

# Pandemic, Poverty and Corruption as a Concept of Broken World

**Evert Manuel Dela Peña Jr.**

Department of Arts and Social Sciences, Central Luzon State University, Nueva Ecija, Philippines

**Email address:**

Evertdelapena11@gmail.com

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**Abstract:** In a pessimistic view, the world is a series of struggles and sufferings. The tribulations are inevitable to man's life for he is in the world. Pandemic, poverty and corruption are the most prominent and prevailing faces of struggles in the world. It affects the individual's lives deeply for it undercuts the experience of being alive and free. It weakens man's appreciation of moments due to misery. The conflicts in the world holds man to appreciate moments for they are occupied on their functionality. The world simply becomes a mechanical for the people lives like a machine where working is much important than reflecting. These problematic figures were paralleled to Gabriel Marcel's concept of broken world. The paper tends to justify that the world is broken for the reason that first, its problems that could be seen in the contemporary world as pandemic, poverty and corruption. Second, man becomes alienated from himself for he ceases on living due to this problematic world. This paper also ventured to Gabriel Marcel's concept of broken world which eventually paralleled to the mainstream problems in contemporary world. The author intended to present a pessimistic view about the world which he claimed to be mad and broken.

**Keywords:** Pandemic, Poverty, Corruption, Homo Viator, Broken World

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## 1. Introduction

In examining the history-in-itself, suffering or tribulation is evident. The scheme of history's dialectic embodies misery. The world is a domain of unfortunate events where man unceasingly suffers from the madness and complexity in everyday living. It is like the world cannot be called world without the parameters of suffering. The world and misery are inseparable where they co-exist with one another. Mr. Anderson stated in his academic journal that Decay, death, and suffering are so common across the universe that some hold the position that suffering is an inherent and necessary aspect of how the universe works [1].

Struggles or suffering is part of the human existence for man was thrown in this "Mad and Broken World". Everyday living is everyday struggle for we encounter different faces of problems like disappointments, rejection and alike. These inevitable miseries make man down, make man to the point of despair where man doesn't feel like living. As man travels temporarily in this temporal mad and broken world, he is inclined to face waves of struggles and problems. No one can

escape this reality, no one can doubt in this reality of tribulations. Some of the prominent misfortunes in this contemporary world are pandemic, poverty and corruption that have become man's struggles in life. He is suffocated in these problems that the broken world offers. These stigmas became the reasons on why man stops on "Being-in-the-way" for it weakens man's life force. However, the mentioned problematic issues are not purely the reason why the world is broken or the world is broken in itself but it is when man failed to live in these tribulations.

One of the great thinkers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Gabriel Marcel examined the brokenness of the world for he had seen how the misery of the world affects the life journey of man. He witnessed the war, illness, poverty and alike which alienated man from himself. According to a published thesis of Panting Lynn, for Marcel, brokenness is the threshold of human experience. It is the unwilling nature of man who fails to reflect and transcend, preferring instead to glory in the particularity of menial tasks or functions, that contributes to this fissure and fragmentation. Ontological exigence is stilled by an unconscious relativism that discounts the personal,

"ignores the tragic and denies the transcendence. Marcel is aiming at transcendence through lived experience [15].

This humble opus aims to present that pandemic, poverty and corruption are the three enormous elements that constitute the madness and brokenness of the world through paralleling in Gabriel Marcel's philosophy of "broken world". This study aims to venture on expounding the three hulks of misery which are pandemic, poverty and corruption and its upshot to man's life journey. Henceforth, this study attempts to describe the philosophical framework of Marcel's broken world that to be contextualized in the three titans of misery. This study also presents a pessimistic sense of understanding the world. Lastly, this study intends to set a new perspective in understanding the madness and brokenness of the world.

## 2. Pandemic

Pandemic is a global disease outbreak which destabilized the health and economy of the society. In the latter part of December 2019, a disease reported in China. In 2020, the plague was identified as SARS-CoV-2 as a new type of coronavirus. World Health Organization (WHO) mentioned in an article that most people infected with the virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. However, some will become seriously ill and require medical attention. Older people and those with underlying medical conditions like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, or cancer are more likely to develop serious illness. Anyone can get sick with COVID-19 and become seriously ill or die at any age [13]. The WHO further claimed that the virus can spread from an infected person's mouth or nose in small liquid particles when they cough, sneeze, speak, sing or breathe. These particles range from larger respiratory droplets to smaller aerosols. It is important to practice respiratory etiquette, for example by coughing into a flexed elbow, and to stay home and self-isolate until you recover if you feel unwell [13].

