



WOMEN ♀ AND PHILOSOPHY

AN INITIAL MOVE TOWARDS A MORE
INCLUSIVE PRACTICE OF PHILOSOPHY
IN THE PHILIPPINE CONTEXT

EDITED BY:
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- **Oriental Thought and East-West Comparative Philosophy**
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The journal primarily caters to works by professional philosophers and graduate students of philosophy, but welcomes contributions from other fields (literature, cultural studies, gender studies, political science, sociology, history, anthropology, economics, inter alia) with strong philosophical content.

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————— *In Memory of* —————
JOSEPHINE ACOSTA-PASRICHA
————— 1945-2020 —————

Women and Philosophy: An Initial Move Towards a More Inclusive Practice of Philosophy in the Philippine Context

*Marella Ada V. Mancenido-Bolaños
and Darlene O. Demandante*¹

Introduction

Philosophy, in general, is a male-dominated discipline. Some fifty years ago, pursuing a career in philosophy was less imaginable to women than to men. Women who choose a career in philosophy are often in danger of being labelled as insane because of the often-conventionalised roles attributed to women in society as domestic carers who are confined to the walls of a home's private space. On the other hand, philosophy as a discipline which is identified with objective intellectual aptitude was once exclusive to the male gender and associated with ideas such as "mind and choice, freedom from body, autonomy, and the public."² Today, while there have been vast improvements in the experiences of women doing academic philosophy, women continue to be one of the visible groups of minorities in this field of work.

In 2009, the feminist philosopher Sally Haslanger published an article in *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*³ where she expressed her rage about how women in academic philosophy communities are being treated. Her striking observations include the fact that contributions of women philosophers remain undervalued. As a matter of fact, top journals and tenure track positions in philosophy departments are often male dominated.

¹ For correspondence, readers may contact Dr. Marella Ada V. Mancenido-Bolaños at mmbolanos@ust.edu.ph and Dr. Darlene O. Demandante at dodemandante@ust.edu.ph.

² Raia Prokhovnik, *Rational Woman: A Feminist Critique of Dichotomy* (London: Routledge, 1999), 103. See also, Mari Mikkola, *The Wrong of Injustice: Dehumanization and Its Role in Feminist Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

³ See Sally Haslanger, "Changing the Ideology and Culture of Philosophy: Not by Reason (Alone)," in *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 23:2 (April–June 2008).

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Haslanger also noted how women still suffer blatant discrimination in the academe, especially in terms of the existence of an overarching male-biased schema of hiring faculties. She pointed out the strong stereotyping of women's role in the academe as half-baked philosophers and full-time house caretakers due to strong cultural bias.

The same observations were echoed by Linda Alcoff in her edited collection of autobiographical essays by women who have succeeded in philosophy.⁴ Alcoff's introduction to the edited volume narrates some struggles of women in the academe, spanning back to the experience of graduate students in the United States who were first admitted to the graduate school program to become professional philosophers. Alcoff narrates how female graduate students of philosophy experience standard inferior treatment as they are subjected to unique challenges such as when they are often compelled to act like their male counterparts and exhibit male virtues.⁵ She further opined that faced with these specific challenges which determine our success in philosophy as a profession, we often resort to silence and subservience.

Aside from the professional challenges, women are also subjected to overt and explicit forms of sexual harassment.⁶ Women, moreover, suffer from the stress of keeping pregnancies secret or delaying their pregnancies prior to tenureship. Some are encouraged to keep one's child-care responsibilities invisible, if not to a minimum, whereas men are admired for attending to their children. A number of institutions enforce compulsory heterosexuality and would often not hire women who deviate from normative traditional standards. Within these conditions, Haslanger and Alcoff recognise that thriving and even surviving can be a painful and difficult experience for women. Their main reference was Western academia, wherein they both belonged. Their observations did not cover what is beyond that, especially in Asian, African, or Latin American contexts wherein women suffer the same fate if not even worse.

In the Philippines' purportedly "big four" universities, where there are existing departments of philosophy, the range of the proportion of female

⁴ Linda Martín Alcoff, ed., *Singing in the Fire: Voices of Women in Philosophy* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2013).

⁵ Women often had to ignore their body pains, inconveniences both physical and emotional in order to function 'efficiently.'

⁶ Attesting to what Alcoff has described above, one of the editors for this special issue presented a paper on Simone de Beauvoir's Theory of Sexual Liberation from the *History of Sex* in a National Conference with the theme, *Discoursing Human Sexuality: Eros, Ethos, Nous*, organized by the Philosophical Association of the Philippines (PAP, Inc.), held last 10 to 12 April 2012. Ninety percent of the participants were male Philosophy teachers. During the open forum, some participants raised questions which are loaded with sexual innuendos rather than inquire about the paper which was presented.

faculty members is between 32-35%. Outside of Manila, the data is not any better. For example, in the University of San Carlos, Cebu only 22% of philosophy faculty are women and in Ateneo de Davao, only 29% are women. Only the faculty profile of the University of the Philippines, Baguio looks promising in terms of equality in gender distribution. However, while this looks good, it could not stand to ensure that female philosophy faculties do not or did not go through the negative experiences described previously, or whether the procedures for hiring faculties, tenureship, and research environment provide equal opportunities for all genders.⁷

As there is hardly any data about the status of women doing philosophy in Philippines, or Filipina women doing philosophy, our insights are limited to our own experiences and the experiences of our colleagues whom we have had the chance of conversing with, as well as a small number

⁷ In terms of publication, we use *Kritike* as a reference to demonstrate women's underrepresentation in philosophy. *Kritike* has only published forty-two (42) articles by women authors in a span of twelve (12) years (2007–2019). These 42 articles are attributable to twenty-five (25) female authors. While the journal utilises a double-blind review which removes the gender bias and focuses solely on the merit of the paper, the number of women who published in *Kritike* attests to the fact that in terms of publication, women are still a minority. *Kritike's* editorial board, moreover, is also predominantly comprised of men. There are only eight (8) editors and three (3) members in the International Advisory Board who are women. Fleurdeliz Altez-Albela, Melanie Mejia, Marella Mancenido-Bolaños, Darlene Demandante, and Tracy Llanera were initially the only female members in the editorial board because they were the only ones who finished their graduate degrees in the early years of the journal. Gian Agbisit, Julia De Castro, and Pia Tenedero were invited as part of the board when the journal was already expanding.

Women are also underrepresented in major philosophical associations in the country both in terms of officership and membership. Currently, Philosophical Association of the Philippines (PAP, Inc.) only has two (2) women who are members of the board. The same is the case with the Philippine National Philosophical Research Society (PNPRS). On the other hand, there are no women in the board of officers of the Philosophical Association of Visayas and Mindanao (PHAVISMINDA). Today, there is still no professional association for Filipina philosophers which can prove to be essential in terms of improving the presence and participation of women in philosophy in the Philippines or Filipina philosophers in general.

On the positive side of things, international scholarship for Filipina women in philosophy has significantly improved as there have been more and more women who have ventured outside the Philippines either to pursue their doctorate in philosophy or become prominent scholars. They pushed their way into the academe with sheer determination, talent, and guts. Tracy Llanera, Kelly Agra, Chistine Tan, Rowena Palacios, Leslie dela Cruz, Lovelyn Paclibar, Preciosa de Joya, PJ Mariano-Capistrano, and Darlene Demandante to name a few. Among these women intellectuals, Tracy Llanera has won two post doctorates in prestigious universities and is about to launch two books: one with Palgrave Macmillan and the other one with Routledge. Llanera's story is an inspiring example of how women push their way into academic philosophy. Her article "The Brown Babe's Burden" published by *Hypatia* in 2019 narrates her experiences of struggling against the challenges of being a coloured woman in a male dominated field. See Tracy P. Llanera, "The Brown Babe's Burden," in *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 34:2 (2019).

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of articles that attempt to compile the work of Filipino philosophers. The closest we had to ascertaining these contributions of prominent women doing philosophy was Demeterio's compilation of the works of Filipino philosophers wherein there were only four female names Angeles, Canilao, Mananzan, and Quito.⁸

This list was, of course, incomplete as well as outdated; only the contributions of seasoned philosophers and pioneers of philosophical thought in the country have been counted, wherein the majority, obviously, are male. The limited data that we have already provides us a glimpse of the unfortunate reality that philosophy in the Philippine academe is not ready for women. There has been some neglect, whether intentional or not, and it continues to be challenging for women to thrive in this current environment. There is hardly any research on the status of women in Philosophy, not to mention that a number of people have a twisted and biased understanding of feminism and feminist philosophy. There are attacks on the credibility of feminism as an approach to social problems,⁹ and more often than not, our complaints are labelled as emotional outbursts rather than symptoms of an existing discrimination. There is, furthermore, a lack of serious engagement with feminist paradigms which have great potential for addressing a number of social issues. The struggle we experience because of our gender does not even include the fact that doing philosophy is not considered as a serious career in the Philippines.

A Call for Improving Women's Participation in Philosophy

When we began working on this special issue, we thought we had a very simple and straightforward goal that is to solicit works by women doing philosophy in the academe in order to give more attention to the interesting work that they have been doing. Little did we know that we would be confronted with a glaring gap in the data on the status of women doing philosophy in Philippine academic circles. There is no doubt that lists of women authors and taxonomies of articles in philosophy written by these authors exist in different scholarly studies, but they remain incomplete and unorganised. There is no existing centralised database which would have made it easier to form a community of women scholars who have interest in

⁸ See Feorillo Petronillo Demeterio III and Lesline Anne L. Liwanag, "Emerita Quito, Mary John Mananzan, and Filipina Philosophy: A Critical Comparison of the Thoughts of the Two Leading Female Philosophers of the Philippines," in *Humanities Diliman*, 15:1 (January–June 2018).

⁹ See Jeremiah Joven Joaquin, "Feminism without Philosophy: A Polemic," in *Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy*, 10:1 (June 2016) and Noelle Leslie G. dela Cruz, "Why Social Movements Need Philosophy (A Reply to "Feminism without Philosophy: A Polemic" by Jeremiah Joven Joaquin)," in *Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy*, 11:1 (June 2017).

pushing forward the agenda of a fair and equal treatment of women in the academe or simply support each other's research endeavours.

This issue of *Kritike* aims to present women embarking on the task of doing philosophy in the Philippines. It is comprised of ten papers that directly engage feminist paradigms, contribute to various issues, and/or do conceptual philosophy in different areas of research interests. The contributions in this volume are organised into three categories.

The first group of papers tackle Feminist paradigms as conceptual tools on how we should approach philosophising, in order that it be sensitive to the social identity of the female gender.

Josephine Pasricha in her piece titled, "Systems Thinking, Gender, and Sex," shares with us a survey document on the success of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals of 2000-2015, focusing on its provisions on gender equality and women empowerment. She used *systems thinking* and *presencing* as methods to lay down her arguments. She also experimented on a new trend of writing with one-sentence paragraphs "continuously flowing in a narrative." Pasricha ended her essay with recommendations on how the academe can further their research and advocacy on policies using systems thinking.

Kelly Agra, in "Epistemic Injustice, Epistemic Paralysis, and Epistemic Resistance: A (Feminist) Liberatory Approach to Epistemology," offers a thought-provoking "interrogation of the ways in which power relations between social identities create conditions of hermeneutical inequality and testimonial privileging and/or marginalization within the field of philosophy." Her project of an epistemic liberatory framework of philosophy draws from philosophical literature in feminist, decolonial, and critical race studies. She argues that if philosophy were to develop as a just institution, there is a need to explore the role of social identity in knowledge formation. The paper makes powerful use of feminist critique in order to surface what Agra calls, "philosophy's insensitivity to its own insensitivity."

In "Immanence and Autobiography: Gilles Deleuze's *a life* and Sarah Kofman's *autobiogriffure*," Jean Tan stages an encounter between the autobiographical writings of Kofman and Deleuze's "Immanence: A Life," in order to draw out the relation between autobiography and philosophy. In her insightful discussion about these two thinkers whose writings significantly differ, she confirms her initial intuition that "there is something courageous and transgressive in the way in which Kofman refused to disavow the particularity of her voice for the sake of attaining the anonymity of the authorial philosophical voice" thus establishing the significance of the feminine voice which is often dismissed as hysterical, emotional, and subjective. The most striking finding of Tan's reflection is that autobiography, as a form of writing, opens a wound in philosophy which enables philosophy

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to confront its inadequacies and dissonance between consciousness and its field.

Ma. Theresa Payongayong, in her piece titled “Reflexive-Liberative Feminist Ethics,” aims to “contribute to the enrichment of knowledge on Filipino feminist ethics.” She attempts to establish a Filipino feminist ethics based on the narratives of select Filipino feminists. She asserts that ethical issues are rooted in the traditional notion of women and their gender roles. She ends her paper by encouraging feminists not to simply reject or accept a value, but to stand by their informed decision. She then suggests that a Filipino feminist ethics must be reflexive, where women are given the chance to choose and understand their choices. It must also be liberative because these choices are not for the benefit of women alone, but for the benefit of humanity as well.

The second group of papers discusses the Feminist paradigm as applied to social issues. We describe these papers as provocations on how feminist paradigms could possibly make a difference when looking at some of the problems in society.

Marella Mancenido-Bolaños’s article titled, “Iris Marion Young’s Faces of Oppression and the Oppression of Women in the *Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012*” takes us into the tedious task of creating a bill that consistently rejects the rights of women over their own bodies. She describes how policies which are not grounded in the experiences of women turn out to be oppressive and counterintuitive to women’s welfare. She invites us to reflect about how a public policy, enactment, or bill which is disconnected from the reality of women’s lives can cause serious problems for the welfare of women. In her reflection, she used Iris Marion Young’s faces of oppression to show the various forms of oppression experienced by women during the crafting of the bills.

In “When Your Country Cannot Care for Itself: A Filipino Feminist Critique of Care-based Political Theories,” Noelle Leslie Dela Cruz addresses the politics and crisis of care. She investigates the plight of women being the primary caregiver be it in the form of paid or unpaid labor. She considers the crisis of care as a form of injustice as it is still considered to be in the sphere of “women’s work.” She then criticizes the problem of poverty and the incapacity of the Philippine government to provide economic security to its citizens which leads to the challenging experience of women who need to provide for their families and women who are forced to leave the country and become underpaid domestic workers. Despite the fact that these overseas women domestic workers keep the economy afloat, the government still does not provide them with policies to ensure their security.

The third group of papers consists of women writing on various topics about philosophy engaging in the exercise of redirecting away from

more commonly known perspectives in philosophy, and suggesting alternative conceptual take on politics, aesthetics, thinking, scientific approach, and literature.

In “Aesthetics, Politics, and the Embodied Political Subject,” Darlene Demandante explores the link between the body, aesthetics, and politics using the works of Jacques Rancière. She looks into the relation between political subjectivity, aesthetics, and politics, arguing that even the unassuming action of the body can be political. Her essay explores the varied potentials of aesthetics to send out political meanings through the action of the body.”

Maria Majorie R. Purino’s paper titled “A Revisiting of Heidegger’s Thinking-Thinking and Zen’s Non-rationality,” draws on the connection between Heidegger’s thinking and Zen Buddhism’s notion of *satori* in order to deduce an idea of thinking that is not calculative but rather meditative. “This meditative thinking,” she wrote, is “a kind of thanking.” Purino adds that thanking “springs from memory,” a remembrance that is “brought about by a sense of fondness of that which is being remembered.” In her careful explication of the connection between Heidegger’s notion of thinking and Zen Buddhism’s notion of *satori*, Purino argues that bereft thinking characteristic of our time could be eliminated if we take the stance of meditative thinking and apply Zen’s non-rationality.

Vida Valverde, in “Argument from Psychological Difference: Why It Makes Sense to Be a Scientific Realist Than an Instrumentalist,” discusses the difference between scientific realism and instrumentalism. Using Devitt’s theory as a foundation for her arguments, she offers us reasons why scientific realism should be favored over instrumentalism. She asserts that this is ultimately because scientific realism is grounded in “existing material reality,” whereas instrumentalism only offers us a convenient fiction that systematizes our experience.

Lastly, Fleurdeliz Altez-Albela in her piece titled “Looking Through the Sweetheart, Flamboyant and Insane: Rereading Rizal’s Critique of the 19th Century Filipina in *Noli Me Tangere*,” shows “how Rizal critically portrayed the struggles of the Filipina as an individual and as a member of the state.” Through an analysis of three Filipina characters in Rizal’s novel, she speculates about his depiction of some stereotypes of the female native during Spanish colonization. In her analysis of the three female characters, she offers a glimpse of the Philippine national hero’s musings about how to be identified as a dignified and empowered Filipina. Altez-Albela’s paper goes against the grain of what is being argued in this issue, particularly on the problem of establishing the identity of women as providing a role of support in building a masculine institution such as the state. This paper invites ambivalences and tensions in the conceptual understanding of what

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is feminine in order to push further the discourse about women in philosophy.

Conclusion: Of Purposes and Hopes

We exerted the effort to produce this collection with the firm belief that it is about time for a special issue on women doing philosophy in the Philippines to be published and made available to the public, if we are to move towards a better direction in the manner that we do philosophy in the country. Having in mind questions such as “At what level do we want to bring our philosophising?” and “In what manner do we want to take the direction of philosophy forward?”, we think that one of the many possible replies to these questions pushes us to be more inclusive and find new ways of thinking that could address the undervalued contributions of women who are doing philosophy in the country. We talk about doing philosophy at the margins, but we must check our privileges as members of the academe and become sensitive to the aggressions that academic philosophy can often be blind to.

The set of problems we have addressed in this special issue is just the tip of the iceberg. We thus hope that this work may serve as an invitation for a more inclusive practice of philosophy from marginalised groups (in terms of gender, race, disability, etc.). It is about time that we focus on recognising these existing vulnerabilities and move forward in a manner that does not attempt to merely save face (the masculine way) but engages in these painful realities in order to set the stage for more potential answers. Ultimately, we hope to start the practice of seriously recognising Filipina philosophers or women doing philosophy in the Philippines in conferences, panels, journals, public debates, and workshops in order to open more spaces for women in philosophical discourses.

We hope to embark on an ambitious project of paving the way, as Quito did thirty years ago, when she laid the foundations for faculties to have a collective voice,¹⁰ only this time with emphasis on women and other minorities in philosophy. Through collective action and the power of community where members complement each other’s shortcomings, and highlight each other’s strengths, we aspire to build a community of women philosophers who can support each other and help each other thrive amidst the specific challenges of engaging in philosophy as a gendered person. Most importantly, we hope to invite a community of women philosophers and academics who take interest in issues surrounding Filipina philosophers.

¹⁰ Anne Quito, “Emerita Quito: The Philippine’s greatest female philosopher has died,” in *Quartz* (17 September 2017), <<https://qz.com/725370/emerita-quito-the-greatest-forgotten-filipino-philosopher-has-died/>>.

