proclaiming that reason is the slave of passion. Rationality is not exercised in its specific forms of activity with its own goods or its own ends internal to that activity. We do not pursue ends instructed by rationality. Reasoned ends are impossible, according to Hume. The ends to which rational activity of any kind is

directed are set before it by some passion. The speculative function of reason, which is to seize the ultimate truth or end, can no longer be maintained. We cannot reason about ultimate ends. Ultimate ends are dictated by human desires, and reason adjudicates the best means to obtain them.

Reason, according to Hume, has two practical roles. The first role is to answer questions, and the passions provide us with motives to ask and answer these questions. These questions concern the existence and nature of those things the passions move us to achieve. The second practical role of reason, according to Hume, is to prescribe the means to achieve such ends set by the passions and to judge those means as more or less as efficient in terms not only of the particular end in view but also in terms of other ends, which the agent might want to pursue.

This practical role of role is, of course, different from Kant's theory. The main concern of Kant's practical reason is to transcend particular desires and interests. Practical reason's categorical imperative is to do good regardless what our interests or desires are. Only those ethical maxims that can be universal maxims are true. Those maxims that are imbued by desires and interests contradict practical reason, according to Kant. The view of the reasoned good that is absent from desires or interests is a common characteristic of those philosophers following Kant's footsteps.

3.2 Aristotle on practical reason

Some philosophers tend to think that Aristotle's practical reason functions only as a deliberation concerning the means and not the ends. However, Aristotle claims that we reason about our ultimate ends. In fact, it is that kind of reason that moves our actions. Desire must be put under strict control of reason, and desire must serve the ends proposed by reason. The failure to reason about ends and to control our desires can lead to two different persons: the *akratic* and the *encratic* person. The *akratic* person is a

person whose desires are not yet under rational control, because this person does not have the knowledge of what is good. The *encratic* person, on the other hand, is a person who knows what it is good and rational to do, but his desires are not yet under control.

Practical reasoning is formed in a syllogism. It is a practical syllogism. It starts with a major premise on what good is at stake, followed by a minor premise on the particular situation. Given that a certain good is at stake, then a certain action is required. The conclusion is formed by the action. The major premise must not say anything about desires. It is a true judgment of what is good. Aristotle claims that a sound practical syllogism is the immediate precedent and determinant of rational action.

A sound syllogism must be grounded on true premises. True premises can never be achieved, except by a process of deliberation. And deliberation ensures that our desires are ordered rationally by arguing from an ultimate end and as to what means must be adopted accordingly. Aristotle calls a reasoned desire *prohairesis*. However, one must note that *prohairesis* result only issue from deliberations by those who have formed their character by a systematic disciplining and transformation of their initial desires. One might say that *prohairesis* is made up by desire and virtue. Without the virtues desires cannot be informed by reason. They cannot be transformed into and be effective as desires for whatever reason prescribes.

Aristotle holds the view that there is no practical rationality without a virtuous character. Practical reasoning is not detached activity; an ultimate end is not its concern. Its concern is how to argue from an ultimate end to concrete virtuous actions. Only the virtuous are able to argue soundly to those conclusions, which are their actions.

What must be underlined here is that the question of practicality is not just a question of cost-benefit calculation; and it is not a theoretical question. Practical reason, according to Aristotle, must involve the virtues

to control our desires. We are diverted from the noble ultimate end as long as our desires remain untamed. In other words, we cannot just justify any means necessary to attain a noble end. Deliberation by a rational agent must issue a conclusion of what good or goods is or are to be achieved. It is not only the ultimate end we must reason about, but we also reason concerning desires by which we attain that end.

It is important to see how Aristotle associated reason with our moral character. We cannot reason appropriately if we do not have a moral character, which is habituated by ethical discipline. This discipline can be found in many religious traditions. The fact that many religious fundamentalist use vicious means to attain their noble ends shows how they have corrupted their faith; their practical reasoning is nothing but mean-end reasoning.

Can Aristotle's practical reason work in a multi-faith and multi-value world? I have some reservations. First, Aristotle regards the contemplative life as the highest form of life. The true end of human life, according to him, is contemplation. By contemplation we can arrive at what is really real. We can disclose the nature of the good and, then, we should live accordingly. Like Kant, this way of thinking provides only one answer to what is needed to lead a good life. The question of how to live is left out altogether.

In a multicultural society, we cannot just live with the knowledge of one ultimate end or value. We also have to conduct dialogs with others and their ultimate ends or values for mutual understanding and enrichment. Aristotle's practical reason, based upon *arche,* is unraveled by speculative reason. *Arche* is the highest good and other goods must be ordered under the highest good accordingly. It is another name for domination of good on goods. However, living together should not be based on domination but on mutual respect and understanding.