When the pandemic disturbed the normal everyday living of people around the world, paranoia begun to rise. People became more cautious on his surroundings and continuously seeking for advice to higher authorities in order to prevent or at least be protected from the said virus. Later on, when the pandemic was globally known, the World Health Organization released a guideline to instruct the people all over the world on how to avoid this Covid-19. They mentioned that the best way to prevent and slow down transmission is to be well informed about the disease and how the virus spreads. Protect yourself and others from infection by staying at least 1 meter apart from others, wearing a properly fitted mask, and washing your hands or using an alcohol-based rub frequently. Get vaccinated when it's your turn and follow local guidance [13]. aside from this, lock downs from various places and countries occurred. The more the world becomes aware of this pandemic, the more normal living changes. The people lead to a choice of

situation to embrace this "NEW NORMAL" way of living.

The unfortunate arrival of this pandemic changes a lot of plans and dreams. It deeply affects the individual's lives for the pandemic heebie-jeebies the plans and dreams. The pandemic strikes not only the working class of the society but also the bourgeois as Karl Marx defined the two classes in the society. The pandemic truly exempts no one and due to this cause, it feels like living in the land of broken plans and dreams. The world is indeed broken not only because of this pandemic but because of how man was broken during this time of pandemic where a lot of individual were captivated into tunnel of doubts and ends which is despair. People are broken inside and out due to rejection of employment applications, work termination, cancelled flights, closing of businesses and other financial and health catastrophic events. A lot of individuals ceased to move forward from living or if we can still call it living. It is like the individual becomes dependent to an opium of positivity that fuels them to stand and just live anyway without identifying the moments of life. Hence, in the absent of positivity, it makes the individual breathe harder. This pandemic reveals or make obvious the brokenness of the world. The reflection of the individual to life's moments seems to be secondary for just living anyway becomes the primary reason of living.

## 3. Poverty

Poverty is a state of being in which a person lacks the income (or other means of support) to reliably meet their basic personal needs, such as food, shelter, and clothing. Poverty exists in every country in the world, though it is a more pressing issue in some countries than in others [18]. One of the extreme problems that the individual is facing is the occurrences of poverty. The cases of poverty in the whole world is in high rate. Looking at poverty trends worldwide, World Data Lab now estimates that on New Year's Day 2019, just under 600 million people across the world (excluding Syria) will live in extreme poverty. By 2030, this figure is expected to fall to some 436 million [6]. In this pandemic, the case of poverty has doubled its number. The pandemic has compounded the threats to progress raised by conflict and climate change. Estimates suggest that 2020 saw an increase of between 119 million and 124 million global poor, of whom 60 per cent are in Southern Asia. Nowcasts point to the first rise in the extreme poverty rate since 1998, from 8.4 per cent in 2019 to 9.5 per cent in 2020, undoing the progress made since 2016. The impacts of the pandemic will not be short-lived. Based on current projections, the global poverty rate is expected to be 7 per cent (around 600 million people) in 2030, missing the target of eradicating poverty [2]. A huge number of heads are struggling throughout history whole over the world due to poverty. The number bloats every year most specially in the pandemic.

This unfortunate phenomenon entails the description of a broken world where the idea of eradicating poverty seems to be impossible. This poverty not only deprived the individual from material things but also in morality. Some sold their

body parts for the sake of surviving in this mad and broken world. Some are selling their bodies for a night in order to have something for their families. Some would take the risk of possible imprisonment in order to survive.

The idea of morality was bent due to need for survival. The individual seems to wake up for the reason of having money than to enjoy living. Some if not all of the individual who are currently experiencing poverty holds to something that is valuable for them in order to temporarily escape from the madness and brokenness of the world. In this sense, the individual becomes more alienated from himself and reality where he tends to continuously escape from misfortunate events and rest on his ideal place of perfection. This imaginary scenery makes only things worst for it holds the individual from embracing the reality which is to suffer in the broken world. This misery of event becomes a part to describe the brokenness of the world.

## 4. Corruption

Corruption is one of the main problems of every society. Anne Peters stated in her opus that corruption is not a technical term; it is typically not considered a criminal offense in criminal codes around the world, and it also does not have a legal definition in international treaties. The most common definition is the one by the non-governmental organization (NGO) Transparency International, according to which corruption is the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. Such abuse may happen on the level of day-to-day administration and public service (petty corruption) or on the high level of political office (grand corruption) [16].