A Tribute to Dr. Josephine Acosta-Pasricha (1945–2020)

When we started brainstorming about this issue, Dr. Josephine Acosta-Pasricha was the first person we had in mind, being the only professor who taught us feminism and women empowerment back in college, at the University of Santo Tomas. She was the first to respond to our invitation and was also the first to submit her paper. It is remarkable that at her age and stature, she humbly submitted her paper to be reviewed and edited by her former students. It is even more impressive how she edited her paper according to the suggestions of her reviewers. She mentioned that once her paper gets published, she wanted to show it to her mentors from the University of Pennsylvania.

In our final correspondence last 14 May 2020, she submitted the final edited version of her essay, telling us that “you can still ask me to change some things until it is finally published.” We are publishing her work in the exact format she submitted it. On 1 May 2020, she sent an email explaining how narratology, systems thinking, and presencing works. She said, “I was regretting that Romy¹¹ is not alive to see this post-human Data Storytelling. He would have been happy and in glee.” She has joined him too soon.

Dr. Josephine Maxima Acosta-Pasricha was a Ford Foundation fellow at the University of Delhi from 1976 to 1977, where she studied Oriental Aesthetics and Philosophy. In 2000, she finished her Doctorate in Philosophy (summa cum laude) in the University of Santo Tomas with a dissertation titled, “A Hermeneutic Translation in Filipino and Gadamerian Meditation of the Indian Epic, Ramayana.” As a renowned Indologist, she later edited Marvin Reyes and Paz Panganiban’s Filipino translation of the *Kama Sutra*.

She was an Assistant Professor at De La Salle University, Manila from July 1985 to March 1994. She was also a Professorial Lecturer at the University of Santo Tomas from July 1966 to March 2013, where she taught Feminism, women empowerment, Aesthetics, and Hermeneutics. Dr. Pasricha was also a Visiting Scholar at San Carlos University, Cebu from April 2000 to March 2013, and a Visiting Scholar on Systems Thinking at the University of Pennsylvania from 2010 to 2013. Her recent publications include *The Future is Love and Marriage* (2015) and *Story Scapes: Pope Francis Effect* (2015).

Where she pushed the frontiers of philosophy in the Philippines through her scholarship, we remember her as a teacher who nurtured her students into finding their own voices through her reassuring demeanor. She

¹¹ Br. Romualdo “Romy” E. Abulad, SVD, Ph.D. was a once a student, and later a colleague of Dr. Pasricha. Br. Romy transitioned to the next life last 17 December 2019, about half a year before Dr. Pasricha’s passing. Both intellectuals were pioneers of philosophy in the Philippines.

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epitomised a passionate disposition towards teaching about feminism and the plight of women. Dr. Pasricha was gentle yet firm in her scholarly interests and advocacies. She knew how to draw strength from her femininity and demonstrated how women should be confident and empowered amidst the male-dominated discipline of philosophy.

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Systems Thinking, Gender, and Sex

Josephine Maxima Acosta-Pasricha

Abstract: This is an academic paper formally presented twice in Asian Philosophical Conferences and many times as a call to action in universities in Asia and the US. It is recently rethought and reframed, reinvented and reengineered through Systems Thinking, suggested for use by philosophy professors teaching feminism, gender studies and women studies. It surveys the outcomes of the Millennium Development Goals of 2000–2015 by the present author as a witness and participant in conferences and movements. The author brings into Presence and Presencing the momentous achievements of the “Empowerment of Women and the Girl Child.” It is now especially relevant with the establishment of UN Women, the UN Entity for gender equality and empowerment of women and girls on January 2011; the Millennium Development Goals 2000–2015; and Sustainable Development Goals 2015–2030. Michelle Bachelet, president of Chile 2006–2010, and then again for another term 2014–2018, a doctor of medicine, defense specialist and divorced/single mother of three children, is the first UN Women head, appointed as undersecretary general of the United Nations on 15 September 2010. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka is the current executive director of UN Women since 19 August 2013.

Keywords: systems thinking, United Nations Millennium Development Goals of 2000-2015, gender, women empowerment

I. Historical Context

The Millennium Summit, which came out with the Millennium Development Goals in 2000, has celebrated its 10th anniversary on 20–22 September 2010 at the United Nations in New York. The heads of state/government and the representatives of 192 countries attended and assessed what their countries have done in ten years and what they still have to do for the next five to ten years.

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US President Barack Obama said in 2009: “We will support the Millennium Development Goals and approach next year’s summit with a Global Plan to make them a reality and set our own sights to the eradication of extreme poverty in our time.” At the United Nations in 2010, President Obama presented a New US Global Development Policy that is founded on three criteria of winner countries—good governance, economic stability, and results/outcomes. This shows a very strategic leadership because it is “soft power” in action—the ability to set and attain goals without the use of force. Then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon also distributed “A Global Strategy for Women’s and Children’s Health,” a strategic handbook that contains policies, processes, programs, best practices and actions to help countries cut maternal mortality and infant mortality by two thirds by 2015. Policies are rules for selecting any means towards a goal or defining function. Processes are sequences of actions directed to goals. Programs are combinations of actions directed to a particular goal. Practices are repeated actions. Actions are one-time choices of means.¹

“Stand up, take action and make noise for the MDGs” also happened around the world on 17–19 September 2010. So “Wake me up when the data is over.”²

Feminists got waken up when the Millennium Document 2010 got signed, which promised US \$26 Billion for maternal and infant health care for 2011 alone, and US \$40 Billion for the next five years to the Global Fund. Then, women could do Data Story-Telling with MDG road warriors on the ground. Women could do “Storyfying” (defined as to narrate or to describe in a story) the experiences of women, especially rural women, at the UN Commission of the Status of Women. It is People Power People³ in action, a trend started by icon Corazon Aquino for change management and transformational leadership. Rio+20 followed in June 2012.

The Commission on the Status of Women and member states met on 27 February to 9 March 2012 at the United Nations in New York to pave the way for joining Rio+20 on Sustainable Development. The present author submitted her paper on “Teaching/Learning Gender and Sex Through Systems Thinking in Asia and Africa”⁴ to the pool of Rio+20 in Rio de Janeiro,

¹ See Russell Ackoff, Herbert J. Addison, and Sally Bibb, *A Little Book of f-Laws: 13 Common Sins of Management* (Devon, UK: Triarchy Press, 2006).

² Lori L. Silverman, *Wake Me Up When the Data is Over: How Organizations Use Stories to Drive Results* (USA: John Wiley & Sons, 2006).

³ Corazon Aquino, in 1986, originated the idea of People Power during her presidential campaign and subsequent People Power Revolution.

⁴ Josephine Acosta-Pasricha, “Teaching/Learning Gender and Sex Through Systems Thinking in Asia and Africa” (paper presented at the Rio+20: United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 20–22 June 2012).

Brazil meeting on 20–22 June 2012. The author joined the debates and discussions on the creation of seventeen Sustainable Development Goals.

UN Women Director Michelle Bachelet called for women’s equal participation in all spheres of life as fundamental to democracy and justice. Countries with higher gender equality enjoy higher level of growth, she said. Ban Ki-moon said that equality for women and girls is not only a basic human right; it is a social and economic imperative.

A corollary to the themes is the stand of Ban Ki-moon with gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people, calling on all countries to join him. Any attack on LGBT people is an attack on universal values; the rights of LGBT is part of human rights, Ban Ki-moon says.⁵

II. Introduction

The metaphor here of Systems Thinking is when a leaf* in the Himalaya ranges flaps its wings, like a butterfly in the Amazon jungle, it can conceivably lead to storms in the South China Sea.

A System, according to Russell Ackoff, is defined as

A set of interrelated elements. Thus, a system is an entity which is composed of at least two elements and a relation that holds between each of its elements and at least one other elements in the set. Each of a system’s elements is connected to every other element, directly or indirectly. Furthermore, no subset of elements is unrelated to any other subset.⁶

It implies two foundations:⁷ (1) a Whole contains two or more parts, each of which can affect the properties or behavior of the Whole; (2) None of the properties has an independent effect on the Whole because parts are all interconnected.

* Editors’ Note: The author was perhaps alluding to the butterfly effect when she described the flapping of leaves in the Himalayas.

⁵United Nations, “Ban calls for efforts to secure equal rights for LGBT community,” in *United Nations Sustainable Development Goals* (21 September 2016), <<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2016/09/ban-calls-for-efforts-to-secure-equal-rights-for-lgbt-community/>>.

⁶Russell Ackoff, “Towards a System of Systems Concept,” in *Management Science*, 17:11 (July 1971), 662. See also Russell Ackoff, “Systems Thinking Speech by Dr. Russell Ackoff,” *Awal Street Journal in YouTube* (1 November 2015), <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EbLh7rZ3rhU>>.

⁷Ackoff, “Systems Thinking Speech.”

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The Butterfly Effect in Systems Thinking means that “the flapping of a butterfly wing in Brazil could stir the air that causes chain reaction of greater and greater proportions, and ultimately results in a raging storm over Europe.”⁸ It means that a simple thing, like a royal wedding or the first overseas trip to Canada and the United States of a royal couple like Prince William and Catherine, Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, or Prince Harry and Megan, Duke and Duchess of Sussex can have chain reactions of bigger and greater proportions. Another example of the Butterfly Effect is how then Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Liberian peace activist Leymah Gbowee, and Yemeni human rights activist and journalist Tawakkul Karman—three outstanding women from Africa and the Middle East won the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize, and then have great chain reactions of big and great proportions for all women in Africa and the world.

Then US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in her visit to Busan, Korea to attend the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, said that nations which invest in women’s employment, health, and education tend to have more economic growth. She suggested that countries put women at the center of development efforts. Clinton then proceeded to visit Myanmar and meet Aung San Suu Kyi, pro-democracy icon.

The Commission of the Status of Women also met along with member states on 27 February to 9 March 2012 at the United Nations.

The themes are well focused:

- Prong 1: empowerment of rural women to eradicate hunger and poverty.
- Prong 2: financing for the empowerment of women.
- Prong 3: education of men and women, boys and girls.

Events can have great impact on the environmental, economic, and geopolitical systems. Hopefully, such events can be life-giving to the youth, to women and girls, to the marginalized, deprived and disabled. The metaphor of conversation here between them and the world is also a rich image to understand the complexity of the human person, human systems, and complex adaptive systems that can unite and differentiate countries and peoples. It has great potential for discourse democracy and peace.⁹

⁸ Daryl Conner, *Leading at the Edge of Chaos: How to Create the Nimble Organization* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1998), 22.

⁹ See Michael Cavanaugh, “Coaching from a Systemic Perspective: A Complex Adaptive Conversation,” in *Evidence Based Coaching Handbook: Putting Best Practices to Work for your Clients*, ed. by Dianne R. Stober and Anthony M. Grant (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2006), 313–354.

III. Statement of the Problem

The problem of this paper is how philosophy can promote gender equality and empowerment of girls and women—as mandated by the Millennium Development Goals 2000–2015 (MDGs) of the United Nations and seconded by the Sustainable Development Goals 2015–2030—through Systems Thinking. The paper does not do “philosophy by justification” but “philosophy by praxis;” because it is role-modeling and praxis that is more effective for change management and behavior modification of masses of people in the field.

IV. Systems Thinking

Since the 1950s up to today, Systems Thinking has found out that analysis, statistics, data, PowerPoint presentations of goals and outcomes are excellent for international and national policy makers and global fund donors; but they do not generally touch and change people on the ground. Quantitative fragmentation impacts on Intellectual Capital and Systems Optimization but at the expense of Public Mobilization. For example, the different definitions of extreme poverty or acute poverty in different countries also muddle the conversation and confuse the dialogue.

The 1968–1981 World Bank president, Robert McNamara, brought the discipline of Systems Analysis or process analysis and the term “absolute poverty” into public discourse in his famous Nairobi speech of 1973, where he suggested the two-pronged twin objectives of economic growth and poverty alleviation. What is poverty? McNamara says: “This is absolute poverty—a condition of life so limited as to prevent realization of the potential of the genes with which one is born, a condition of life so degrading as to insult human dignity, and yet a condition of life so common as to be the lot of some 40% of the peoples of developing countries.”¹⁰

Can Structures move 1.2 billion poor people in 2000, 70% of which are women, from the poverty level of living on US \$1 a day, up to the first rung of the ladder of the lower middle class by 2015? According to the World Bank, for the year 2005, there are 1.4 billion people or one quarter of the population of the developing world, who live below the poverty line of US \$1.25 a day based on 2005 prices.¹¹

¹⁰ Robert S. McNamara, “Address to the Board of Governors,” (address delivered to the Board of Governors of the World Bank at the *Annual General Meeting*, Nairobi, Kenya, 24 September 1973), <<http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/930801468315304694/pdf/Address-to-the-Board-of-Governors-by-Robert-S-McNamara.pdf>>, 7.

¹¹ “Purchasing Power Parity 2005,” in *World Health Organization*, <<https://www.who.int/choice/costs/ppp/en/>>.

According to the UNDP, for the year 2010, there are 1.7 billion people who live in acute poverty, with the new definition of poverty based on the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), as developed by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPDI). The MPI assesses a range of critical factors or “deprivations” at the household level—from education to health outcomes, assets, and key sources like water, sanitation, and electricity. As of June 2010, human population of the world is estimated at 6.82 billion. In 2009, the UN has estimated the Earth’s human population to be 6.8 billion. In 2009, China has already moved 300 million poor to the middle class (that is equal to the entire total population of 300 million Americans in the US). In 2015, human population is 7.2 billion, while in the US current census bureau world population estimate in June 2019 of the global population is 7.5 billion. The current world population as of 2020 is 7,734,770,873. So, would it take more than 15 to 25 years to move 1.4 billion poor people in the world up the ladder of human dignity, equality and “capabilities”?

Jeffrey Sachs, UN special adviser on the Millennium Development Goals, and director of Earth Institute at the Columbia University, says it is doable, practical and measurable, even monitorable and auditable. Through straightforward Systems, increasing efficiencies can be monitored by timelines, milestones, bottom-lines. Sachs says that the lack of financing for the MDGs has nothing to do with recession; it is caused by long-standing neglect. It is a political problem. There is a need for a New Aid Architecture, a new funding mechanism, a new window for funding in straightforward Design Systems. For example, the financing gap for MDG 5 (or maternal death in child birth and neonatal death of infants in the first 28 days of life) is US \$35 Billion—a mere 1/10 of 1% of US \$35 Trillion, which is the annual income of the developed world. The Millennium Document of 2010 promises US \$26 Billion for the year 2011 alone, and US \$40 Billion for the next five years to the Global Fund.

Ban Ki-moon stated that global poverty is expected to decline by 15% by 2015. There is a significant decrease of poverty noted in Asia. But there will still be 920 million people living below the poverty level, with hunger and malnourishment rising in South Asia. Progress is noted in the Sub Saharan Africa for access to primary education; progress in child health and gender equality in Latin America and the Caribbean. And there was that handbook of policies aimed at cutting maternal and infant mortality that Ban Ki-moon has distributed.¹² But has anybody in government ever read it or even put them into action?

¹² See United Nations, “General Strategy for Women’s and Children’s Health,” in *Every Woman and Child*, <http://www.everywomaneverychild.org/images/content/files/global_strategy/full/20100914_gswch_en.pdf>.

The world's highest number of unemployed is also on record, with 211 million people unemployed, and a need for 470 million new jobs in the next 10 years to keep pace. Ban Ki-moon says that the financial crisis, food crisis and fuel crisis have impacted on the MDGs, so there is a need for mid-course corrections to accelerate progress, and to open windows of funding up to 2015. Ban Ki-moon has announced the formation of an Outside Panel of government officials and civic leaders as advocacy group for the MDGs with Rwandan President Paul Kagame, and Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero as co-chairs. Among the members of the panel are: Nobel Laureates Mohammad Yunus and Wangari Maathai, former Chilean president Michelle Bachelet, Graca Machel, Wang Yingfan, Stine Bosse, Philippe Douste-Blazy, Mukesh Ambani, Hiromasa Yonekura, Dho Young-Shim, Julio Frenk, Akin Adisina, HHS Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser, Jan Eliasson, Bob Geldof, Ray Chanders, Bill Gates, Ted Turner and Jeffrey Sachs. Perhaps, countries and local villages could also organize an Outside Panel of government leaders, civic actionists and social activists, as advocacy group to track foreign financial aid and delivery on the ground of the MDGs and eventually the SDGs. The Outside Panel can be composed of an executive director, secretary-general, eight advocates, each of whom is a specialist on one MDG or one or more SDG. How government narrows its gap with the people and involve the people in goals and actions is the "magic bullet" here—Systems Thinking that can move forward to the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals.

People Power, People!

V. Outcomes of MDGs

In September 2000, the Millennium Summit was the largest gathering of world leaders at the United Nations, participated in by 150 heads of State or heads of Governments. The Millennium Summit addressed major global challenges, in an agenda for reducing poverty, its causes and manifestations. The Millennium Summit came out with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)—or global targets that the leaders of the world set in the Millennium Declaration, such as: how to pull 1.2 billion people in 2000 out of extreme poverty, how to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS, and how to protect the environment.

The most well-known target of the Millennium Declaration is the pledge to cut the number of people living in absolute poverty, which according to the United Nations definition of the term, poverty are people

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living on less than US one dollar per day. Then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in 2000, enumerated worrisome statistics as follows:¹³

1. 1.2 billion people live with less than US \$ 1.00 a day
2. 800 million are malnourished
3. 153 million children are below the ideal weight
4. 115 million children are not enrolled in school with 97 % of children in developing countries
5. 64 % of world's illiterate population are women
6. 80 % of world's refugee population are women
7. 60 % of children not enrolled in primary school are female
8. Every year, 10 million children die of preventable diseases
9. Every year, 500,000 women die when giving birth or during pregnancy

In Sub Saharan Africa, 1 in 16 women die in these conditions while in OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries, this same proportion is only 1 in every 2,800 women. In year 2000 alone, 22 million people died of HIV/AIDS, 13 million children lost their parents to HIV/AIDS virus, and 40 million people live with HIV/AIDS.

1. Annually, 300 million people are sick of malaria
2. Annually, 60 million people are infected with tuberculosis
3. In year 2000, 1 billion people in developing countries did not have access to drinking water
4. 2.4 billion people did not have access to sanitary services
5. 14 % of the world's population in the developed world, produces 44 % of the yearly CO2 total.

Kofi Annan, who was UN Secretary-General from 1997–2006, and chair of African Progress Panel, has concluded that US \$ 100 Billion are necessary to achieve the MDGs. He has said that 0.5 % of GDP of developed countries is necessary for raising that amount.