3.3 Aquinas's practical reason and pluralism

Aquinas follows the Aristotelian notion of practical reason, however, with a slight revision. He also holds the Aristotelian view that practical reason is not detached reason, i.e. reason is connected with moral character. He follows the Aristotelian notion of *prohairesis* as reasoned desires, which are disciplined and directed by the right moral habits.

However, Aquinas introduces the will as a component of action, which expresses *prohairesis.* The will is always free in the sense that it acts on the basis of a contingent judgment as to what is good or bad and it is always open to some alternative contingent judgment. The key point here is that the will is not moved to any end by necessity. This means that the rational understanding of an end moves the will, which is contingent and always open to other rational understandings.

Therefore, Aquinas steps out from Aristotle's solipsism. It is true that Aquinas followed Aristotle in claiming that we reason deductively from an *arche* found by speculative reason. However, judgment of what is good or bad is judgment of values, which must be separated from an ontological understanding of God. God is infallible, but our judgment of ends and values is not. There is not only one ultimate judgment of the good that leads to the will but many. This means that there is always room for discussion on the level of judgments of true ends.

Aquinas also holds the view that the ultimate end for a human being is contemplating the beatifying wisdom in God. It is the first premise of all fully rational practical reasoning, and it is true that we must reason practically from our understanding of God. However, our contingent judgment of ends and values can never be a true end. Our ultimate end transcends this present life, which rest on God. In *Whose justice? Which Rationality?* Alasdair Macintyre writes:

"Aquinas extended Aristotle's arguments not only so as to exclude other particular items such as worldly power, but also so as to exclude every finite state which can be achieved in this present life, even finding some confirmation of this in Aristotle himself. For every such state will be less good than it might be; it will not adequately exemplify the universality of good or its self sufficiency. So the ultimate end of human beings is outside and beyond this present life."[7]

By qualifying the judgment of ends and values in this world as contingent, Aquinas appreciates the plurality of ends and values. We may believe in one God and rest our practical judgment on him. However, our faith does not necessary mean that our judgment of values is absolute. Since we live in the world of practical concerns, which makes our judgment of ends and values always situated. In no way we can act on the basis of absolute value claims. That would result in ethical solipsism, which makes an enriching dialog impossible.

How to act in such a multi-value world? Aquinas points at four cardinal virtues that must accompany our practical reasoning.

The first virtue is prudence; prudence is a virtue that enables us to make judgments in particular situations from universal moral precepts. By having this virtue, we are aware of the multiplicity of situations which may need different moral precepts. Different from Kant, Aquinas's virtuous practical reason is situation sensitive and does not subsume every particular situation under one universal moral precept.

The second virtue is justice; justice is first of all an application of reason to conduct and it is concerned with how the will may be rationally directed toward right action. In our multi-faith and multi-value world this virtue of reasoning is very important. It tells us not just to act rationally based upon our faith-based values, but to do justice to others. The right action is not just an act according to our values, but also to take others into account. This virtue is very much needed whenever our values collide with others.

The third virtue is temperateness; temperateness is a virtue by which we restrain the passions that are contrary to reason. It is a virtue of self-criticism. By this virtue we must disclose and evaluate the passions that motivate our noble ends, and if it is contrary to reason, then it must be corrected.

The fourth virtue is courage; courage is a virtue by which we hold onto those passions required by reason when fear of danger and hardship urges us otherwise. By this virtue we are encouraged to use reason practically even in this world full of terror. We must trust reason, otherwise we will be drawn into a culture of apathy and we will give in to fundamentalists.

3.4 Toward a multicultural practical reason

Today, we face a multi-faith reality. The classical notions of practical reason, which is technical (Hume), insensitive toward the particular (Kant) and solipsistic (Aristotle), are unable to deal with the multi-faith reality. We do not only need a virtuous practical reason, but we also need a notion reason that is engaged with the world. Therefore, I discuss some contemporary notions of practical reason.

The first is Charles Taylor's notion of practical reason. Taylor associates the notion of practical reason with the notion of the strong evaluator. The strong evaluator is one who has strength of character produced from constant evaluations. Someone who does not do so is regarded as a 'simple weigher'. Practical reason, according to Taylor, becomes a tool for the strong evaluator to engage in moral discourse with others, and by which moral change is produced. Implicit within this notion are two simple claims: first, practical reason arbitrates moral differences; second, the denial of rational inarbitrariness between moral differences.

Taylor divides practical reason into apodictic practical reason and ad-hominem practical reason. Apodictic practical reason is modeled on scientific epistemology, which main feature is proceduralism. The task of apodictic practical reason is to establish a neutral set of rights and liberties

designed to allow maximal choice about what constitutes a good life or proper end. Those rights established by apodictic practical reason do not neglect what is good, but what is fair. The problem of this version of practical reason, according to Taylor, is that morality can no longer be conceived as a guide for action. It is only about what is considered fair in pursuing each conception of the good. However, it is insensitive toward the particular.