Corruption occurred when an authority or public servant leader prioritized his self-gain than the people. Corruption affects economic prosperity, socio-economic classes and moral integrity of an institution. Thus, the most affected of all are the people who are being robbed by their leaders. The poor becomes poorer and the corrupt becomes wealthier. This corruption deeply affects the society and some of the studies supported this claim. A certain group of researchers in Bangladesh stated in their article that the underlying causes of irregularities and informal practices emerging from their review were predominantly financial including poor salary and benefits, lack of incentives, lack of autonomy of local authorities to hire and fix remuneration, and lack of accountability of doctors to local authorities. The impacts of corruption are multiple, affecting service access, utilization and cost. Corruption practices associated with the misuse of available resources in resource-constrained settings and increased financial burden on the poorest, also lead to inefficient public expenditure. Corruption can increase the cost of treatment to patients if a bribe is demanded or an informal payment is made in addition to the official payment, and thereby reduces demand for services and worsen health outcomes. Other effects include failure to ensure timely and appropriate treatment care for those who can least afford costly services from the private sector, and wastage of resources [12]. This result of study is aligned to the outcome

of Eugen Dimant and Guglielmo Tosato's investigation regarding the effects of corruption. They found the aspects where corruption affects deeply.

First, in bureaucratic inefficiency where they stated that Corruption, in theory, should increase bureaucratic inefficiency. From a game theory perspective, those who are benefitting from the inefficient system by engaging in corrupt activities have no incentive to streamline the system. Thus, similarly to cultural values, corruption and bureaucratic inefficiency may be a viscous cycle [3].

Secondly, Theoretical arguments have been made for the effects of corruption on economic growth via lower levels of investment, lower quality of investment, higher levels of indirect taxation, and misallocation of resources due to distorted incentives. Large amounts of empirical studies have been published to support these theories. One paper provided evidence that there was a significant relationship between the allocation of talent to unproductive activities and corruption, as well as higher levels of indirect taxation and corruption, thereby reducing growth rates (Tanzi and Davoodi, 2001) [3].

Lastly, Higher levels of corruption could theoretically increase a country's brain drain problems. Corruption is associated with a number of unfavorable outcomes, which might act as push factors to potential migrants. It has been argued that returns on education would be particularly affected (high levels of unemployment, lack of social advancement, slower economic growth etc.), thus those particularly sensitive to such a push factor (highly skilled individuals) would be more likely to emigrate due to this (Dimant et al., 2013) [3]. Although their paper found a lot of results regarding the effectivity of Corruption to the society, the aspects are mentioned are the highlights in the study.

With the supported claims that have been mentioned above, the linear commonalities went to a single idea that corruption is certainly burdened the society (Society here refers to the individual specially in the lower class in the society). In the history of this problematic world, corruption is always at its presence. With this, corruption seems to be an unfortunate phenomenon which is part of the world that cannot be eluded by the individual. It betrays the individual to the point where corruption seems to become normal. Where the working class continuously paying their taxes even knowing that their contribution will be used for the personal benefit of the leaders. The "go with the flow" maxim becomes prominent. The poor in whatever form of Government they belong is still voiceless and unfortunately even some are letting things be. This unfortunate phenomenon is part of this broken world or what constitute to be a broken where it affects people to be more passive in the sense that they are neglecting to reflect and just focus on the functionality.

## 5. Marcel's Idea of the Broken World

The brokenness of the world resides not only due to the misfortunate of occurrences but because of its effect to the individual in their everyday living. In understanding the

philosophy of broken world of Gabriel Marcel, we should first venture to his concept of the *Homo Viator* because the broken world is a reflection of Marcel towards the world and *Homo Viator*.

*Homo Viator* defines (is defined as) it as a man wayfarer in this broken world. For Marcel, problems are only small part of human reality because the human being is more than a problem solver but also *Homo Viator* (Being-on-the-way, a wondering-wanderer), that is, a being who can experience the depths of reality (being) that go beyond functions, techniques, and problems, in other words, a being who can encounter mystery [17]. The *Homo Viator* in the contemporary world of Marcel that could be paralleled to our contemporary world has two destination in his journey. It is either to move forward and continue his way or to cease from moving and be passive. The *Homo Viator* has a crisis of identifying himself for he is too much occupied into the functional world where the individual cease to reflect and cherish the moments of everyday living.