The Millennium Declaration wants to reduce absolute poverty by one half, bring down mortality of children under five years old by two thirds, and mortality of mothers dying in childbirth by three fourths, by the year 2015. It is now 2020 and the expected global outcomes have not been comprehensively reached; the progress is uneven, both by developed and developing economies, rich and poor countries. The gaps between goals and

¹³ World citizens would consider these as shameful/shameless numbers that result in a "Politics of Disgust."

key result areas are wide; the obstacles/blockages are stiff; many women and children are falling in the cracks.

Vietnam is phenomenal in that it has made all the MDGs! Ghana and Vietnam are the star performers, according to the Overseas Development Institute (ODI). Ten African countries have attained the target of halving poverty levels, ODI adds. Mwandama, Malawi presents the best prototype of a Millennium Development Village, a live document of public/private partnership, between an effective/efficient government and an empowered people with the Earth Institute of Columbia University, international organizations and philanthropic donors. But many countries lag behind, especially in women's problems. For example, the single biggest lag is in universal secondary education for young adolescent girls; because, there is no funding targeted for this. While the most lagging MDG is safe childbirth. Maternal deaths in pregnancy and childbirth, which have known scientific solutions, still hound the poorest of the poor.

Trending is the Feminization of Poverty! Extreme poverty has the face of Women and Girls. Why? How come? So, what now?

The present author believes that it is about time to evolve to Systems Thinking, from the First Order of change to the Second Order of change, from a frame-making developmental focus to a frame-breaking transformation, from the quantitative numbers game to a qualitative human side of change management and transformational leadership.¹⁴ There must be a change from the first order to the second order for the following reasons:

1. First Order Change occurs within a given Form which remains unchanged. Second Order Change is one where occurrence changes the Form itself.
2. First Order Change is change within the system. Second Order Change is change of the system.
3. First Order Change is development. Second Order Change is transformation.

The Millennium Summit has celebrated its 10th anniversary on 20–22 September 2010 at the United Nations in New York. The heads of State/Government and representatives of 192 countries have attended and assessed what their leaders and countries have done in ten years and what they still have to do for the next five to ten years. Surely, these are not the same leaders who met in the Millennium Summit 2000 and signed the Millennium Declaration as a social contract. But these are new and young political leaders and millennial actionists who contribute new energy and

¹⁴ Paul Bate, *Strategies for Cultural Change* (Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann, 1994), 163.

technologies, a stronger political will, a higher commitment of financial and human resources. Civil society and the youth are also around to mobilize public involvement on the ground.

Then US President Barack Obama (2009–2016) has announced a New US Development Policy that will give USAid to winner countries which answer the three criteria of good governance, economic stability, and results. In other words, the “basket cases” of countries with corrupt government, instability and inefficiencies would remain in the basket. But is it enough to suggest institutional restructuring and another global action plan? Is it enough to allocate 0.7% of the gross national income of developed countries to assist developing countries in identifying barriers/blockages and motivating stakeholders? Is it enough for Poverty activists/actionists, especially students and the youth, to drum up awareness in the media and become grassroots monitors of the program?

According to Salil Shetty, director of the UN Millennium Campaign on MDGs, 23 million people around the world, mostly the youth, participated in “Stand Up” in 2007, 116 million people in “Stand Up and Speak Up” in 2008, and 179 million people in “Stand Up and Take Action” in 2009. The students and out of school youth planted ten million trees in three days. “Stand up, Take Action and Make Noise for the MDGs” happened on 17–19 September 2010 around the world; World Food Day on October 16, and World Poverty Day on 17 October 2010.

VI. UN Women

A people’s problem needs a people’s solution. Women’s problems need women’s solutions.

On July 2, 2010, in a most historic move, the United Nations General Assembly has voted unanimously and created a new UN Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, to be known as UN Women. This is to accelerate progress in meeting the needs of women and girls worldwide, advance human/women’s rights and priorities of women, and provide a powerful unified voice of women and girls for full participation in global affairs. Gender Equality is a basic human right. Trending now, although it is not yet carved amongst the human rights, is the “human right to development.” Women and girls have the human right to self-develop.

Michelle Bachelet has been appointed as the first head of UN Women, second highest in rank as undersecretary general of the United Nations on 15 September 2010. She has brought with her to the negotiating table a global network, an indomitable will power, competencies and achievements, especially in pushing the envelope wide on gender issues and women’s

rights. As the first female president of Chile, and even in South America, she has been cutting edge success because of the following:

1. a law giving women the right to breastfeed at work
2. a law stiffening penalties for men failing payment of alimony
3. nurseries established for infants and children, domestic violence centers established for women and children
4. equal numbers of women and men serving in top government jobs, including the cabinet
5. women getting admitted for the first time to the Chilean Naval Academy

The crowning glory of her presidency, however, is “Chile Crece Contigo”¹⁵ or “Chile Grows With You,” a childhood development program seen from the lens of social investment. Her progressive policy of pragmatic socialism has reduced social inequality, extreme poverty and maternal/infant mortality and diseases, at the same time, encouraged a free market economy, public-private partnership and a global commodities boon. Her Systems Thinking emphasizes “Social Cohesion” where all members, men and women, adults and children, government and people, participate in the planning, action and development process.

It is worth reviewing her Four Main Principles, as they converge with the philosophy of Systems Thinking:

1. Human Rights: All children have the right to develop to the maximum individual potential.
2. Social Participation: The families of children participate in the initial design phase to include their needs and wants.
3. Equity: Universal action for all children of similar age.
4. Social Safety Nets: Free pre-natal and post-natal care, a mandatory paid maternal leave, State-subsidized day care centers, free childcare to working families, scholarships to adolescent mothers.

As a result, Chile has been included in the Human Development Index of UNDP as 38th and ahead of all Latin America. Chile has also become the first South American country to be accepted into the OECD, or the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, composed of the world’s top 31 industrialized economies.

¹⁵ See Centre for Public Impact, “Chile Crece Contigo (CCC): supporting early years development,” in *Centre for Public Impact: A BGC Foundation* (25 May 2016), <<https://www.centreforpublicimpact.org/case-study/chile-crece-contigo/>>.

“Social Justice for women and poor people,” is Bachelet’s lifelong call to action. Definitely, this is also evident in her present appointment as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights since 1 September 2018.

VII. Global Colloquium of University Presidents

On 4 April 2011, the Fifth Global Colloquium of University Presidents, “Empowering Women to Change the World, What Universities and the United Nations Can Do” was hosted by Dr. Amy Gutmann, president of the University of Pennsylvania.

Ban Ki-moon was keynote speaker. About 25 university presidents, accompanied by faculty experts, came from around the world. Then UN Undersecretary-General and UN Women Director Michelle Bachelet also attended and gave the keynote speech on 5 April 2011. Ban Ki-moon used Story-telling, the latest trend, as a tool for change management and transformational leadership. He opened a Johari¹⁶ window about himself. In so doing, his speech became more Leo Tolstoyan. Ban Ki-moon told the story of how in his childhood in the 1950s, he wrote to UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold about the status of children during the Korean war. Now that he is secretary general, he hopes that no children would need to complain in the same manner. Ban Ki-moon said, however, that there are many children around the world writing to him.

Ban Ki-moon also told the story of how the United Nations sent an all-women Indian police to Liberia for a six-month peace-keeping stint. The victims of injustice, especially of violence and sexual harassment, opened up to them. “The women felt safer and more empowered to complain about abuses,” he said. But surprisingly, the Liberian women also became inspired to apply for jobs and join the police force. Ban Ki-moon has announced two heartwarming initiatives. One, is his intention to increase women workers in the United Nations. There is already egalitarianism and equal opportunity for women and men in the top management; but he is working for an increase of women to about 40% in middle management. Two, is the establishment of the UN Academic Impact for partnership between UN and the universities. “There are already 600 members from 100 countries, universities and institutions of higher education and research,” he said. He wants to bridge information to policy. There is a need for research in gender equality and women empowerment, especially in data gathering, analysis and

¹⁶ Johari window is a tool in Psychology where a person reveals something about himself, and the other person that he is in conversation with is encouraged to reveal a something similar. It is considered rude not to reciprocate.

management, concepts, definitions, methods and tools for organization, change management and transformative leadership.

Meanwhile, in her keynote speech to the university presidents and faculty experts in the workshop, Bachelet posited her Vision Statement for UN Women: For women and girls, men and boys to have equal opportunities and capabilities; for gender equality and empowerment of women; for human rights, peace and security. Bachelet has enumerated Five Thematic Priorities as follows:

1. women leadership and participation
2. ending violence in women and girls
3. engaging women in peace building processes
4. enhancing women's economic empowerment
5. gender equality central to national development planning

Bachelet has also put forth Four Proposals:

1. collaboration between interested faculty with UN women senior policy advisor to contribute to UN Women's research agenda
2. UN Women Fellow's Programme, a network of engaged professionals
3. UN Women Internship Programme for master's degree students
4. Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health

When I personally met Bachelet after the conference, I told her that I have sent her a research paper on "Teaching/Learning Gender and Sex Through Systems Thinking in Asian and African Philosophy." Bachelet asked me "When?" I said, two days ago. Bachelet said that she has just flown in from Nairobi to Philadelphia, and she has not gone through her emails. She promised to read the paper. I have never met a president, or former president, or diplomat who is so pointed, specific and concrete even in her casual conversation. Bachelet is "so in the moment."

Indeed, women workers are most necessary now in post-disaster and post-conflict situations in Japan, Africa, and the Middle East. Trending is Feminization of global disaster. Women and children, infants without milk in Japan, is the Face of the triple tragedy of earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear radioactivity. Women journalists in the Middle East, being stroked on the hair and being told with a soothing voice, in a foreign language: "You will die tonight," is also the face of violence, rape, sexual harassment. In India, women and girls are raped; one rape reported every 15 minutes, the worst instance of which is Nirbhaya, who was gang raped by 6 men and a long pipe inserted into her reproductive organ. Gender Justice is rendered only after four of the

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six rapists were hanged to death on 20 March 2020, 7 years after the heinous crime was committed on 16 December 2012.

Why? How could all these happen? What now?

UN Women, with an expected budget of US \$500 Million, has started to be operationalized in January 2011.

In 2008, the World Bank says that the cost of achieving MDG 3 is about US \$60 Billion to US \$80 Billion. Spain and the Scandinavian countries are first to contribute to this Global Fund for Women. UN Women has double the combined funds and human resources of four agencies. It merges four existing gender entities into one powerful dynamic organization. The four programs or agencies are:

1. Office of Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI, 1997)
2. UN International Research and Training Institute for Advancement of Women (UN-INSTRAW, 1976)
3. UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM, 1976, the largest of four)
4. Division for Advancement of Women (DAW, set up in 1946)

The question to ask is: with the MDGs having ended in 2015 and having become just one part of the 17 SDGs, as Goal 5 or Gender Equality, can the UN Women focus on de-Feminization of Poverty?

The MDGS have been phased out in 2015; its data frozen in contemporary history can no longer be scaled up or updated. The MDGs most probably will be the most successful anti-poverty movement in history.¹⁷ The SDGs, “the blueprint to achieve better and sustainable future for all,” are the focus of the United Nations until 2030. The present author believes that the success of the MDGs cannot be duplicated even by the SDGs, especially with the Corona Virus pandemic causing humanitarian havoc of more than 4 million global case infections, and deaths of about 300,000 in 177 countries. There is unemployment of 20 million workers in the United States alone. The Stock Market is down, factories are shutting down, companies are declaring bankruptcies. Jobs, housing, education, health, food supply are all put at unprecedented risk.

Women and children and the minorities are the first to suffer. Women and children will not be first and prior in Stimulus Package Aid. Again, there will be Feminization of Poverty!

¹⁷ Francyne Harrigan and Sharon Birch, “MDGs produced most successful anti-poverty movement in history: UN report,” *United Nations Development Programme* (6 July 2015), <<https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/news-centre/news/2015/07/06/mdg-s-produced-most-successful-anti-poverty-movement-in-history-un-report.html>>.

VIII. Recommendations

This paper would like to recommend three Breakthrough Action Plans to be done in academia and institutions on available research grants, with great innovation and creativity:

1. Perhaps, there is a need to bridge the gap between the Millennium Development Goals that evolved to be just Goal 5 called Gender Equality of the Sustainable Development Goals, and an Idealized Design through Systems Thinking as innovated by Russell Ackoff, but with a focus on the women's perspective.
2. Language is also a means of dealing with problems in the world. Perhaps, through "Communicative Action" or communicating through action as taught by Jurgen Habermas, we can increase understanding and learning, innovation and creativity, mutuality and respect to attain peace, truth and justice. This can be done within the context of universal education in "Deliberative Democracy" or Discourse Democracy as taught by Habermas, John Rawls and Amy Gutmann.
3. The "Theory of Capabilities" applied in economics by Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen, and in philosophy by Martha Nussbaum, may extend insights through Gender Analysis into better quality of life assessments in development/transformational economics and international/national policymaking. Nussbaum has written "Women and Human Development," a framework-breaking seminal work, on women's issues, questions and problems.

Gender Economics is the way to go forward especially in a post-pandemic crisis situation.¹⁸ Gender Economics needs to be seen through Systems Thinking lens or Systems Thinking Zeitgeist.

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¹⁸ On 12 May 2020, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered a state of the nation address in response to the Covid19 crisis situation. He enumerates five pillars as basis of an action plan. These are economy, infrastructure, technology-based systems, democracy and demand. Note that Systems Thinking is in operation. His mantra is "Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan" or a Self-Reliant India.

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Epistemic Injustice, Epistemic Paralysis, and Epistemic Resistance: A (Feminist) Liberatory Approach to Epistemology

Kelly Louise Rexzy P. Agra

Abstract: Using the vocabularies of *epistemic injustice* coined by Miranda Fricker, *epistemic paralysis* (my term for the incapacitation of the epistemic agent), and *epistemic resistance* developed by José Medina, I aim to sketch in this paper an epistemic liberatory project in philosophy that takes its cue from recent philosophical literature in feminist (but also decolonial and critical race) studies, which interrogates *the fundamental role of social identity in knowledge formation*. The central focus shall be the interrogation of the ways in which power relations between social identities create conditions of hermeneutical inequality and testimonial privileging and/or marginalization within the field of philosophy. Drawing from Linda Martín Alcoff's and Elizabeth Potter's development of feminist epistemology that no longer takes gender as a "'pure' or solitary influence" in the production, construction, and validation of knowledge, this paper, to use the words of Alcoff and Potter, hopes "not only to satisfy intellectual curiosity," but also to contribute to the emancipatory goal of "the expansion of democracy in the production of knowledge," with specific attention to the practice of academic philosophy. In this sense, the paper is feminist in its emancipatory goal; but it aims to liberate and empower not only 'women' in philosophy, but other (intersectional) social identities silenced by the privileged rhetoric of philosophical practice.

Keywords: feminist epistemology, epistemic injustice, epistemic resistance, philosophy

“... to refer to a liberatory project as ‘feminist’ cannot mean that it is only for or about ‘women,’ but that it is informed by or consistent with feminism. It seeks in current feminist parlance, to unmake the web of oppressions and reweave the web of life.”

“For feminists, the purpose of epistemology is not only to satisfy intellectual curiosity, but also to contribute to an emancipatory goal: the expansion of democracy in the production of knowledge. This goal requires that our epistemologies make it possible to see how knowledge is authorized and who is empowered by it.”
—Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter¹

In their introduction to the 1993 anthology, *Feminist Epistemologies*, Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter stress how feminism is fundamentally a political agenda. For this reason, discourses on the intersection of feminism and epistemology within the framework of traditional epistemology seem to occupy an uneasy position in as much as the canons of traditional epistemology foreclose the association of epistemology with politics. At the same time, feminist epistemologies’ commitment to contexts and relationality seems to run in opposition to traditional epistemologies’ commitment to universality and subjectivity. These are particularly distinguishable for instance in Immanuel Kant’s *Critiques*, where practical reason is foreclosed from pure reason, and where pure (necessary and universal) knowledge ranks higher to empirical (accidental and particular) knowledge. In such a framework, the commitment to the recognition of complex power relations and singular contexts as implicative to the production and validation of knowledge in feminist epistemology is a form of political resistance to traditional theories of knowledge.

I seek to explain this political move in epistemology as a form of *epistemic resistance* necessary to combat *epistemic injustice* within philosophy. Using the vocabularies of *epistemic injustice* coined by Miranda Fricker, *epistemic paralysis* (my term for the incapacitation of the epistemic agent), and *epistemic resistance* developed by José Medina, I aim to sketch in this paper an epistemic liberatory project in philosophy that takes its cue from recent philosophical literature in feminist (but also decolonial and critical race) studies that interrogates *the fundamental role of social identity in knowledge formation*. The central focus shall be the interrogation of the ways in which power relations between social identities create conditions of hermeneutical inequality and testimonial privileging and/or marginalization within the field of philosophy. Drawing on Alcoff’s and Potter’s development of feminist

¹ Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter, “Introduction: When Feminisms Intersect Epistemology,” in *Feminist Epistemologies*, ed. by Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 4; 13–14.

epistemology that no longer takes gender as a “‘pure’ or solitary influence”² in the production, construction, and validation of knowledge, this paper, using the words of Alcoff and Potter, hopes “not only to satisfy intellectual curiosity,” but also to contribute to the emancipatory goal of “*the expansion of democracy in the production of knowledge*,”³ In this sense, the paper is feminist in its epistemic emancipatory goal; but it aims to liberate and empower not only ‘women’ in philosophy, but also other (intersectional) social identities silenced by the dominant rhetoric of philosophical practice.

I. Epistemic Injustice

Epistemic injustice is a category coined and developed by Miranda Fricker in 2007, in her book, *Epistemic Injustice: Power & the Ethics of Knowing*. The category and her work aimed at capturing and analysing the forms of violence and inequality that are of the epistemic kind. Her work proceeds from the area of social epistemology which extends the horizon of epistemic investigation from the provenance of the solitary-individual human subject to the social sphere or to the ways in which, by and large, the society (or a collective or a system) affects or creates the conditions of the possibility of knowledge. At the same time, in as much as the struggle against injustices at the epistemic level requires the cultivation of ‘epistemic virtues,’ the discourse on epistemic injustice also interests those working in area of virtue epistemology. In her works, Fricker asserts that epistemic justice lies at the intersections of epistemology, ethics, and political life.

Fricker broadly defines epistemic injustice as “a wrong done to someone specifically in their capacity as a knower.”⁴ She notes however that the question regarding unfair access to epistemic goods, such as education or information for instance, while may very well be forms of epistemic inequality, do not immediately qualify as epistemic injustices. Fricker emphasizes that rather than including simply the distributive aspect of epistemic unfairness, epistemic injustice investigates instead the discriminatory origin of the inequality. She is particularly interested in two kinds of *discriminatory* epistemic injustices: *testimonial injustice* and *hermeneutical injustice*. In the context of this paper, both forms of epistemic injustices will be considered but with particular focus on hermeneutical injustice.