Taylor proposes the notion of ad-hominem practical reason. This practical reason is sensitive toward the particular by speaking to someone's particular moral situation. The task of ad-hominem practical reason is not to change someone's moral position completely by imposing some abstract principles, but to increase clarity and understanding. In short, the ad-hominem model of practical reason is not a heavy-handed kind of approach. It protects the dignity of the person by shifting their positions on the basis of principles they already accept to something that makes more sense or has better explanatory power.

In terms of ad-hominem practical reason, one can convince another by speaking to the other personally; either by articulating underlying moral intuitions, or perhaps by moving him or her to the point of making his or her description as the other. It is an argument from within. It is done by an error-reducing move, which is sensitive toward contradictions and uneasiness.

By proposing the notion of ad-hominem practical reason, Taylor suggests two things. First, we do not subscribe to general principles, unless a principle makes sense within the context of our own lives. Second, we do not change our actions unless they seem to make sense based on our experience and worldview. Those two suggestions are a strong challenge to the Kantian tradition, which upholds a solid notion of disembodied, formal and insensitive practical reason. The idea is not to judge other moral positions by some general standard approved by reason, but to speak to others in his or her particular moral context and to handle the contradictions that might appear. In that way, ad-hominem practical reason provides means for discussion even in the absence of a shared moral ground.

The second contemporary notion of practical reason comes from Habermas. He proposes that practical reason answers to three questions: pragmatic, ethic and moral. The pragmatic question is a question about technical issues concerning appropriate methods for satisfying our contingent desires. The ethical question is a question about prudential issues of developing life plans in the light of culturally conditioned self-interpretation and claims of the good. And the moral question is a question about the right or just regulation of social interaction conditioned by the plurality of goods that may conflict one another. The implicit message of the third question is how we should live together.

The third question, according to Habermas, is best handled by the principle of universalization. The task of practical reason is not to find some formal criteria in solitary reflection, as in Kant's theory. However, its task is to find valid norms, which can meet the following three criteria:

(a) Only those norm may claim to be valid that could meet the consent of all concerned, in their role as participants in practical discourses.

(b) For a norm to be valid, all must freely accept the consequences and side-effects of its general observances for the satisfaction of each person's particular interests.

(c) An ethics is termed universalistic when it alleges that a moral principle, far from reflecting the intuitions of a particular culture or epoch, is valid universally.

Habermas maintains that the task of practical reason, in terms of moral questions, is to find an impartial and neutral ground for the plurality of goods. In order to be impartial, it is a necessary to adopt the principle of universalization. This principle holds that a valid norm should be capable of receiving rational assent of all potentially affected by its observance.

Some claim that this puts Habermas in a Kantian tradition. Taylor claims that Habermas' practical reason is still an apodictic one, which concentrates upon fairness and not guidance for particular action.

Responding to that kind of criticism, Habermas introduces another notion, which is 'application'. Impartiality, according to Habermas, is not only a matter of universal justification by meeting those three criteria of universalization based on an ideal speech situation. Impartiality must also be conceived as applicability. What Habermas means by this is that all conclusions concerning valid norms are open to reinterpretation in the light of unforeseen situations of application and that questions of their appropriateness to particular situations must be answered separately from the question of justification.

When we are confronted with the question of which norm should govern an interaction, we should look for the public norm to which all rational agents could freely consent. However, a public norm is inappropriate in discerning the ethical question of who I am and who I want to be. Habermas maintains that what Kant means by a maxim can be judged separately in terms of ethics and morality. On the one hand, our maxim or situational rules of action can be judged ethically, when it answers the question of whether the rule is good for me and appropriate in a current situation. On the other hand, our maxim can be judged morally, when it answers a question whether I can will that a certain maxim should be followed by everyone as a public norm. By doing so, Habermas saves his Kantian position from criticism by neo-Aristotelian philosophers. He wants to stress the point that universalism does not necessarily mean the annihilation of a subject's ethical identity. The question of ethics and morality can be separately posed and answered.

However, Habermas' separation between the question of ethics and morality is still problematic. The question of what I should do in the ethical realm already contains moral questions. In today's pluralistic world, one's ethical decision always involves the conflict of different conceptions of the good. Moral concerns form a continuum with ethical ones.

The ethical question is not only to solve conflicts between my present moral identity and my ideal moral identity. It is also a question to solve conflicts between different conceptions of the good. Immediate universalization proposed by Habermas in the moral sphere cannot be the answer. Thereby, I propose the term 'engagement'. When conflicts of ideals take place, we should not immediately step into the sphere of morality to find a universal public norm. Instead, we must keep our moral position open to each other's conceptions of the good to find a possibility of enrichment. By 'enrichment' I mean more or less the same as Taylor's notion of 'arguing from within'. My value commitment is enriched when I can take the other's commitment into my account by solving both apparent and unapparent contradictions. My position is enriched when it gains more explanatory power within my own context. And this is a vice versa process.