Margaret M. Mullan stated in his opus that Marcel studied the human person navigating technological realms and observed common experiences of dislocation and insecurity ("Sacral"). He listened to his colleagues' interpretations of this same world and their belief that this life was meaningless ("Ontological Mystery"). He attended to intersubjective interactions around him while traveling on trains and while attending social gatherings and found feelings of alienation or isolation from one another. He described these experiences of insecurity, meaninglessness, and alienation as happening in technological environments. Living in the modern world involves being in a world broken by technology [11]. Marcel saw the effect of technology to the individual that it creates division and passiveness. This concept of broken world is a debunk against technology that Marcel believes it destabilizes human experience.

In one of his plays namely entitled "THE BROKEN WORLD" he quoted that Don't you feel sometimes that we are living... if you can call it living... in a broken world? Yes, broken like a broken watch. The mainspring has stopped working. Just to look at it, nothing has changed. Everything is in place. But put the watch to your ear, and you do not hear any ticking. You know what I'm talking about, the world, what we call the world, the world of human creatures... it seems to me it must have had a heart at one time, but today you would say the heart had stopped beating. That is a speech by the heroine of one of my plays, and from time to time I shall be quoting from my own plays in this way. For it is in these imaginative works of mine that my thought is to be found in its virgin state, in, as it were, its first gushing from the source [9, 4]. Marcel cleared that this play encapsulates the totality of his idea about the world. But, it must be cleared that Marcel in his term of world is not only pertains to the world per se but he defined world as man. It is a two-way process where the world per se is broken in itself and broken due to man's failure to recognize the cracks of the world. Chris Osegenwune even stated in his Journal that in his view, it would be correct to say that we live in a world

that is essentially broken, broken in essence, in addition to having been further fractured by events in history. The broken world is characterized by a refusal (or inability) to reflect, a refusal to imagine and a denial of the transcendent (Marcel, 1951: 36-37) [14, 5]. Furthermore, Osegenwune cleared the two-way process of the brokenness of the world where he stated there are two crucial issues raised by Marcel. The first one is that the world we live in is a broken one, the second point is that there is much emphasis on the functional person. One will be correct to say that the world has never been intact. Many factors in human experience such as anxiety, fear, anguish, dread, death and suffering have made the world unsafe. If these themes mentioned plague the life of man, the reality of the broken world is not in question. Marcel observed that the emphasis placed on the functionality of the individual has made him or her an object for various productive activities thereby negating the human essence. This person who has lost awareness of the sense of the ontological, the one whose capacity to wonder has atrophied to the extent of becoming a vestigial trait, is an example of the influence of the misapplication of the idea of function. The loss of ontological sense or awareness which is anchored on functionality, makes man a mere machine whose life is monotonous. At this juncture, our life becomes boring, not challenging any more, and the most problematic is the loss of wonder and the castration of the intellect. [14]

Marcel gave an emphasis on the *homo viator* that it should be recognized that world indeed is broken. In the awareness of the world is broken there is the only moment where *homo viator* can proceed to his journey for he acknowledges the presence of a need to transcend not just mere passive like just living. This emphasis of Marcel could also be seen as a debunk against the optimism for the optimism gives a hint that there is an escape or end to this brokenness of the world where the individual or the *homo viator* denies reality of the broken state of the world. The optimism rejects the reality of brokenness of the world that in time, the world will form into its natural state but world is not as perfect as it seems rather it's fissure, it's cracks is the world's natural form. The catastrophes, suffering and tribulations are what constitute the world itself. However, as pessimistic as it seems, Marcel is not a pessimist where in fact he is the total opposite. He introduces the new face of optimism which he coined hope which he literally refers to as transcendence. Hope accepts and recognized the reality of broken world but the brokenness of the world does not cease the *homo viator* from his journey for in hope there is a transcendence and recognition of the self that gives an existence a meaning. Marcel wrote that "hope is for the soul what breathing is for the living organism. Where hope is lacking, the soul dries up and withers. We might say that hope is the availability of a soul which has entered intimately enough into the experience of communion to accomplish in the teeth of will and knowledge, the transcendent act, the act establishing the vital regeneration of which this experience affords the pledge and first fruits [8]. Furthermore, once man has no experienced of hope he's life is meaningless because he cannot get out from

the reality of captivity that man has experiencing. He will drown into darkness and not able to see the mysterious light that hope will bring. For it is hope which gives a meaningfulness to man's existence [8]. So, what differs Hope from optimism is that it recognized the failures and fissures of the world and the existence itself. There is no plan of escape from the problems of the world but there is a plan to move forward despite of its fractures. Hope does not intend to give an escape but intend to present the problems of the world but gives reasons to go further.