Testimonial injustice is explained by Fricker as that which “occurs when prejudice causes a hearer to give a deflated level of credibility to a

² *Ibid.*, 3.

³ *Ibid.*, 13. Emphasis added.

⁴ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power & the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1.

speaker's word."⁵ Testimonial injustice is an assault to someone in their capacity as bearers and transmitters of knowledge. This kind of injustice is conditioned by what she calls *identity-prejudicial credibility deficit*⁶, which evaluates the veracity of a testimony on the basis of the speaker's social identity rather than on the basis of the statement's truth-content. In her book, she used the example of the fate of Tom Robinson, an African-American accused of raping a white woman, Mayella Ewell, in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mocking Bird*. Robinson was basically *silenced* in the court because of the prejudicial biases against his social identity. In her lecture on "Epistemic Equality?", Fricker noted that she may seem to have identified testimonial injustice in her book as something that might more often occur in courts, but she explained that it also covers a whole range of pragmatics, from making a statement, to airing an opinion, to sharing a hypothesis or an idea.⁷ She also gives emphasis on the fact that the prejudice against the identity of the speaker could be nonintentional and therefore difficult to immediately detect.

Meanwhile, hermeneutical injustice is wider in scope and could even be that which lies at the background of certain testimonial injustices. Fricker explains that hermeneutical injustice "occurs at a prior stage, when a gap in collective interpretive resources puts someone at an unfair disadvantage when it comes to making sense of their social experiences."⁸ In clarifying this, she used the example of the difficulty of explaining the experience of *sexual harassment* back when the term has not yet been coined and circulated. What is most significant in her discussion is that a phenomenon becomes a case of hermeneutical injustice if the lacuna in the collective hermeneutical understanding of an experience is largely caused by the fact that those who undergo that experience, on account of their identity, are not being allowed to contribute to the stock of meaning necessary to make sense of the experience—that is, if they are, in other words, hermeneutically marginalised. If testimonial injustice operates at the level of the individual, whether consciously or unconsciously, marginalization in hermeneutical injustice operates at the structural level. As Fricker explains, it is "the injustice of having some significant area of one's social experience obscured from collective understanding owing to a *structural identity prejudice* in the collective hermeneutical resource."⁹ It amounts to the "prejudicial exclusion

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 28. Fricker also talks about *credibility excess* in contrast to *credibility deficit* but notes how the latter is of greater importance in terms of the ways in which they disadvantage epistemic agents.

⁷ Miranda Fricker, "1 Miranda Fricker - Epistemic Equality?" SocialEqualityUCT in YouTube (10 September 2014), <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u8zoN6GghXk&t=595s>>.

⁸ Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 1.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 155. Emphasis added.

from participation in the spread of knowledge”¹⁰ due to an identity credibility deficit that is structurally or systemically deployed.

What I would like to focus on in hermeneutical injustice within the ‘Academy’ in the discipline of philosophy, is not only how it excludes persons or groups from participating in knowledge formation on account of their social identities, but how epistemic injustice paralyzes epistemic agency itself. This is something that Fricker has already hinted at when she wrote that:

When you find yourself in a situation in which you seem to be the only one to feel the dissonance between received understanding and your own intimated sense of a given experience, it tends to knock your faith in your own ability to make sense of the world, or at least the relevant region of the world.¹¹

Hermeneutical injustice as a harm done in your capacity as a knower is not only about how you are excluded by an *external* entity—a person, a community, or a system—from contributing to the pool of hermeneutical resources, but also about how you can be incapacitated to participate in the democratic production of knowledge because of an *internalized distrust towards your own epistemic agency as a result of a dissonance between a received understanding and your own intimated sense of a given experience*. This is the dimension of epistemic injustice that interests me most in the context of this paper because it is what, I think, lies at the other half of the critique against the kind of violence inflicted by a philosophical practice that is Euro-, ego-, phallo-, and logo- centric. I will call this *epistemic paralysis*.

II. Epistemic Paralysis

Philosophers differ in their view of what is to be considered as the primary role of philosophy in human life and in the society. Some view it as a tool for diagnosing social pathologies, some view it as a form of social hope, some view it as a tool for analysis and clarification of statements and ideas, some view it as an interpretation of life and the world, and some view it as an existential proposal or a way of life. I side with those who view philosophy as necessary for human flourishing. In general, I consider three interconnected social functions of philosophy: ethical, epistemic-ethical, and political-social.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 162.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 163.

1. *Ethical function*: Philosophy promotes the conduct of a good life in everyday situations through reflection and/or prescription.
2. *Epistemic-ethical function*: Philosophy provides critical tools for evaluating the society's institutions, norms, and practices.
3. *Political-social function*: Philosophy provides creative tools for the theoretical construction in the sense of a reconstruction or imaginative projections of the principles of a good society in relation to concrete and actual contexts.

These three interconnected functions are what philosophy, *in principle*, can provide to the individual and the society. Whether philosophy, *in fact*, fulfils such social function is a different matter for this, then, calls for the shift from the descriptive to the normative evaluation of the *task* of philosophy, or more appropriately, the *responsibility* of philosophy.

Philosophy as practiced by Socrates, Confucius, or Siddhartha Gautama was a kind of thinking or reflection that seemed organic to the human being. But as it and other scientific fields developed, philosophy has evolved into an institution. The French philosopher Alain Badiou refers to the philosophical institution as “a procedure of conserving a knot, a knot in danger of being cut, which would cause its components to disperse” — components which include philosophical addresses, transmissions, and inscriptions.¹² He also rephrases this as the “management of factional equilibrium” among philosophers (professors), their disciples (students), and publications (books, articles, speeches).¹³ The philosophical institution is the empirical marker of the existence of philosophy. It is what materially sustains philosophizing.

Philosophy, as an institution, is part of an *epistemic system*. An *epistemic system* “designates a social system that houses social practices, procedures, institutions, and/or patterns of interpersonal influence that affect the epistemic outcomes of its members” and has “truth-promoting or error-minimizing properties.”¹⁴ This is where the discussion about the intersection of epistemology, ethics, and politics becomes significant. In as much as the philosophical institution is part of a larger epistemic structure, it is not spared of the pressures that economic and political structures exert on that epistemic

¹² Alain Badiou, “What is a Philosophical Institution? Or: Address, Transmission, Inscription,” in *Conditions*, trans. by Steven Corcoran (London and New York: Continuum, 2008), 27.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁴ Alvin Goldman, “A Guide to Social Epistemology,” in *Social Epistemology: Essential Readings*, ed. by Alvin Goldman and Dennis Whitcomb (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 13, 18.

structure. This interrelation between economic, epistemic, and political structures that forms a Borromean knot, is the convergence point of the discussions of Karl Marx on the relation of practice and critique, and Michel Foucault on knowledge and power. It is at the same time that which threatens or obstructs the delivery of the three-fold social function of philosophy.

Returning to the topic of epistemic injustice, philosophy, in its Euro-, ego-, phallo-, and logo- centrism, stands charged of committing an epistemic injustice that is of the hermeneutical kind. As stated in the previous section, hermeneutical injustice covers both the marginalization of a person or group from contributing to the epistemic resource, as well as the *incapacitation of a person or group to participate in the production of knowledge by virtue of an internalized distrust towards one's own epistemic agency as a result of a dissonance between a received understanding and one's own intimated sense of a given experience*. This latter dimension of hermeneutic injustice is what I will use as the working definition for *epistemic paralysis*.

Epistemic paralysis in philosophy is what may occur when, for instance, a woman is immersed in philosophies about being human that regards being emotional as a feminine character and then equated to a form on non- and/or ir-rationality, which interferes with the philosophical contemplation of the Good. A possible outcome of such immersion to such philosophies is for the woman to deny herself of her emotions and start acting or thinking 'like a man.' Another possible outcome is that because she now thinks that she is 'essentially or naturally emotional,' she will begin to regard herself and her kind as inferior to men, may think that she will never be able to match the philosophical abilities of men, and then stops philosophizing altogether. These two epistemic outcomes may be different, but they are both instances of epistemic paralysis in so far as they both paralyze or incapacitate the epistemic ability of the epistemic agent. As in medical terms—where paralysis is the loss of the ability to move or the loss of bodily function and the ability to feel or sense, as caused by a disconnection between the brain and the muscles—epistemic paralysis is the loss of the ability to know or think in a certain way because of the disconnection between what is received as the 'correct' way of knowing or thinking and what one has organically practiced, developed, and/or experienced. At the same time, the paralysis may be partial or total. The first outcome can be said to be an instance of a partial epistemic paralysis, while the second outcome can be said to be an instance of a total epistemic paralysis in the context of philosophizing. To press this point further and to relate epistemic paralysis in philosophy to the economic, epistemic, and political tripartite structure undergirding the philosophical institution, it is fitting to discuss Linda Martín Alcoff's accusation of Eurocentrism as an epistemology of ignorance.

In her contribution to *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice* entitled “Philosophy and Philosophical Practice: Eurocentrism as an epistemology of ignorance,” Alcoff starts off with a quote from Kwame Nkrumah’s *Consciencism*: “... even philosophical systems are facts of history.”¹⁵ Alcoff suggests in this essay that ‘the protection and maintenance of western philosophy’s ignorance about the effects, and limitations, of its geographical location through the perpetuation and defense of Eurocentric practices and curricula’ indicates that Eurocentrism “is a species of an even larger pathology,” which she calls the *transcendental delusion*.¹⁶ She defines the transcendental delusion as the “belief that thought can be separated from its specific, embodied, and geo-historical source.”¹⁷ Alcoff recounts in this essay the epistemologies of coloniality of Walter Dignolo, Enrique Dussel, Ramon Grosfoguel, and Kwame Nkrumah among others.¹⁸ For Dignolo, western philosophy, with its obsession with the highest and universal form of knowledge, operates as a form of theo- and ego-politics. For him, theo- and ego-politics in philosophy intentionally disregards the question of ‘for whom, when, why, and where are knowledges generated,’ or the kind of questioning operative in geo- and body-politics. Meanwhile, Dussel describes the European colonization of the Americas as less of a discovery and more of an *encubrimiento*, or a covering over on the part of the Europeans, which resonates with what Grosfoguel named as *epistemicide*, or the denial of knowledges of the peoples subject to colonization as true, the relegation of these knowledges as inferior to European knowledges, or the outright theft of these knowledges and their repackaging as European knowledges. In the same vein, Nkrumah argues that colonialism required the suppression of epistemic democracy in order to thwart the demands for political democracy, which meant that for the colonial rule to be successful, the political rights of colonised subjects must be stripped off, and their epistemic agencies distrusted. In these epistemologies of coloniality, the idea that a strong ideological epistemic backup is essential to political and economic domination, or that canons of epistemic systems may be politically manipulated for economic gains, is recognizably deployed. In the case of European colonialism, Europe had to establish itself as “both the vanguard of human race and as achieving a universal form of thought”¹⁹ in order to justify its political oppression and economic usurpation.

¹⁵ Linda Martín Alcoff, “Philosophy and Philosophical Practice: Eurocentrism as an epistemology of ignorance,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice*, ed. by Ian James Kidd, José Medina, and Gaile Pohlhaus, Jr. (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 397.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 397.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 397.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 398-403.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 399.

Epistemic paralysis in the context of colonialism takes the form of what Dussel referred to as *encubrimiento* or Grosfoguel's *epistemicide*, where non-European knowledges and ways of knowing have been distrusted, repackaged, or even totally discarded. What is alarming, however, is that the same epistemologies are perpetuated in the philosophical institution. It is to this extent that philosophy, in its Euro-, ego-, phallo-, and logo- centricism, could be referred to as committing epistemic injustice. It reproduces a framework of epistemic assumptions that sustain epistemic violence.

III. Epistemic Resistance

The hermeneutical injustice that philosophy commits at the institutional/systemic level when it is Euro-, ego-, phallo-, and logo- centric is wider in scope and longer in duration. When someone is immersed in philosophies of being human that are not recognizable for them, or those that do not even recognize them as human beings (as in cases of racist philosophies), *philosophy as the means for critical reflection and epistemic emancipation could be the very tool of oppression*. If sustained, such instances can take the form of an internalised distrust against one's capacity to know, in the broad sense, or to philosophise, in the specific sense, and as we have noted, may lead to epistemic paralysis. Within the context of an epistemic community, this distrust also creates divisions among epistemic agents by building suspicion towards one another's epistemic agency. This is for instance the case when Filipino philosophy scholars undervalue their fellow Filipino philosophy scholars and overvalue Western philosophy scholars not on the basis of scholarship but as an effect of an internalised philosophical position that privileges the western, white, and male identity in the judgment of philosophical prowess. The transcendentalist delusion which Alcoff referred to as both a cause and a symptom of Eurocentrism²⁰ constructs a "web of oppression"²¹ that thwarts what Richard Rorty referred to—in allusion to John Dewey's and Jürgen Habermas's idea of democratic participation—as "the urge to come to free agreement with our fellow human beings" and "be full participating members of a free community of inquiry."²² The possibility of this freedom is what is imperilled in epistemic paralysis as a result of hermeneutical injustice. How it may be protected or regained is the subject of interest of José Medina's *epistemology of resistance*.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 398.

²¹ Alcoff and Potter, "Introduction: When Feminisms Intersect Epistemology," 4.

²² Richard Rorty, "Education as Socialization and Individualization," in *Philosophy as Social Hope* (London: Penguin Books, 1999), 119.

Medina, in his 2013 work *The Epistemology of Resistance*, argued that resistance is the epistemic virtue necessary for democracy.²³ Epistemic resistance encompasses forms of epistemic agency that are directed by the imperative to use “epistemic resources and abilities to undermine and change oppressive normative structures and the complacent cognitive-affective functioning that sustains those structures.”²⁴ Medina sees resistance or dissent as “the heart and soul, the epistemic centrepiece, of a democratic culture.”²⁵ In epistemology, epistemic approaches to democracy are categorized under Social Epistemology. This is what one finds in Medina’s work; but his analyses also provide its dialectical reverse: his epistemology of resistance is at the same time a democratic, feminist-liberatory approach to epistemology.

One of the central ideas of Medina’s epistemology of resistance is the value of epistemic interaction and epistemic friction for a democratic community that not only expands epistemic horizons but also refines ethical sensibilities. Relaxing Elizabeth Anderson’s *The Imperative of Integration* or the obligation to integrate oneself or others into the society in order to guarantee everyone’s freedom and equality, Medina offers as an alternative *The Imperative of Epistemic Interaction*:

The aim of the *epistemic interaction* in which resources are pooled and experiences and imaginations are shared, compared, and contrasted is both practical and epistemic: democratic epistemic interactions aim at perfecting not only our practices but also our *sensibilities*. Democratic sensibilities require free and equal epistemic interaction among the heterogenous groups that are part of society. This is what I call the *Imperative of Epistemic Interaction*.²⁶

His move to relax the imperative of integration proceeds from the recognition that there are unequal levels of privilege within societies. Medina explains that the imperative to integrate may pose problems for the already oppressed and underprivileged group. To force them to find their place in practices and institutions that are not theirs, and for which they have been excluded and marginalised, may be too strong a demand, greater than the demand for the privileged group to share their privileges. Interaction, as the ‘weaker’ version

²³ José Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and Resistant Imaginations* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

of integration, calls mainly for communication and cooperation. What makes it distinct from integration is the commitment to particularism and the self-empowerment of the underprivileged. The imperative seeks to provide “social spaces and practices that are intended primarily (if not exclusively) for the members of minority groups that struggle to achieve self-empowerment or to preserve their distinctiveness.”²⁷ Medina stresses that the integration must only and carefully be advised if it can assure the preservation of group specificity. In addition, the necessary ‘interaction,’ prior to integration, must have already taken place. For him, it is of vital importance to recognize differences and to not force them to cohere to generalities. At the same time, the minority group must be self-empowered so they may interact with the dominant group at a more equal footing.

This idea of self-empowerment, which I will now relate to epistemic agency, is something that Lynn Hankinson Nelson in “Epistemological Communities” (1993) and Nancy Arden McHugh in “Epistemic Communities and Institutions” (2017) have stressed in their discussions of epistemic agency. For Nelson, communities are the primary generators and repositories of knowledge.²⁸ She argues that it is the communities that construct and acquire knowledge.²⁹ Nelson strongly asserts the social construction of knowledge and argues that it is communities, and not individuals, which must be recognized as epistemic agents. McHugh recounts this in her essay and links it with Medina’s notion of epistemic resistance. For McHugh, epistemic agency in communities can take the form of epistemic resistance or subversion, or even separatism; it can even arise in conditions of oppression. She notes that “when we acknowledge that marginalised communities resist epistemic injustice, we can recognize that although epistemic injustice *is* an injustice, it is not an epistemic dead end.”³⁰ What is worth noting in McHugh’s analysis is the possibility of resisting injustice not only from the position of the one committing the injustice, but from the position of the oppressed. As to how individuals, communities, and institutions develop such resistance to injustice and how individuals within these communities and institutions regain their epistemic freedom is what primarily concerns us in the discussion regarding epistemic democracy/equality/justice.

Returning to Medina’s imperative of interaction, it is important to note his two minimum requirements for the development of habits of

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁸ Lynn Hankinson Nelson, “Epistemological Communities,” in *Feminist Epistemologies*, 140.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 141.

³⁰ Nancy Arden, McHugh, “Epistemic Communities and Institutions,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice*, 277.

communication and reaction, as well as the cultivation of democratic sensibilities—the requirements of *expressibility* and *responsiveness*.

Democratic sensibilities consist in cognitive-affective attitudes that facilitate and promote the capacity to relate, to listen, to feel concerned, and to care for the interests and aspirations of others. The establishment and maintenance of such attitudes require effective communications among diverse publics. And for such effective communication to take place, publics have to be formed and to become able to express themselves; and social sensibilities of openness have to be cultivated for those publics to be listened to and to be responded to properly. ... The *expressibility requirement* demands that the different groups that a social body can contain have the opportunity to coalesce in a public with expressive capacities, so that they can articulate their shared experiences and perspectives. The *responsiveness requirement* demands that the social and epistemic conditions of communication and interaction be such that the expressions of a public have the proper uptake by other publics and by society as a whole.³¹

That the epistemic agents, be they communities or individuals, must be *capable* of expressing themselves, and not only creating spaces for expression, is of paramount importance. This, for instance, is the core point of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) which stresses the fundamental necessity of empowerment. In epistemic liberation, the agent implicated in the perpetuation of injustice is one possible agent of resistance, but not the only one. The paralyzed victims of epistemic injustice are still epistemic *agents* capable of resisting the injustice and emancipating themselves out of the condition of oppression. It is in this sense that feminism or the feminist project in epistemology is a form of epistemic resistance. However, and this is now where most of the proposals for fighting epistemic injustice will make sense, the expressibility requirement must be complemented by the responsiveness requirement. The aim is not only to let the subaltern *speak*, but for the subaltern to *also be heard*. Siavash Saffari's reformulation of Spivak's question into 'Can the Subaltern be Heard?' hammers home this point.³² In the resistance against epistemic injustice,

³¹ Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance*, 9.