The question of engagement is also absent from the solipsistic stance of practical thinking. In engagement, the question of what should I do is already a recognition of the other. We cannot evaluate ourselves without opening-up our position to other ideals and. Practical reason has four tasks. The first task is pragmatic; practical reason's pragmatic task is to intervene in the objective world in order to bring about desired states of affairs. The second task is ethical; practical reason's ethical task is to offer advice on correct conduct and to realize personal projects. The third task is moral; practical reason's moral task is to justify and apply norms that stipulate corresponding rights and duties. Engagement is the fourth task of practical reason; its task is not to find shared moral ground for the plurality of conceptions of the good, but mutual enrichment and evaluation, which is open to each other and particular-sensitive. This fourth task of practical reason is the most appropriate task of practical reason in our multi-faith and multi-value world.

4. Engagement in faith

Reasoning is a form of engagement. In terms of faith, we do not just reason about God as the ultimate being, but we also reason about how to live accordingly. However, many types of reasoning are disengaged forms of reasoning. Relativist kind of reasoning, for example, imprisons reason to one conceptual scheme. It means that we do not have to explain our belief rationally to others, because we reason within different conceptual schemes. As a result, we are disengaged from one another, so that there is possibility for mutual understanding and enrichment.

History also shows how the rich notion of reason has been reduced to mere technicality. As a consequence, reason has become detached from *being*. Reasoning becomes an instrument to serve whatever human passions or desires propose. The question of our *being* as part of the larger *Being* is left unscrutinized. We treat *being* not as a mystery, but as something that can be manipulated. In terms of faith, this type of reasoning also prohibits mutual engagement between different believers. Despite of communication between different believers, a believer uses this type of reasoning to promote his or her own faith-based-value schemata as the ultimate one.

Medieval philosophy, especially Augustinian philosophy, sees reason as a speculative way to understand God. This understanding of God is considered the ultimate end of humanity. However, this mode of reasoning has disengaged not only man from practical concerns, but it also disengages man from other believers. This mode of reasoning may answer an epistemological, ontological or even an axiological question of God. However, it does not tell us how we should live together in a pluralistic world. Whether each believer comes to his or her ultimate end in understanding God, questions of how to live together remain unanswered. Each will concern only his or her ultimate end, disregarding the fact that we live in a world of multiple ends.

Reason should also be a form of engagement. However, I draw a distinction between monistic and pluralistic practical reason. Monistic practical reason deduces from one supreme end. It is rooted in the Aristotelian conception, which subsumes practical reason under *arche* contemplated by speculative reason. *Arche* is found by speculative reason and it is the highest good, other goods must be ordered accordingly. This monistic tradition of practical reason influenced modern philosophy. Kant's notion of practical reason, for example, is also founded upon the categorical imperative value commitment, which is indifferent to our multi-faith world. However, what is important from Aristotle is his claim that not only the end but also a desire must be justified. He introduces practical reason as non-detached reason. Reason is then connected with one's moral character, i.e. a non-virtuous individual cannot reason soundly.

My interpretation of Aquinas prepares the way for a contemporary notion of pluralistic practical reason. Aquinas' practical reason recognizes not only the necessity of virtues but also the plurality of human ends. He claims that the ultimate end only resides in God. It constrains what we should value in this world. However, it also makes all worldly ends contingent. He appreciates the multiplicity of human ends. However, Aquinas' conception of the highest good, which measure contingent goods, is still quite solipsistic, regardless the metaphysical problem it infers. Today, we are faced by a plurality of highest good, which are not necessarily in harmony.

My reading of contemporary notions of practical reason concludes that practical reasoning must become an epistemological site for a dialogical relationship between adherents of different values. It is not an imposing but an expanding of reason. Practical reason on practical concerns in our multi-faith world must be an ongoing process of answering not only the question of the art of living, but also the art of living together. In terms of reasoning in faiths, it must open our faith-based-values to others' for mutual enrichment and evaluation.

End Notes:

[1] Roger Trigg, *Reason and Commitment* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1973).
[2] Hans Frei, "The Theology of H. Richard Niebuhr," in *Faith and Ethics* (New York: Harpers&Brothers, 1957), 69.
[3] Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 169.
[4] Daniel Weinstock, "The Graying of Berlin," *Critical Review* 11, no. 4 (Fall 1997).
[5] Stephen Toulmin, *Return to Reason* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).
[6] Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 29.
[7] Alasdair Macintyre, *Whose justice? Which rationality?* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 92.

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