## 6. Pandemic, Poverty and Corruption as a Concept of Broken World

Marcel on one occasion asked a question whether the world is broken in nature or broken due to a certain time or certain period only. He answered: for my own part, I would certainly answer, without any hesitation, that this break in the world cannot be considered as something that has come about in recent years, or even during recent centuries, in a world originally unbroken. To say so would not only be contrary, I repeat, to all historical likelihood but even metaphysically indefensible. For we should be forced in that case to admit that some incomprehensible external action or other has been brought to bear on the world; but it is all too clear that the world itself must have already contained the possibility of being broken. But what we can say, without contradicting either the recorded facts of history or the more obvious principles of metaphysics, is that in our time the broken state of the world has become a much more obvious thing than it would have been for, say, a seventeenth-century philosopher [9]. The world-is-broken and not was broken. The brokenness of the world refers to trials and how it affects the individual where they cease to live and just part of a functioning world. When an individual becomes more into work or more into functioning in what the world requires him, it cease him to move forward. The moment that he moves for the requirements of the world sake and not for himself, the alienation occurs. He becomes a machine where he exists but ceased on living.

Living is not doing the requirements of the world but it is more on freedom and experience where you able to reflect about life to be aware and cherish the moments in your journey. Trials are the cracks of the world for Marcel that holds man to reflect; trial which may refer to as captivity or darkness. It was also mentioned on a journal article that Marcel claimed It is important to note that Marcel sees trial as a "darkness" and a "captivity." Furthermore, being a captive involves oneself in being "alienated" e.g. sterile artist/writer, the invalid/sick [7]. These trials that Marcel saw during his time could be paralleled to Pandemic, Poverty and Corruption which are the mainstream faces of trials in the contemporary world. Pandemic, Poverty and Corruption are the rediscovered broken world for it challenges the human existence by affecting the homo viator's drive to move forward. It makes the individual cease to appreciate and

acknowledge the existence and moments in the journey. This broken world which I refer to as pandemic, poverty and corruption sets a standard of living where people prioritized their functionality and with this functionality I refer as what the broken world requires us to live (money, work and hardships). The desire for the material thing becomes the priority and seems to be what defines life. The intensity of suffering that the broken world provides made the contemporary man neglect his being for it deludes the individual to focus on materiality which paradoxically defined as living. The pandemic, poverty and corruption pushed people to double their work to the point where living is all about making money or focusing on jobs and not living the moments of life. The optimism in the contemporary world which drives people to go further in the midst of pandemic, poverty and corruption has become prominent which creates an illusion that there is an escape from these sufferings. However, optimism as good as it seems only captivates the individual from living for they cannot realized the reality that the world is indeed broken and we cannot do anything to fix this for this is the world's nature. These pandemic, poverty and corruption is what makes the broken world more obvious. The suffering that it provides made the individual stops from living but mere existing. Again, the world is broken for there is the existence of suffering with the face of pandemic, poverty and corruption. Furthermore, because contemporary man ceases on living for he neglects from reflecting and realizing moments of life.

## 7. Conclusion

The world is imperfect and broken. It seems that life and sufferings are inseparable and escape is a paradox that cease man from realizing reality. Life is never too easy nor too comforting for we live in a broken world. The problem of left behind, problem of unloved, problem of being alienated from ourselves. Problem of evaluating our lives in accordance with our functions are some parts of the broken world but pandemic, poverty and corruption are the mainstreams. Pandemic, poverty and corruption are the reflection of the brokenness of the world. today, we are tending to focus for material things and forget the vital things in life such us, ourselves, absolute thou and others. These are the effect of the tribulations in the world. We are being drowned into materiality for the fissures of the world deludes us that life is all about materiality. With these, misery or despair occurred. According to Marcel: Each of us can, at certain times, have the feeling that the world is set up in such a way as only to foment in us the temptation to despair. From the moment that this temptation makes its presence felt, incitements adapted to reinforce it seem to surge up on every side. That is what I meant when I previously wrote about being encompassed by despair. It is as if suddenly life presents to me the petrifying face of the medusa, this is the hour of tragic pessimism. Surely it can, if need be, emerge into a philosophy of heroism but it can also lead either to suicide or to the surrender of a being who breaks down when pitted against a scandalous

world [10]. Pessimistic as it seems this paper only presents reality that the world is indeed broken due to its tribulations with the face of pandemic, poverty and corruption. Hence, man neglects reflection and awareness of reality. However, embracing the reality of sufferings and realizing that the world is broken, the individual can still live life worth living. The awareness of the broken world and realizing there is no escape will at least give the individual ways on how to make most of the living despite of the brokenness. It only takes realization of reality for one to be able to live life with significance.

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