³² See Siavash Saffari, "Can the Subaltern be Heard?: Knowledge Production, Representation, and Responsibility in International Development," in *Transcience*, 7:1 (2016).

certain forms of subjectivity with certain epistemic characteristics are necessary, and Medina proposes the active search for epistemic friction as one of them. For Medina, “we all have a prima facie obligation to undergo a process of *self-estrangement*, to cultivate openness to perplexity and to interrogate received attitudes and habits.”³³ He writes:

... in order to be able to expand and meliorate our social sensibilities, we need to start by exposing ourselves and making ourselves vulnerable, by opening up our perspective to processes of critical scrutiny and resistance, that is, by putting our perspective in communicative interaction with the perspectives of significantly different others so that there can be epistemic friction among perspectives. ... only when significantly different perspectives are available and they are allowed to interact so as to learn from each other and to make maximal use of their difference, only then can we have epistemic and political practices that can be self-corrective in a democratic way.³⁴

His idea of epistemic friction and self-estrangement resonates well with Fricker’s call for virtuous listening but with a specific focus on how social identities interplay with how we weigh the value of perspectives expressed by social identities different from our own. As Fricker writes: “The virtuous hearer, ... must be reflexively aware of how the relation between his social identity and that of the speaker is impacting on the intelligibility to him of what she is saying and how she is saying it.”³⁵ Fricker thinks that by exercising this epistemic virtue, one can neutralize the impact of identity prejudice on one’s credibility judgement.³⁶ The practice of epistemic virtue within the context of epistemic injustice makes agents aware of their privileged lives and privileged perspectives, calls into question how these marginalise members of the epistemic community, and thus, or at least hopefully, resists the perpetuation of individual and structural sources of epistemic inequality. Furthermore, what is equally significant to note is that epistemic resistance is primarily an exercise of epistemic agency. As Medina explains, “Resistance is not simply something that happens to us, but it is fundamentally something we do (or fail to do) and for which we have to take

³³ Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance*, 19.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

³⁵ Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 169.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 92.

responsibility.”³⁷ Thus, as to how this can be imbibed by the philosophical institution in its delivery of its threefold social function must be the central point of critical reflection about the nature of philosophising and who are empowered or oppressed by it.

IV. The Responsibility for Justice of the Philosophical Institution

When as a philosopher, one is confronted with the limitations of philosophising, it is difficult to ignore the question: Is it philosophy that must be re-examined every time, or must it be the kinds of expectations and responsibilities ascribed to philosophy that must be re-evaluated? Within the context of social philosophy, the task is even larger, because it is not only thinking that must be re-evaluated and disturbed, but also existing political and economic conditions. The question of whether it is possible at all to provide a way to introduce an interruption to these structures, is a question that philosophers must commit themselves to answering—such is the social responsibility of philosophy.

Alcoff, in her criticism of philosophy as an epistemology of ignorance, provides a staunch attack against simple multi-perspectivism. She argues that,

... one cannot simply add women and stir as a way to introduce scholarship and research on women into the academy Just so, one cannot simply add non-Western philosophy or topics such as race and colonialism to the existing field of philosophy, its canon and curriculum, without subverting the mainstream periodization, the existing canon, even questioning what is meant by ‘philosophy.’³⁸

Furthermore,

Eurocentric theory is going to be called out, and worse, put in context as a limited, partial, often delusional perspective, and not in any sense the underlying key to the riddle or the mainspring of critical and liberatory philosophy.³⁹

³⁷ Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance*, 16.

³⁸ Alcoff, “Philosophy and Philosophical Practice: Eurocentrism as an epistemology of ignorance,” 399.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 400.

Alcoff explains that “it is not that the origin of an idea is all-determinative, but that we should stop assuming it has no effect without explanation.”⁴⁰ Philosophy, if it sustains its Euro-, ego-, phallo-, and logo- centrism, risks misnaming particulars as universals.⁴¹ To simply provide space for resistant epistemologies without subverting the presuppositions of traditional epistemology will be to defeat the purpose of the struggle. Recalling the threefold social function of philosophy that has been mentioned in the second section, philosophy as an institution cannot be allowed to operate under the epistemology of ignorance. If critique, theory, and practice only privilege a certain bio-geo-political group, then philosophy fails in the delivery of its social function through and through. At the same time, if such privileging and marginalization persists within the philosophical institution itself such that different identities are paralyzed rather than enabled to philosophise, then it certainly becomes a non-democratic and unjust educational institution that betrays the people. As McHugh, in reference to Dewey, explains:

‘Education’ should be seen not only as a set of practices that can lovingly confer tradition, but also as practices that confer habits of privilege, experiences of marginalization, ways of viewing our own and others’ bodies, practices that sediment social relationships and interactions, and an epistemic lens through which to experience and know the world.⁴²

Intentionally or unintentionally reproducing epistemically unjust educational institutional structures equates to the ‘protective’ and ‘defensive’ conscious or non-conscious refusal to create conditions for the flourishing of members of the society. If philosophy is accessible only to the few, or if its fundamental epistemic assumptions are compatible with the structures that create conditions of inequality, then it has failed in its social responsibility, lost its social relevance, and is systemically committing epistemic injustice. If the philosophical institution sustains its ‘meta-insensitivity’⁴³ to how different political relationships undergirding epistemic practices construct a ‘web of oppression,’ then it frustrates its own emancipatory function.

The primary liberatory aim of the feminist critique to philosophy is to challenge philosophy’s insensitivity to its own insensitivity. It seeks to disillusion philosophical thinking from its transcendental delusion. Its agenda is epistemic, political, and ethical: the critique and grounding of

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 403.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 403.

⁴² McHugh, “Epistemic Communities and Institutions,” 271.

⁴³ Medina, “Insensitivity and Blindness,” Foreword to *The Epistemology of Resistance*, xi.

thinking to the principle of human flourishing. It obliges philosophy to bear the responsibility of resisting epistemic injustice by actively searching for epistemic friction, which entails listening to those whose positions contest or dispute its own, as well as being mindful of how social privileges affect philosophical deliberation. The feminist struggle in philosophy is the struggle to make philosophy democratic and empowering. It is the resistance to philosophy's dominating, authoritarian, ideologically blinding, and epistemically paralyzing unexamined presuppositions and practices.

In the context of epistemic resistance to injustice as an institutional responsibility, philosophy must become *more than* a philosophy and *more than* an institution. It must become a *just philosophical institution* that translates its epistemic virtues into institutional virtues. It must be able to empower social groups that have been systemically marginalised from contributing to the philosophical resource by virtue of their belonging to a specific gender, race, age, class, or sexuality. This empowerment must encompass a whole range of institutional support—from funding, to curricular presence, to institutional visibility, to the creation of social spaces for epistemic interaction. Philosophy as an institution must commit to being epistemically democratic, aware of the structural dimension of knowledge (including its economic and political historicity) and how social relations between identities may implicate philosophical practice. Only when philosophy is self-corrective in a democratic way can it enable epistemic agency and help create conditions for human flourishing.

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Immanence and Autobiography: Gilles Deleuze's *a life* and Sarah Kofman's *autobiogriffure**

Jean Emily P. Tan

Abstract: How does the “I” of autobiography relate to the “I” of the philosopher? Is there an alternative to conceiving of this relation in terms of the opposition between the particular to the universal? This essay offers Deleuze’s notion of immanence as a fruitful way of approaching this question by staging an encounter between Sarah Kofman’s autobiographical work, *Rue Ordener, Rue Labat*, and Gilles Deleuze’s “Immanence: A Life.” In this textual encounter, Kofman’s autobiography is interpreted in light of Deleuze’s concept of “immanence” and Deleuze’s notion of “a life” is explicated through its application to autobiography.

Keywords: Kofman, Deleuze, immanence, autobiography

Sarah Kofman (1934–1994) and Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995) are not two names that are often linked to one another, but they were contemporaries. Kofman—a French philosopher known for her books on Nietzsche and Freud (and in the English-speaking world, particularly for her book on Freud’s account of femininity, *The Enigma of Woman*¹—was born nine years after Deleuze and died the year before his death.

Kofman has acknowledged her indebtedness to Deleuze in two of her books on Nietzsche; in *Explosion II (Les enfants de Nietzsche)*, Kofman notes that it was Deleuze’s course on the *Genealogy of Morals*, “which she followed when she was studying for the ‘agrégation’ examination, that first inspired

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¹ Sarah Kofman, *The Enigma of Woman: Woman in Freud’s Writings*, trans. by Catherine Porter (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1980).

her interest in Nietzsche.”² Notably, it was Deleuze who took over the supervision of Kofman’s dissertation on “The Concept of Culture in Nietzsche and Freud” in 1971, when her mentor, Jean Hyppolite, died in 1968. While it would be interesting to undertake a study of the lines of influence connecting these two thinkers,³ in this essay, I wish to take the Deleuze and Kofman connection to a different direction. By staging an encounter between two of their texts, I hope to show that the Deleuzian concept of immanence, interpreted in the light of Kofman’s notion and practice of autobiography, can shed light on the question of the relation between life and text.

I first discovered Kofman through her autobiographical work, *Rue Ordener, Rue Labat*, written in the last year of her life. A gem of a memoir about her childhood during and after the Nazi occupation of France, this slim book—written with such sparse simplicity, as if memory were pared down to nothing but the essential—begins with the arrest of her father, Rabbi Berek Kofman, who was later killed in a concentration camp, and narrates how Sarah and her mother were saved, thanks to a Christian woman who hid them in her apartment. In “saving” her, the woman, whom she calls Mémé, not only distanced her from her Jewish identity but also sought to take—and it seems, succeeded in taking—her mother’s place.

One of the interesting, difficult, and confounding aspects of Kofman’s work is the manner in which autobiography is so undeniably implicated in her corpus at multiple levels. In her interpretations of various philosophers, she uncovers suppressed or unrecognized autobiographical aspects of these authors’ works, arguing for the status of these texts as autobiographical fictions. We can say that there is nothing particularly remarkable about such a psychoanalytic mode of reading. But what makes Kofman’s readings particularly enigmatic—and also problematic—is that her readings of other thinkers serve not only to unmask the autobiographical aspect of their texts, but are also imprinted by her own autobiographical signatures, so to speak. She reads texts in a way that it is impossible to ignore the motifs that run through her own biography.

This fact was remarked upon by Jacques Derrida, in his memorial essay on Sarah Kofman. In the following passage, Derrida is revisiting Kofman’s first book *The Childhood of Art (L’Enfance de l’art)* in light of her succeeding works:

... this first book—so rich, so sharp, so perfectly lucid in its reading of Freud—was also the childhood of the art,

² Duncan Large, Translator’s Introduction to Sarah Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, trans. by Duncan Large (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), x.

³ For instance, it would be worth examining how these two thinkers make use of and are connected by the concept of “becoming-woman.”

the child's play, of Sarah Kofman. An autobiographical anamnesis, an *autobiogriffure*. All the places—of the father, of the mothers, of the substitution of mothers, of laughter and life as works of art—were there already acknowledged, rigorously assigned.⁴

What do we make of the incursions of the autobiographical in Kofman's philosophical texts? It might be all too easy to dismiss her work as being too confessional, as mere hysterical projections of a woman, but there is something courageous and transgressive in the way in which Kofman refused to disavow the particularity of her voice for the sake of attaining the anonymity of the authorial philosophical voice.

Kofman forces us to think about the relation between life and text, and specifically between autobiography and philosophy. How does the "I" of autobiography relate to the "I" of the philosopher? Is there an alternative way of conceiving this relation other than by opposing the universal to the particular? Other than relegating the autobiographical to the sphere of the contingent and merely personal?

In this essay, I would like to inquire whether Deleuze's notion of immanence might offer us a fruitful way of answering this question. I propose to do this by staging an encounter between two texts, both written at or near the end of each author's corpus—Sarah Kofman's *Rue Ordener, Rue Labat*⁵ and Gilles Deleuze's "Immanence: A Life."⁶ In this textual encounter, I shall be doing several things simultaneously: (1) read "Immanence: A Life" closely, (2) read Kofman's autobiography using Deleuze's concept of "immanence," and (3) explicate Deleuze's notion of "a life" through its application to autobiography.

The Transcendental Field

Deleuze's final essay, "Immanence: A Life," is the posing of the question of "a transcendental field" that leads to the concept of pure immanence. As a heuristic device, I would like to suggest that one could understand Deleuze's metaphysical intent (his anti-transcendental metaphysics) by thinking of his project as an "epoche"—in the phenomenological sense—a reduction, but not of objects to the constituting

⁴ Jacques Derrida, "Introduction," in *Enigmas: Essays on Sarah Kofman*, ed. by Penelope Deutscher and Kelly Oliver (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1999), 22.

⁵ Sarah Kofman, *Rue Ordener, Rue Labat*, trans. by Ann Smock (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1996).

⁶ Gilles Deleuze, "Immanence: A Life," in *Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life*, trans. by Anne Boyman (New York: Zone Books, 2001), 25–33.

consciousness, but to something nearer, more immediate than even self-consciousness. In the following passage, Deleuze refers to the transcendental field as being irreducible to the mutually constituting relation of subject and object (of the transcendental ego and the transcendently constituted object). He is effecting an *epoche* that goes beyond consciousness, so to speak.

Consciousness becomes a fact only when a subject is produced at the same time as its object, both being outside the field and appearing as “transcendents.” Conversely, as long as consciousness traverses the transcendental field at an infinite speed everywhere diffused, nothing is able to reveal it. It is expressed, in fact, only when it is reflected on a subject that refers it to objects. That is why the transcendental field cannot be defined by the consciousness that is coextensive with it, but removed from any revelation.⁷

But if it is “removed from any revelation,” how can we conceive of the transcendental field? If consciousness can only think of objects that it can represent to itself, and if the transcendental field cannot be thought—“cannot be defined by the consciousness that is coextensive with it”—then I suppose consciousness would have to conceive of the transcendental field by creating or finding a kind of inadequation with the field. To ask about the transcendental field, I take it, is to consider the *field of possibility* of thought, which is to say—to consider that there might be other possibilities of understanding, other formations of experience, other combinations entities, other doors, other windows to becoming.

How do we know this is possible? How can we know that there are other possibilities of thought? I would suggest that it is a matter of pursuing avenues of inadequation. It’s a matter of teasing the snags of existence in order to unravel some portion of its fabric, in order to come to another layer, another plane of possibility. We listen for, we follow the restlessness and uneasiness we might feel, that signals to us other registers of being than the one we have come to inhabit. We put our ears on the ground and listen for a different beat. We follow our affects. In other words, the “beyond consciousness” of what I would call the Deleuzian *epoche* is not so much a going beyond as it is a “getting beneath” consciousness.

This is why the question of the transcendental field leads directly to the concept of immanence:

⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

The transcendent is not the transcendental. Were it not for consciousness, the transcendental field would be defined as a pure plane of immanence, because it eludes all transcendence of the subject and of the object.⁸

and the concept of immanence, directly to “a life”:

No more than the transcendental field is defined by consciousness can the plane of immanence be defined by a subject or an object that is able to contain it.

We will say of pure immanence that it is A LIFE, and nothing else. It is not immanence to life, but the immanent that is in nothing is itself a life.⁹ ...

... The transcendental field is defined by a plane of immanence, and the plane of immanence by a life.¹⁰

A Life from the Individual to the Singular

A life refers to thrumming life, faint life, buzzing, or somnolent life, but *a life here*—life sensed, life felt, life recognized as it flares (or dims), but not contained by subjects (of consciousness) in objects (known) or abstracted and projected to a transcendent beyond. The indefinite article “a” is crucial here. “A life” here is conceived neither in terms of the organic unity of a body¹¹ (with determinate boundaries) nor in terms of a universal life force—neither *this* life nor *life in general*, but *a* life. The phrase retains the index of the singular that is at the same time indeterminate.

In order to illuminate what he means by “a life,” Deleuze resorts to an example from literature:

What is immanence? A life ... No one has described what *a* life is better than Charles Dickens, if we take the indefinite article as an index of the transcendental. A disreputable man, a rogue, held in contempt by everyone, is found as he lies dying. Suddenly, those taking care of him manifest an eagerness, respect, even love, for his slightest sign of life. Everybody bustles

⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹¹ This is in contrast, for instance, to Aristotle’s definition of the living body in the *De Anima*—although it has to be remarked that even for Aristotle, the “primary definition” of life is still indeterminate: the being-at-work of an organic body *as potency*.

about to save him, to the point where, in his deepest coma, this wicked man himself senses something soft and sweet penetrating him.¹²

This is crucial—that reduced to “his slightest sign of life,” stripped of power and his defining characteristics, it is not only that the people around him are able to recognize something that they respond to with “eagerness, respect, even love,” but that *the man himself* “senses”—*feels* —“something soft and sweet penetrating him.” *His* life is his and not his, him and not him, emanating from him, coursing through him, but also penetrating him. The dying and the saviors both are able to enter and sink into a plane of immanence by virtue of a *pathos* of dispossession that is more radical even than renunciation. It allows beatitude and empathy to meet: the beatitude of one and empathy from others, precisely when the one, the individual, gives way to *a* life—an impersonal yet singular life:

Between his life and his death, there is a moment that is only that of *a* life playing with death. The life of the individual gives way to an impersonal and yet singular life that releases a pure event freed from the accidents of internal and external life, that is, from the subjectivity and objectivity of what happens: a “Homo tantum” with whom everyone empathizes and who attains a sort of beatitude. It is a haecceity no longer of individuation but of singularization: a life of pure immanence, neutral, beyond good and evil, for it was only the subject that incarnated it in the midst of things that made it good or bad. The life of such individuality fades away in favor of the singular life immanent to a man who no longer has a name, though he can be mistaken for no other. A singular essence, a life¹³

What does this mean? How can a life be both impersonal and yet singular? What is the difference between individuality and singularity? Between individual life and *a* life as pure immanence?

I hope to develop an interpretation of this notion by reading Sarah Kofman’s autobiography, situating this within her own conception of the practice of autobiography, as an example of this movement from individuality to singularity. My working hypothesis is that Sarah Kofman’s

¹² Deleuze, “Immanence,” 28.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 28–29.

autobiography, *Rue Ordener*, *Rue Labat*, can be understood by applying Deleuze's concept of immanence; and that conversely, applying Deleuze's categories in the interpretation of Kofman would offer a good way of illuminating what is possibly meant by Deleuze's notion of "a life."

A Life and Kofman's Autobiography

How could an autobiography be useful in illuminating the concept of "a life"—supposed to be indeterminate and impersonal—when the act of writing about one's life fixes, rather than strips away, the "accidents of internal and external life," recounts, rather than escapes, "the subjectivity and objectivity" of what happens?

I suggest that it is a matter of placing Kofman and Deleuze on the same plane, of reading Kofman in a Deleuzian fashion, which is to say, from the perspective of the rhizome rather than of the tree.¹⁴ From the arboreal schema, the question of the philosophical significance of the philosopher's autobiography would be posed in this way: What is the universal significance of the life of the individual thinker? To the extent that it does have (or is presumed to have) a philosophical significance, wouldn't it mean either (A) that the philosopher's life is reduced to the universalizable traits (marks) it possesses? Wouldn't one end up turning the individual's life into a model (an example or an exemplar) of the universal or at least of a particular type—or, in the Hegelian mold, as a moment in the development of the Idea? Wouldn't one have to reject (or transform) the contingencies of individual life in order to do so?

Or (B) the alternative in this arboreal reckoning—which the female philosopher is particularly vulnerable to—would be to disregard the philosophical significance of her autobiography and the autobiographical aspects of her work, and to dismiss her philosophical work for being merely (or too) autobiographical.

In both cases, the philosophical significance of autobiography is essentially negative—the particular perspective embodied by the philosopher's life, unless purified of whatever in it is contingent and accidental, serves only to undermine the universality and objectivity of the philosopher's thought.

And in both cases, autobiography is construed as an account of individual, i.e., individuated, particular life. Individuation finds its bearings in its relation to the kind, the scheme of classification. The individual is situated within a field of determinate objects and events. Here, the

¹⁴ See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 3–25.

individual's life is the life actualized in the "accidents of external and internal life."¹⁵

From this perspective, namely, the perspective of individual life, one might read *Rue Ordener, Rue Labat* as a memoir in the genre of Holocaust literature. Sarah Kofman was one of the generation of children who were able to survive the war because they were hidden by their Christian saviors. One could read her autobiography as a historical document; aggregated with similar accounts, it gives a picture of what the survivors of the Holocaust suffered as children and continue to suffer. On the basis of such accounts, we could generalize the effects of war, of genocide, of displacement, of religious intolerance.

What would it mean to read Kofman's autobiographic writings *otherwise*? What would it mean to read *Rue Ordener, Rue Labat* as a memoir not of an individual but of a singular life?

First, let us note that the difference between the individual and the immanent, singular life does not consist in the difference between external and internal events. It does not consist in the difference between objective and subjective, as both are already borne by a life flowing "everywhere" and "in all [its] moments":

A life is everywhere, in all the moments that a given living subject goes through and that are measured by given lived objects: an immanent life carrying with it the events or singularities that are merely actualized in subjects and objects. This indefinite life does not itself have moments, close as they may be one to another, but only between-times, between-moments; it doesn't just come about or come after but offers the immensity of an empty time where one sees the event yet to come and already happened, in the absolute of an immediate consciousness.¹⁶

So on the side of immanence are the "events and singularities" carried by a life; and on the side of the individual life (the life of a "given living subject") are the subjects and objects in which these singularities are actualized. It is not a question of pitting these "sides" against one another, but of descending from the level of discrete, individuated, existents (subjects and objects both) to the indeterminate, to the diffuse intimations of the virtual by catching sight of the in-between.

¹⁵ Deleuze, "Immanence," 28.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

But how is this operation to be done? How do we shift gears, so to speak, from the level of individuality to that of singular, immanent life? In other words, how does one read Kofman's autobiography as a memoir of a singular life? The following passage is instructive here:

The singularities and the events that constitute *a* life coexist with the accidents of *the* life that corresponds to it, but they are neither grouped nor divided in the same way. They connect with one another in a manner entirely different from how individuals connect. It even seems that a singular life might do without any individuality, without any other concomitant that individualizes it. For example, very small children all resemble one another and have hardly any individuality, but they have singularities: a smile, a gesture, a funny face—not subjective qualities. Small children, through all their sufferings and weaknesses, are infused with an immanent life that is pure power and even bliss.¹⁷

Singularities connect with each other in a way very different from how individuals connect. What's the difference? Deleuze continues:

The indefinite aspects in a life lose all indetermination to the degree that they fill out a plane of immanence or, what amounts to the same thing, to the degree that they constitute the elements of a transcendental field (individual life, on the other hand, remains inseparable from empirical determinations).¹⁸

It is a question of how connections are made (or not made), or perhaps, a question of unmooring the individual life from its usual constitutive—its empirical—determinations. It is a question of recognizing procedures or practices that disengage a life from its accustomed bearings (from its moorings in everyday experience) and give intimations of what I referred to a while ago as “inadequations” with the field of consciousness and its objects.

I would like to suggest that Kofman's notion of *autobiogriffure*—of which her own memoir can be read as an example—is such a practice (a textual practice) of disengaging the individual and her life from its empirical coordinates, and resituating it in another field, with other subterranean

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

concomitants. I am proposing, in other words, that Kofman's autobiography can be read as "filling out a plane of immanence."

Autobiogriffure

"*Autobiogriffures*" is the title of one of Kofman's works, in which she reads a work of fiction by E.T.A. Hoffmann, *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr*.¹⁹ The word "autobiogriffures" is a play on autobio-"graphie" (writing), *griffe* – which can mean a *claw* (such as a cat's) or a *stamp* (in the sense of a label) or *signature*, *griffer* which means to scratch or claw or stamp one's signature (the way a cat would "write"), *griffonage* which means scrawl or scribble, and *greffe*, which means 'graft.' Kofman coins the term to refer to the tomcat's autobiography that is interspersed with and grafted upon (and thus mockingly interrupts) the biography of Johannes Kreisler in Hoffmann's *Tomcat Murr*.

In a 1986 interview with Roland Jaccard, Kofman likens herself to Murr in her ambivalent desire to write her life:

I have devoted to Tomcat Murr, by Hoffmann, a text, *Autobiogriffures*. I am like the Tomcat Murr, whose autobiography is only an assemblage of citations from various authors. He seeks to affirm his identity through this autobiography, but he does not realize that he loses it precisely through writing.²⁰

Kofman here is acknowledging an inescapable paradox of autobiographic writing: that the act of appropriation—of events, of memories, of other texts—is at the same time an act of disappropriation of the self. The risk of losing a sense of the boundaries of the self is inherent in autobiography due to the citationality of all writing. And yet, despite the elusiveness of this self that she seeks to affirm, despite the fact that she doubts the viability of this desire to affirm one's identity through an autobiography, despite the fact that she is aware that this desire could very well be merely illusory, still, Kofman admits to feeling a need to write her life:

I have come to a moment where I feel the necessity to write a biographic "autobiogriffure" which would not simply be an autobiography through texts. I feel I no

¹⁹ E.T.A. Hoffmann, *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr*, trans. by Anthea Bell (London: Penguin Books, 1999).

²⁰ Sarah Kofman, "Apprendre aux hommes à tenir parole. Portrait de Sarah Kofman," interview with Roland Jaccard, in *Le Monde* (27–28 April 1986), vii.

longer have anything to say, and yet, *I feel driven to make an autobiography that would be myself*. But this myself, is it not an illusion? Is it not an illusion to believe that I have an autobiography other than that which shows through my bibliography?²¹

Assuming that Kofman writes her autobiography with a self-conscious awareness of this paradox and the unavoidable grafting that constitutes autobiographic writing and with a Nietzschean wariness about the truthfulness of our self-representations, we could apply Kofman's own notion of *autobiogriffure* to the reading of her own autobiography.

In *Autobiogriffures*, Kofman contrasts the linearity of the tomcat's autobiography with the disrupted biography of the composer Johannes Kreisler, and shows how the cat's autobiography mocks man's²² claim to superiority over the animal on the basis of his rationality:

... the writing of Murr is linear, it is the telling of a biography, which has a beginning, birth, and an end, death (reported in a note by the editor...). Rigorous continuity of the Murr pages, the points of suspension which "begin" each page only the mark of the provisional and contingent suspension of the text of the cat by the text of the man. Therefore a linear autobiography, parodying the strict order of consciousness: the order of the story which is that of a novel of "formation" which follows the individual from his birth until his death, passing through the detours of an education which leads him away from his birthplace, to confront the hazards of the world and to come up against them, before returning home, having acquired by experience, wisdom and reason.²³

This is one way "to tell the story of [one's] life." As Kofman argues in *Autobiogriffures*, the convention parodically employed by Murr is aimed at constructing a narrative of the formation of the great man, the man of genius.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² My use of the masculine here is intentional, since the leitmotif of the "grand homme" is a gendered notion. The unmasking of man's suppressed and misrecognized appropriation of what he takes to be the feminine is a recurring theme in many of Kofman's readings of various authors, such as Rousseau, Comte, and Freud.

²³ Sarah Kofman, *Autobiogriffures. Du Chat Murr d'Hoffmann*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1984), 93. Translation mine.

It intends to paint a portrait of an exemplary life that has succeeded in educating animality into “wisdom and reason.” This narrative of cultivation (*Bildung*) transforms Murr into a hero to be emulated by others. It interprets his childhood as the precursor to the flowering of genius in his adulthood. In the following passage, Kofman points out how Murr retroactively endows the events of his childhood—even of his infancy—with the significance of a hidden, nascent destiny, the destiny of the “grand homme”:

Thus, Murr, like all heroes, barely escapes death, at the moment of his birth: twice. The first time, thanks to his mother, when his father, like Kronos, wanted to devour him; the second, thanks to Master Abraham, when he almost drowned

To be saved twice, is that not the sign that one is born under a lucky star? Is this not the sign of a brilliant hidden destiny?²⁴

Like Murr, Kofman as a child was saved from death during the war. Might we read in Kofman’s confession that she “had always wanted to tell the story of [her] life,”²⁵ and to have wanted to tell it in a continuous, linear story, without any gaps, a confession to a desire to decipher in her own life a destiny that would, in effect, save her life by giving it significance? If so, then conversely, Kofman’s rejection of the ideal of the linear, continuous narration of her life would imply relinquishing the fantasy of a hidden destiny. It would also mean questioning the narrative of the “grand homme,” who can only be raised to the height of greatness at the expense of a reductive reading of his life and childhood, a reading that determines in Hegelian fashion the essential elements while discarding its contradictory and unsublatable aspects on the grounds that these are merely contingent and accidental.

From a Deleuzian standpoint, Kofman’s notion of autobiography, the *autobiogriffure*, can be seen as a mode of writing that seeks to descend to the singularity of a life by shaking it loose from its moorings in the narrative of the “grand homme,” the narrative of destiny that culminates in the affirmation of the individual’s identity. Rather than presenting a sustained narrative that explains her struggles and the decisions that have defined the person she has become, in other words, rather than bestowing upon her life a unified meaning, *Rue Ordener*, *Rue Labat* offers its readers only a fragmentary

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 97.

²⁵ Sarah Kofman, “‘My Life’ and Psychoanalysis,” trans. by Georgia Albert, in *Selected Writings*, ed. by Thomas Albrecht, Georgia Albert, and Elizabeth G. Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 250–51.

account that hints at what in Kofman's life remains unnamed, unsettled, and would perhaps remain undone.

I think it is utterly significant to note that when Sarah Kofman finally writes her memoir, she devotes it only to the tumultuous years of her childhood, beginning with the arrest and deportation of her father to Auschwitz and centering on the ensuing trauma of being caught between her mother and the woman who hid them during the German occupation. She does not provide much of an account of her adolescence and early adulthood except for brief anecdotes about her difficulties with her mother and, more frequently, of keeping in touch with Mémé as she marks time with a recitation—all within the last chapter—of where she lived and studied until she entered the *École Normale Supérieure*. At this point, Kofman writes, “another life begins” and she closes her memoir with the death of Mémé.

Rue Ordener, Rue Labat retains the sense of unreality that surrounds childhood memory. Rather than employing a strictly continuous and linear narrative, the very short chapters read like a series of vignettes with faded backgrounds. Remembered fragments follow the tangled paths of memory; a memory conjured by some detail in the current temporal frame evokes another memory from either a more remote or recent past.

For all its brevity and the sparseness of its narration, *Rue Ordener, Rue Labat* is anything but a simple account of a childhood. Rather than giving the impression that it states Kofman's “bare truths,” the restraint in Kofman's writing style surrounds her words with the silence of things that remain unsaid. The tone of the memoir is that of someone who feels compelled to testify to the truths of one's past and to mourn the losses—still unbearable—that have been suffered.

In Kofman's memoir, what is said serves as a screen that keeps the intolerable at bay. For example, immediately after the chapter recounting the court battle between Kofman's mother and Mémé, where her mother accused Mémé of “having tried to ‘take advantage’” of Sarah and where Sarah in turn betrayed her mother by testifying (truthfully enough) that her mother had been beating her, Kofman breaks her narration with two apparently parenthetical chapters, both dealing with the substitution of the bad for the good mother and the confusion between the two. Chapter XVIII speaks of Leonardo da Vinci's drawing, the *Madonna and Child with St. Anne*, and Chapter XIX, of Alfred Hitchcock's film, *The Lady Vanishes*. These chapters can be said to function as an introduction to the years of her anguished relationship with her two mothers, but they also forestall a direct confrontation with the painful event that had just been narrated, allowing Kofman to speak of her trauma indirectly.

By inserting these two chapters, Kofman is breaking the continuity of the narration of her childhood. Citing da Vinci (as well as Freud, who

analyzes this scene) and Hitchcock is, on the one hand, an act of appropriation of these texts; but on the other hand, one can also read it as an act of dispossession and dis-appropriation of the self. Her life is in a sense no longer *her* life—it is now a footnote to Leonardo da Vinci and to Alfred Hitchcock. These chapters interrupt and break down the consistency of her individual identity, and resituates her childhood with other “concomitants.”

As Deleuze points out, the events, the singularities gain their virtuality and are given their power (their power for transformation) by being linked and divided differently, by being assembled with other singularities, allowing them to enter into a plane—an other plane—of immanence. On this reading, the significance of citationality in autobiographic writing is that it invites the dissolution of a discrete individuality in order for the story or the outlines of a particular individual, the subject of the autobiography, to reemerge in a way that resonates with other stories of other individuals, with other memories and other desires, in other places and at other times.

From Individuality to Singularity: Autobiography as a Testimony

According to Deleuze, “the Life of such individuality fades away in favor of the singular life immanent to a man who *no longer has a name; though he can be mistaken for no other*. A singular essence, a life...”²⁶ Is it possible to reconcile such “namelessness” with the naming that occurs in the act of commemoration that is performed by the autobiographer?

I believe so. I would argue that in *Rue Ordener, Rue Labat*, all the talk of names of persons and places—publicly verifiable, especially the places—on one hand, serve to anchor the autobiographical narrative in the empirical: this is about the individual called Sarah Kofman. And yet, on the other hand, once you read the autobiography, you do not meet Sarah Kofman the philosopher, the individual born in September 14, 1934 and who would die in October 15, 1994. You hear an interior, atopic voice. Speaking in the first person, recalling events, remnants of impressions in simple, sparse prose, this autobiographic voice captures what Deleuze might mean by a haecceity that is anonymous and yet singular, “nameless” and yet “cannot be mistaken for another.”

I would like to introduce at this point the notion of testimony, which I would argue is at the core of this singularity that characterizes Kofman’s autobiographic voice. It is true that in testifying, the one who speaks seeks to make a testimony that is as precise in its details—hence, the enunciation of names, the dating of events, the identification of places. On the surface, testifying seems to run counter to the “fading away” of individuality and the

²⁶ Deleuze, “Immanence,” 29. Emphasis mine.

“loss of names.” But there is an aspect of testimony that makes it an exemplar of singularity: the one who testifies is irreplaceable. And the one who testifies is testifying to an event that has vanished, to an event whose existence is precariously guarded by the testimony. The voice that testifies is absolutely singular, even if this testimony were to be joined by other testimonies. The testimony is in some sense an attestation to the singular.

Kofman’s autobiography, as a memoir not just of experiences in general, but of childhood, a traumatic childhood, is bearing witness to an invisible universe—a virtual space. She mentions persons by name—classmates in school, teachers—who had been kind to her. And she mentions places in Paris—names of streets, train stations, even apartment addresses, no matter how uncertainly remembered.

But her mother, strikingly, remains unnamed. Her father’s name is mentioned near the beginning of her memoir, when the police come to arrest him: Rabbi Berek Kofman. Siblings, teachers, Mémé’s lover Paul, even her rival, another girl also taken care of by Mémé, are named, but not her mother. Although it is true that her substitute mother, whom she calls Mémé, is also never properly named, Kofman does mention that her saint (and possibly namesake) is Claire.

The woman who saved her, and at the same time wounded her most deeply, is first referred to as “the Lady of Rue Labat” and then later on as “Mémé.” But her mother’s name is never given. She is always called “my mother.” This suggests that while the opening of *Rue Ordener, Rue Labat* draws the reader’s attention to her father’s broken pen to signify what she had been wanting to write about, perhaps, what was truly intolerable for Kofman, what which she could not bring herself to speak about²⁷ was not the death of her father but her separation from her mother. It is as if in this book, the nameless mother becomes an emblem for the vanishing point at which anonymity gives way to absolute singularity. Perhaps, one can only bear witness to the absolute singularity of a being or an experience by hovering about it wordlessly.

Thus, Kofman substitutes the names of the streets for the names of the two women—her mothers. The streets, train lines and stations, the landmarks in Paris and in the countryside plotted the virtual landscape of her childhood. Recalling a fateful night in February 1943, when because of a

²⁷ *Rue Ordener, Rue Labat* begins with these words: “Of him all I have left is the fountain pen. I took it one day from my mother’s purse, where she kept it along with some other souvenirs of my father. It is a kind of pen no longer made, the kind you have to fill with ink. I used it all through school. It ‘failed’ me before I could bring myself to give it up. I still have it, patched up with Scotch tape; it is right in front of me on my desk and makes me write, write.

“Maybe all my books have been the detours required to bring me to write about ‘that.’” Kofman, *Rue Ordener, Rue Labat*, 3.

warning that there would be a roundup, she and her mother had to flee their apartment to seek refuge in the Lady of Rue Labat, Kofman writes:

The Metro stop separates the Rue Ordener from the Rue Labat. Between the two, Rue Marcadet; it seemed endless to me, and I vomited the whole way.²⁸

Autobiography and Virtuality

Kofman's autobiography, a sparse, discontinuous, discrete testament to the persons and events of her childhood, is an act of dispossession. Nearly the last book she would publish, it is a book in which, as Ann Smock (who translated this book to English) puts it, Kofman was able to "turn toward a sort of knot in her past, into which her heart was tied."²⁹ But if she was able to turn towards this knot, it was not in order to unravel it and attain the illumination of an explanation. Smock describes the lucidity of Kofman's autobiography in this way:

... bathed in a lucidity unclouded by insight. No sense of understanding or ultimate resolution—no relief, no consolation whatsoever—mars it. It is clear.³⁰

Through the simplicity of its style, *Rue Ordener*, *Rue Labat* bares an old wound with utmost discretion; without the support of an edifying purpose. without offering lessons on how suffering is to be overcome, and without even the support of her usual (anti-)philosophical style. Speaking of the "high-spirited Nietzschean malice" in Kofman's philosophical writings, and contrasting this with the tone of *Rue Ordener*, *Rue Labat*, Ann Smock observes that:

She liked to play the role of the mocking girl whose laughter interrupts the philosopher at his desk, scatters his grave truths the better to greet in their stead beautiful fictions, uncanny signs, and figures 'devilishly deceptive.' That splendid mask of insolently feminine brilliance is not apparent at all in *Rue Ordener*, *Rue Labat*, which, I would say, does without literary qualities.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁹ Ann Smock, Translator's Introduction to *Rue Ordener*, *Rue Labat*, xi.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, xii.

It is simple, but it does not have a simple style or any style. You would not say of it “well written” or “a good story.” Fortunately, it exists and is plainly legible.³¹

In this book, Sarah Kofman speaks, and yet not in the way that say, Nietzsche speaks in “*Ecce Homo*.” Yes, it is confessional, for it opens with an admission: “Maybe all my books have been the detours required to bring me to write about ‘that.’”³² But rather than offering an explanation of how one becomes what one is, hers is more of a confession of all that is unresolved in her life. It is as if Kofman were saying, “Perhaps, this is what I could not bring myself to write about, and so I wrote all those other books instead”

Kofman’s autobiography is an act of dispossession of mastery over her own life. In Deleuzian terms, it undoes the markers of Kofman’s individuality—her style, her status as a philosopher, an analyst of Nietzsche and Freud. Using a fragmentary structure, it disavows the genre of the biography of the *grand homme* and descends to a plane of immanence. By entering the wound of her childhood—by opening up an old wound—Kofman renounces the fiction of the life that has progressed into maturity, found its destiny, and in which one has “become what one is.” Just at the point where, in all its simplicity of language and style, Sarah Kofman attains to the singular voice of the witness to the singular experience of her childhood, this voice becomes the anonymous voice of *a* life.

A life, writes Deleuze, “contains only virtuals. It is made up of virtualities, events, singularities.”³³ And he explains virtuality by saying that “what we call virtual is not something that lacks reality but something that is engaged in a process of actualization following the plane that gives it its particular reality.”³⁴ What exactly does Deleuze mean by virtualities? Virtualities can only be spoken of in the most indeterminate way—which is why the indefinite article is an index of the singular. But it is important to note that these singularities are not purely isolated. Deleuze speaks of virtualities as “something that is engaged in a process of actualization following the plane that gives it its particular reality.”³⁵ Thinking of virtualities is therefore, both a matter of thinking the in-between—the indeterminate, the possible—as well as the plane of consistency that “give[s] virtual events their full reality.” It is my understanding that in Nietzschean terms, identifying a plane of immanence—or perhaps, more precisely, situating oneself within a plane of immanence—would mean having a perspective.

³¹ *Ibid.*, x–xi.

³² Kofman, *Rue Ordener, Rue Labat*, 3.

³³ Deleuze, “Immanence,” 31.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.* Emphasis mine.

As Nietzsche would put it, to live is to have a perspective. And to have a perspective, does this not consist in placing oneself in a nexus of “concomitants”? But not just any sort of perspective will do. The final passages of Deleuze’s brief essay suggest that in order for us to descend to a plane of immanence, a certain discomposure with ourselves—with our certainties, with the organizing and individuating unity of the self—is necessary. Which is why Deleuze identifies the plane of immanence with a *wound*:

Events or singularities give to the plane all their virtuality, just as the plane of immanence gives virtual events their full reality. The event considered as non-actualized (indefinite) is lacking in nothing. It suffices to put it in relation to its concomitants: a transcendental field, a plane of immanence, a life, singularities. *A wound is incarnated or actualized in a state of things or of life; but it is itself a pure virtuality on the plane of immanence that leads us into a life. My wound existed before me: not a transcendence of the wound as higher actuality, but its immanence as a virtuality always within a milieu (plane or field).*³⁶

Deleuze speaks of a wound as “a pure virtuality on the plane of immanence” and of woundedness as containing the possibility of “lead[ing] us into a life.”

“My wound existed before me” — what if we were to read this quite literally from the standpoint of autobiography, and in particular, Kofman’s autobiography? It would mean that trauma precedes the subject. Before the “I” who writes the autobiography, who self-consciously thematizes one’s life in the act of writing, is the wound—which is to say, everything in one’s history, personal and historical, that calls for healing and saving, for some sort of reckoning without providing the terms of its reckoning.

Because the memoir is a testament, the plane of immanence that it fills out through the wound is a plane of possible encounters. We could thus sketch an ethical structure of autobiography: on the side of the autobiographer, autobiography (1) sketches the contours of a perspective—neither an inexorable fate nor a project drawn by the individual—with which another may resonate; and (2) bears witness to the nameless, to those who have disappeared, but who are irreplaceable, singular. And on the side of the reader, autobiography opens the possibility of responding with empathy, and

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 31–32.

like the “others” in Dickens’ work, with “eagerness, respect,” or perhaps, “even love” for an elusive and singular life revealed in the text.

Finally, what of the relation between autobiography and philosophy? The autobiography is a wound of philosophy. It enables philosophers to sink beneath the terrain of conceptualization in order to find traces of inadequation, of dissonance between consciousness and its field.

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Reflexive-Liberative Filipino Feminist Ethics¹

Ma. Theresa T. Payongayong

Abstract: Filipino feminists have been known to give value to familial relationships, cultural heritage, and religion that are largely influenced by patriarchy. How one aspect (women’s emancipation and fight against patriarchal culture) affects the other (women’s valuation of family, culture, and religion) in one line of struggle is an important topic to explore, since varied experiences show how some feminists struggle with application of feminist principles to their everyday lives and to women’s movement at the same time. Some have had difficulties resolving conflicts between their feminism and social expectations. Others have made equally difficult choices in pursuing and maintaining their intimate relationships. To understand how they deal with these struggles amidst active participation in the women’s movement, this paper looks into the emerging feminist ethics among Filipino feminists. The findings identify ethical issues in Filipino feminists’ lives and how they address these issues. A reflexive–liberative feminist ethics emerge from the findings. This type of feminist ethics emphasizes choice, and when applied to the women’s movement, could lead to a more caring and just society.

Keywords: feminism, ethics, reflexive, liberative

I.

Varied experiences show how some feminists struggle with application of feminist principles to their everyday lives and to women’s movement. Some have had difficulties resolving conflicts between their feminism and social expectations. Others have made equally difficult

¹ An earlier version of a part of this paper was presented as “Reflexive-Liberative Activism and Feminist Ethics,” in a conference with the theme, *Feminist Approach to Women’s Empowerment in Korea and ASEAN*, organized by the Korea-ASEAN Cooperation Project (KACP) on Education and Exchange Program for Young Scholars in Women’s Studies, last 17 October 2012, in Jeju Island, South Korea.

choices in pursuing and maintaining their intimate relationships. To be able to understand how women deal with these struggles amidst active participation in the women's movement, this research studied the ethics of lived feminisms in the Philippines. In the end, these research questions had been answered: What are the ethical issues in Filipino feminists' lives? How do Filipino feminists address these ethical issues? What is the emerging Filipino feminist ethics?

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of Filipino feminists; fill the gap of lack of knowledge on the emerging Filipino feminist ethics; and contribute to knowledge of Filipino feminist ethics and how it is formed.

As there had been very few attempts to dig deeper into the nature of the ethical dimension of women; as there had equally been no further attempt to focus on what constitutes Filipino feminist ethics and where it comes from; and as various studies presume that both men and women possess certain ethical or moral standards but do not focus on how these standards came to be, the need for a kind of research study that fills the abovementioned lack is in order.

Furthermore, there is still scarcity of written works and studies about feminists' ethical dimension, particularly in the Philippines. There may be works that discuss women's ethical dimension, but only insofar as it is compared to men's ethical dimension. There is none, however, that particularly focuses on how the lived lives of feminists are shaped by their ethics or morality. There is a need to do a kind of study that will dig deeper into the nature of feminist ethics to be able to grasp how feminists live their lives, relate with other people, and affect others in the process.

This study committed to contribute to the enrichment of knowledge on Filipino feminist ethics mirrored in the lives of selected Filipino feminists by emphasizing how feminist ethics could help liberate and emancipate women more.

This study involved self-identifying Filipino feminists who either belong to or have strong affinity with any women's organization or movement. There was definitely conscious effort to make the composition of participants as diverse as possible (like in terms of differences in age, sexual preference, level of education, and occupation). There was, likewise, an effort to represent self-identifying feminists from the various political spectrums. Although efforts had been exerted to ensure variety in the representation of feminists, factors such as, but not limited to, conflict of schedule, proximity, and availability of prospective participants became a hindrance. As a result, all of the participants came from the Luzon area only.

FGD (Focus Group Discussion) and LSI (Life Story Interview) topics focused on intimate relationships and family life. These topics connect the

participants to people close to their lives. Participants are most familiar with these topics because these come closest to their personal everyday experiences.

II.

There is scarcity of written works and studies about Filipino feminist ethics. Some studies did provide insights on the roles and images of women compared to men. Some proponents attributed it to biology while some said it is based on culture. There is none, however, that particularly focuses on how the lived lives of feminists are shaped by their ethics or morality.

The book, *Researching the Fragments: Histories of Women in the Asian Context* edited by Carolyn Brewer and Anne-Marie Medcalf, is a compilation of works on cultural and social history of women in Asia. Among the twelve articles in the book, only one article by Mina Roces entitled “Beauty Queen, Moral Guardian, Inang Bayan, and Militant Nun: Images of Female Power in Postwar Philippines” tackled the relation of mother image with women being moral guardians. The usual civic participation of women in society, like charity works and education, is rooted in her mother image. Women are also regarded as guardians of morality, especially in terms of fighting against corruption in politics.²

Another book entitled *Mga Ina ng Bayan: Life Stories of Filipino and Japanese Women Community Leaders* by Amaryllis T. Torres, Marlene G. dela Cruz, and Thelma B. Magcuro discussed the dedication of five Filipino and six Japanese women to community service. Each story presented how these women handled their lives as wives, workers and leaders. The book discussed how these women’s lives are affected by their relationship with men. The stories rooted out the usual moral issues that women face in relation to men and the ways such issues are resolved based on gender role stereotyping.³

One particular work that came closest to the topic of this study was Sylvia H. Guerrero’s *Towards Feminist Consciousness: Filipino Mothers and Daughters Tell Their Story*. It presented life stories/histories of feminist mothers and daughters from about two to three generations. It discussed influences and external factors identified by mothers and daughters that

² See Mina Roces, “Beauty Queen, Moral Guardian, Inang Bayan, and Militant Nun: Images of Female Power in Postwar Philippines,” in *Researching the Fragments: Histories of Women in the Asian Context*, ed. by Carolyn Brewer and Anne-Marie Medcalf (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 2000). See also Mina Roces, *Women, Power, and Kinship Politics: Female Power in Postwar Philippines* (London: Praeger, 1998), 161–188.

³ See Amaryllis T. Torres, Marlene G. dela Cruz, and Thelma B. Magcuro, *Mga Ina ng Bayan: Life Stories of Filipino and Japanese Women Community Leaders* (Quezon City: Milflores Publishing Inc., 2002).

affected their consciousness and views on feminism. It also narrated how it is to be raised by a feminist mother. What was given due emphasis here are the values formed from one generation of feminists to another. There are cases when daughters imbibe the values by themselves; some are forced to accept it; while others totally reject it.⁴

A book entitled *The Woman of Faith Today: Shaping the Nation's Future* edited by Jesselynn Garcia-dela Cruz is a compilation of articles presented during the National Conference on Women in 1997. The articles revolved around the responsibilities of women of faith to address problems of the world. It offered the idea that change is in the hands of women, thus, change should emanate from them. Propagation of faith, life, and love remains part of women's role in society from a religious point of view. It tackled the implications of the religious point of view vis-à-vis men's roles and obligations in society as well as its implications on the ethical dimension of women.⁵

"Coping Strategies of Female-Headed Households in Urban Poor Communities in the Philippines" by Amayllis Torres in *Review of Women's Studies* is a description of families headed by women from urban poor communities. It discussed the implications of a family set-up like this on the children and on mothers, too. It tackled the influences of being raised in a poor female-headed family on the ethical dimension of children. This work indirectly rejected the idea that differences of ethical dimension are biology-based.⁶

In *Sex and Gender in Philippine Society: A Discussion of Issues on the Relations between Men and Women* by Elizabeth V. Eviota, sex- and gender-based division of labor was seen as a great impetus for the redefinition of family and the valuation of familial structure based from systematic changes outside the family, i.e., in workplaces, communities, schools, churches, and others. The work pointed to factors that shape a woman's ethical perspective.⁷

⁴ See Sylvia Guerrero, ed., *Towards Feminist Consciousness: Filipino Mothers and Daughters Tell their Story*, (Quezon City: University Center for Women Studies – UP Diliman, 1997).

⁵ See Jesselynn Garcia-dela Cruz, *The Woman of Faith Today: Shaping the Nation's Future*, (Quezon City: Office on Women, CBCP, 1999).

⁶ See Amayllis T. Torres, "Coping Strategies of Female-Headed Households in Urban Poor Communities in the Philippines" in *Review of Women's Studies*, 4:1 (1994), 93–110.

⁷ See Elizabeth V. Eviota, ed., *Sex and Gender in Philippine Society: A Discussion of Issues on the Relations Between Men and Women* (Manila: National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women, 1994).

Narcisa Canilao-Paredes did a paper on “Ethics in Feminist Research.” This work focused on the role of ethics in feminist research but not exactly on what constitutes feminist ethics.⁸

Because of the dearth of local data on feminist ethics, there is a need to surface theories of feminist ethics in the Philippines based from feminists’ lived experiences as this study attempted to illustrate.

Compared to local literature, there have been several international studies on feminist ethics. Margaret Urban Walker sets the background for understanding of feminist ethics, discussing women’s ways of knowing and how meanings are produced. Her book, *Moral Understandings: A Feminist Study in Ethics* is useful in evaluating women’s sources of knowledge and experiences. It discussed feminist epistemology in connection to the subject of moral philosophy.⁹

Feminist ethics challenges traditional, male-dominated ethics. An interesting work by James P. Sterba, *Three Challenges to Ethics: Environmentalism, Feminism and Multiculturalism*, discussed recent critiques to traditional ethics, one of which is feminism. Feminism maintains that there is a masculine bias in ethics and purports to show how to correct it.¹⁰

In “In a Different Voice: Women’s Conceptions of Self and of Morality,” Carol Gilligan says:

Feminist ethics starts, in one sense, with the realization that Aristotle’s famous question in male-stream philosophy does not apply- or has not applied- to women. As de Beauvoir said, women have been objects and not subjects. By that she meant that women have been denied the right to be full moral agents, they have not been those who choose a life. Feminist ethics, therefore, now poses the question: “Is it good for women?” In this way, feminist theorists seek the re-visioning of moral philosophy. The feminist imperative is to challenge the hegemony of male ethical theory and to insist on the woman’s voice. Feminist ethics, then,

⁸ See Narcisa Paredes-Canilao, “Ethics in Feminist Research,” in *Gender-Sensitive & Feminist Methodologies: A Handbook for Health and Social Researchers*, ed. by Sylvia H. Guerrero (Quezon City: University Center for Women’s Studies – UP Diliman, 1999).

⁹ See Margaret Urban Walker, *Moral Understandings: A Feminist Study in Ethics*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹⁰ James P. Sterba, *Three Challenges to Ethics: Environmentalism, Feminism and Multiculturalism*, (NY: Oxford University Press, 2001).

arises directly out of women's lives and women's issues.¹¹

A female ethics is proposed in Nel Noddings' "Ethics from the Standpoint of Women." Female ethics does not aim to "genderize" morality; rather, it gives value and credence to women's experiences and voices. It does not invoke already established ethical frameworks but takes the standpoint of women based from her lived experiences instead. "The idea is to develop a phenomenology of women's experience that will provide an adequate grounding for the construction of ethics from the standpoint of women."¹²

Carol Gilligan in her work, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, argued that males and females possess different moral voices but this does not mean that one is superior to the other. She discussed how two children interpret the same moral dilemma differently. The female is concerned about maintaining relationships while the male is concerned with rules and fairness. This correlation is supposed to enhance and complement male-female relationship, not let it degenerate. This fact, according to Gilligan, can be traced from differences of moral development of men and women. Men are impersonal while women are personal when dealing with ethical issues. Logical system and the law are central concepts utilized by the former while the latter considers communication and preservation of smooth interpersonal relationship. In relation to this, men do not really ask for details, they instead directly answer a given moral dilemma. Women, on the other hand, ask many questions, clarify the given, and look for details of the problem before coming up with any position about or answer to a given moral issue. This difference suggests the public-private divide in morality. It appears that men's moral dimension is more public than private. It is public because of the very structural thinking just like the process and system used in various societal institutions. Women's moral dimension is supposed to be private because of the value given to the preservation of emotions and relations like family relations.¹³

Ethics is not something apart from the experiences of individuals. Starting from the self, individuals acquire ideas of ethics and morality as one enters into human relationships in school, church, organizations, and the like. Furthermore, institutions and culture construct practices that direct

¹¹ Carol, Gilligan, "In a Different Voice: Women's Conceptions of Self and of Morality," in *Women and Values: Readings in Recent Feminist Philosophy*, 3rd ed., ed. by Marilyn Pearsall (USA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1999), 314.

¹² Nel Noddings, "Ethics from the Standpoint of Women" in *Women and Values: Readings in Recent Feminist Philosophy*, 388.

¹³ See Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1982).

individuals to act according to what is valued by society at large. Evidently, ethics shapes both the intra- and inter-personal lives of individuals. Surely, whatever ethical principles are acquired from individual, institutional and societal levels of experience, either the principles are reproduced or are modified depending on what goes on between and among people.

Richard Norman distinguishes between two forms of ethics, namely, the substantive or normative ethics, and meta-ethics. Substantive or normative ethics, according to Norman, is concerned with identifying which actions are considered good or bad. In contrast, meta-ethics transcends this concern by analyzing the meaning of good or bad actions instead of merely identifying them. Thus, substantive or normative ethics deals with the “actual use of concepts (good or bad) to talk about human conduct;” while meta-ethics deals with the “examination of these concepts.”¹⁴

Related to Norman’s forms of ethics is what Walker referred to as the “two pictures of morality,” namely, the “theoretical–juridical” and “expressive–collaborative” models.¹⁵ On the one hand, the theoretical–juridical model “prescribes the representation of morality as a compact, propositionally codifiable, impersonally action-guiding code within an agent, or as a compact set of law-like propositions that ‘explain’ the moral behavior of a well-formed moral agent....”¹⁶ Ethics here serves as a system that guides the actions of individuals.

On the other hand, the expressive–collaborative model views “morality as a socially embodied medium of mutual understanding and negotiation between people over their responsibility for things open to human care and response.”¹⁷ Ethics in this sense offers certain values that allow individuals to express their feelings, choices, relationships and understandings through shared responsibility.

This study adopted the expressive–collaborative model of ethics or morality for the following reasons: its concept of morality concurs with the idea of feminism; and, just like this sense of ethics, feminism also values the individual expression of feelings, choices, relationships and understandings through shared responsibility.

III.

This study uses four (4) main domains in the analytical framework, namely, personal characteristics of self-identifying feminists, life experiences,

¹⁴ Richard Norman, *The Moral Philosophers: An Introduction to Ethics*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1–2.

¹⁵ Walker, *Moral Understandings*, 7.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 7–8.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

formation of feminist consciousness, and challenges to mainstream/male-centered ethics.

Personal characteristics refer to the demographic profile of participants. Self-identifying feminists are those who consider and actually label themselves as feminists. Life experiences refer to personal everyday experiences while feminist consciousness refers to the understanding of the woman problem and making conscious effort to end the problem. Mainstream/male-centered ethics refers to values imposed by men and concepts of good and bad in accordance to the male perspective.

Personal characteristics of self-identifying feminists are sex, age, education, occupation, and civil status while life experiences are intimate relationships, family life, and involvement in feminism. Intimate relationship refers to a personal, private connection with someone. Family life refers to a set-up or arrangement that accounts for the manners and activities of individual family members. Both personal characteristics of self-identifying feminists and life experiences influence the formation of feminist consciousness. Under formation of feminist consciousness are qualities of being a feminist and feminist values. Formation of feminist consciousness results to challenges to mainstream/male-centered ethics. These challenges are non-traditional concept of family, alternative to marriage, feminist spirituality, and reflexivity of the nationalist and women’s movement.

In whole, the analytical framework described the emergence of Filipino feminist ethics.

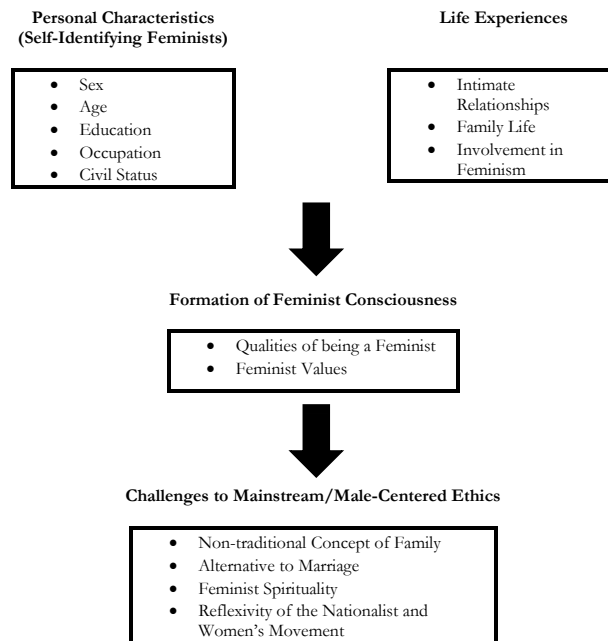


Figure 1. Ethics of Lived Feminisms Framework

Selected participants are self-identifying feminists from various age groups, civil status, and education. These participants represent the young, the middle aged, and the senior who may be married, single or separated and who may be undergraduates, college graduates or post-graduate degree holders. These criteria were set to capture a more complete picture of the lives of prospective feminist participants. Self-identifying feminists are those who consider and actually label themselves as feminists. Most of the self-identifying feminists who participated in the Life Story Interviews are well known within the women's movement to be either founders of feminist groups or are active in feminist movements. In processing their accounts, the focus was on the participants' personal meanings, experiences, views, principles, beliefs, and values. In analyzing the results, their accounts were interwoven to generate a kind of feminist ethics unique to Filipino feminists.

The author observed ethical considerations in the course of the study. The author secured informed consent of participants; ensured confidentiality of data; respected privacy and personal space of participants; and used pseudonyms to represent each of the participants in the discussion of findings. Personal preferences of participants as well as their rights and dignity as persons were also respected. The author also communicated possible benefits of the study to all participants.

IV.

This part discusses findings on each of the above domains based on the responses gathered from the Focus Group Discussions and Life Story interviews.

A. Personal Characteristics of Self-Identifying Feminists

The five (5) indicators that defined the personal characteristics of self-identifying feminists are sex, age, education, occupation, and civil status.

1. *Sex.* The twenty-two (22) participants are all women, and three (3) of them identified themselves as lesbians.
2. *Age.* The participants represent various age group, namely, young, middle aged, and senior. The young feminists are in their 30s while the middle aged are in their 40s. Senior feminists are aged 50 and above. Six (6) are young feminists, eight (8) are middle aged, and eight (8) are senior feminists. The participants' age ranges from 30 to 72 years old.
3. *Education.* Majority of the participants are highly educated. Four (4) of them are college graduates. Nine (9) participants have graduate

degrees, and four (4) have post-graduate degrees. Five (5) are high school graduates.

4. *Occupation.* Half (11) of the participants are NGO workers. Eight (8) are from the academe, two (2) are government workers, while one (1) participant works for the media industry and at the same time serves as a council member of an NGO. Four (4) out of eight (8) participants from the academe also works for an NGO.

Participants whose main occupation is NGO work are involved in various sectors. Four (4) are from NGOs on the women sector; one (1) on women and children; and another one (1) on women and fisherfolks. One (1) NGO has programs on farmers and fisherfolks; one (1) on farmers; and another two (2) on fisherfolks. Only one (1) NGO focuses on labor.

5. *Civil Status.* Half (11) of the participants are married; two (2) are single (one is a nun, and the other has a child); three (3) are in domestic partnership (two of them are in same-sex relationship, and one is in an incestuous relationship); three (3) are separated (one of them has a partner but they are not living together); and three (3) are widows (but one of them currently has a partner).

B. Role of Life Experiences in Shaping Feminist Consciousness

Along with personal characteristics, life experiences play a role in shaping feminist consciousness. These life experiences refer to intimate relationships, family life, and involvement in feminism.

1. *Intimate Relationships.* Participants define intimate relationship based from their experiences. They mention qualities to maintain intimate relationship. Some of them identify challenges to it.

Definition of Intimate Relationship

Participants associate intimate relationship with private property. One participant, Loreta, shares that “being intimate is an issue of one being a property of the other. You are mine, I am yours ... If you want to philander around, our intimate relationship ends.”

On the ideas of exclusivity and mutuality, they believe that there should be no other parties involved. Once another party enters the scene, it breaks the exclusivity clause and alters the character of the relationship. One adds that it would be hard for her to be in an intimate relationship with two or more individuals such as a ‘threesome.’ For her, the concept of ‘sharing’ in this case, is repugnant.

The participant in the same-sex relationship shares that she finds it easier to connect with another woman and because she and her partner share the same values, they are exclusive or monogamous by choice. Jonet points out that “actually, it is no different from a heterosexual relationship. We are exclusive; we are monogamous not because we require each other to be so but because the values of each one come into play.”

Another participant, Josefina, adds that intimate relationship need not be within the bounds of marriage and between opposite sex. Melinda shares her incestuous intimate relationship with her third-degree cousin. She says, “what makes the relationship complicated is the fact that my partner is my third-degree cousin. The ethical issue is, therefore, glaring. He is my third cousin, he’s younger than me, and we live together. This is our shared level of intimacy.”

Qualities to Maintain Intimate Relationship

There are qualities of an intimate relationship that the participants believe should be maintained. It is important to be friends, according to Nita, Aurea, and Lucia. Melinda, on the other hand, considers her partner as roommate or companion. Aurea also shares that it is important to have constant communication.

Nita adds commitment and respect for each other. She says,

The only thing consistent in us is that we’re friends. Sometimes, I don’t want this anymore, I can’t take this anymore. He is also like that. There are times when you say, “I’m fed up.” That’s when you no longer feel the excitement, you feel excited about other people instead. But what is consistent here is we are friends. We just have to respect each other because we already have two children.”

Jonet also says that she values commitment. “I am committed with this person. Because I have a commitment, even if I fell in love with another, I made the decision to keep this relationship.”

Independence is also valued. Aurea keeps her own money while her husband keeps his own. Nita says she has her own activities or projects separate from her activities with her husband. Josefina and Jonet add that it is important to maintain one’s own identity within a relationship, and that the relationship has to be nurturing so as to enhance each other as a person. Jonet shares,

What should happen within a relationship is that your person is enhanced, it develops more. So, even when you separate ways, no one is devastated, instead, you'll get out of it complete and whole, and so much more because of the learnings and experiences you got from your relationship no matter how long or how short the relationship may be.

According to Aurea, Lucia, and Perlita, it is important that the spouse is as much a part of, or supportive of, the activist or revolutionary movement. It is also important that the spouse is supportive of their feminist ideals. Because of this, Aurea says, she and her husband never had major problems; the secret to their happy and peaceful marriage is the application of feminist values in their lives.

Challenges to Intimate Relationship

An issue regarding Melinda's intimate relationship is that she recognizes the economic disparities with her partner. She says, "It's also not equal because I am more dominant not only in decision-making but also in terms of finances, because I have a higher salary. I have accepted that we're really not equal."

There is also unequal gender division of labor in Lina's case. She shares, "taking care of the children is automatically mine. But he has other priorities. He has work, he tends to go home late. He still wants to stay out at eight o'clock in the evening." This is also true of Xenia's case. According to her, "my husband arrives, I make him coffee, serve his food, wash his clothes, while I take care of our children. It seems those are my set roles as his wife. Until I joined a woman's group where I had trainings on how to stand for women's rights."

Before, Perlita's husband had an opinion regarding the tasks for women and tasks for men. Ten years ago, they both decided that her husband should add one household task in what he is doing, that is, doing groceries. He is doing that until now. Perlita adds,

In principle, aside from the fact that he is hands-on with the kids, he has a household task that is agreeable for him, so that it is also clear to himself, to his integrity, to his kids, that household tasks should be done and that it is not demeaning.

For other participants, in contrast to marriage, non-traditional relationships work for them. Even if uncertainties in their relationship continue to hound her, because she is into a domestic partnership, Melinda continuously makes effort to make it work and plans to stay as long as they live harmonious lives and they do not hurt each other.

Remedios also lives with her same-sex partner. She says she is happy with the set-up. "They knew we shared a home, we bought it. That's what we want—we're independent, we're together." For Carmen, who had gone through two previous marriages, and now has a partner, traditional relationship does not work for her. At present, she has a partner but they do not live together.

Five participants, Melinda, Nita, Lina, Loreta and Ana share a common experience. Their husbands/partners had an affair with other women. Melinda says she drove her partner out of the house when it became clear that she cannot stop her partner's affair. "I don't know if I'm wrong, I drove him out of the house right away. I don't want to be at the losing end ... I think this is the most painful that ever happened to me."

Unlike Melinda, it was Lina who left the house. Lina reasons out that she is working for gender issues and helping other women, yet she had a problem with her husband's infidelity. Eventually, the need for someone to be always there for her prevailed.

Instead of getting separated, Nita proposed an open relationship. She explains, "you know, if you have a relationship, you have expectations, right? So, remove the concept of relationship and you wouldn't have expectations." In the end, they reconciled. Nita also learned to lower her expectations in the relationship and be independent from her husband.

We no longer talk about sweet nothings. Mushy expectations are gone. Maybe we have matured over time. When there's a party and he does not invite me to come with him, I don't feel hurt anymore because I also have a party to attend to. And then before, it was an issue when we do not share the same bed. Now, we more often do not share the same bed. We have separate beds. After it happened, there's a possibility of separation. What is important, and my kids know it, with or without a partner, you have something you can call your own. After it happened, my conviction to have my own house is strengthened, I will build my own, what I can consider my own.

Loreta shares how she handled the situation when she found out her husband had another woman. She says, “along the way, he had a third party. I declared then, ‘let’s separate because you’re no longer mine, and I’m no longer yours. I don’t want to share you with another woman.’ It’s also difficult. Of course, you know the nitty-gritty and the implications of separation—children’s interests first, the length of the relationship, your history together.”

2. *Family Life*. Participants describe their actual family set-up. Child-rearing experiences from their immediate and current families are also shared.

Family Set-up

Participants share various forms of family—single, nuclear and extended. Paula says it is important that there is a bond between and among people whom you consider as family. She shares, “I’m a single parent. My concept of family is that you have a strong bond. I don’t believe that to become a family there should be a mother and a father. Blood relation binds me with my daughter. So, she is my direct family.”

Paula, Sheila and Joana say that there could also be an extended family. Paula’s experience is that, “the other extended family includes the parents, grandparents, there is also bond there. Then there is the ‘movement’ that binds you beyond blood.”

Sheila says, “now that I belong to a movement, my family has grown bigger.” Joana adds, “the people whom I offer my life, time and actions to are my family.”

Jonet considers same-sex partners as family. She shares, “I’m now within a non-typical family. Me, my partner and her two kids. This is our family, including the cat.” Melinda adds childless couple as a kind of family, too. She says, “it’s also a family even if [the couple is] childless and has no benefit of marriage.”

In a broader sense, participants extend family to non-relatives, such as members of organizations and movements to which they belong. Loreta includes non-humans, like birds, plants and animals as family. “I belong to a traditional family. With husband, children, including dogs, birds, plants.”

Child-Rearing Experiences

Child-rearing experiences affect the formation of feminist consciousness. In turn, it also affects the way feminists rear their own children. Feminists either adopt or reject the child-rearing practices they experienced in their own method of child-rearing.

Four of the participants say they have strict and traditional parents while six say otherwise. Carmen says that her mother is submissive to her father and even to her father's siblings and her in-laws. It was her grandmother who taught her how to fight for her rights and how to be independent.

Remedios says her parents were disciplinarians; there were many restrictions in their childhood. Her parents also favored the only son over her and her sister. Rowena shares that her parents were more protective of daughters than of sons. Lina says she was compelled to obey her parents all the time and not to argue with them. She also does not share her problems with them but with older cousins.

In comparison, the rest of the participants say their parents were not strict at all. Susan claims that her parents did not impose rules. Both Nita and Melinda say that their parents were not strict; they were given permission to attend parties or to go anywhere they wanted to go.

The parents of Nita and Perlita were also liberal in terms of sexuality. Nita's parents did not forbid her from accepting suitors or from talking about her crushes. Perlita also recalls her mother saying, "You know, only kind and religious women get pregnant. There are available contraceptives, [just] in case."

With regard to their own children, the participants are as liberal or more liberal than the type of child-rearing practices they experienced. They enumerate several examples to prove this.

Jonet and Josefina share that it is good to have rules in the family. Jonet values open communication as a basic rule in her family. Josefina agrees with Jonet and adds, "It is important, especially while kids are still young. Because children feel safe with routine."

Lina says she does not impose too many rules; in fact, there are only a few. She also lets her children explore and express themselves. Nita recognizes the importance of open communication; her children can talk freely about anything.

When it comes to toys, Lina and Perlita let their children decide whether they will choose toys for boys or for girls. Meanwhile, Rowena prefers gender-neutral toys, like stuffed toys, building blocks, and books.

Assignment of household tasks varies. In Remedios' case, all her siblings, whether male or female, had responsibilities and duties in the household. Lina says it depends on who is more hardworking. More often, children in their family were spared from household tasks. It is the same with Nita; older children have more responsibilities.

Both Nita and Rowena do not believe and veer away from physical punishment as a form of child discipline. In fact, Rowena says she felt guilty when she hit her child, and she never did it again.

According to Perlita, her children recognize that, as a mother, Perlita is involved in certain decision-making processes, such as the reproductive aspects of the children's lives.

When it comes to sexuality, both Perlita and Rowena give informed choices. Perlita says it is her children's choice whether to adopt or reject mainstream values. Perlita says:

I explain to my children why I do those things. Here are the mainstream values, assess yourself. Then the feminist way of living is there. When they ask about sexuality, physiology, questions of what is my morality regarding those things, I answer them without hesitation.

Rowena says:

I'm also not strict in terms of their intimate relationship. I only have a rule. When my daughter started menstruating, I just said, don't have sex because sex can get young persons very crazy in their head. But if you cannot avoid it for whatever reasons, just make sure you protect yourself. Don't ever get pregnant against your will. I just reverse it with my son. I just assume that they will be sexually active.

Aurea shares she supported her eldest daughter who is a lesbian. Her daughter has a same-sex partner, who has a child. This child Aurea accepts and treats as their family's own, as their first *apo*. When her daughter is still in the process of coming out, Aurea was there to help her out. Aurea accompanied her to various libraries; she lent her daughter books to read. In the end, when her daughter decided to come out, Aurea and family fully supported the daughter. Aurea has always been proud of her eldest daughter. When it comes to child's play, Nita and Lina have different experiences. Lina says boys and girls play together while Nita says boys excluded the girls, and that boys spent more time outside the house.

Two participants say their views on sexuality were influenced by older cousins and the liberal atmosphere in college. Lina recalls her older cousins having boyfriends and talking about the changes in their bodies.

Conflict with Household Help

Loreta shares how conflict with their household help becomes an issue. She says:

I have issues with my helper. There is conflict of space between her son and my children. The question of who is going to discipline my helper's child arises. I recognize though that the child and my helper have their own dynamics. I also feel for my helper as she is a single mom and I know it would be difficult for her if I let her go.

Jonet adds, "We have the same problem with our former helper. Of course, we don't tell her not to bring her child with her. But the problem is, the child's presence invades our privacy." Ana also mentions privacy and space as main reasons why she does not want household help.

3. *Involvement in Feminism.* Responses show that participants' involvement in feminism are rooted in their activism—through student movements, NGOs, and revolutionary movement. The participants are activists first before becoming feminists. Others trace out their involvement in feminism through the academe. They are also referred to as intellectual feminists.

Activists as Feminists

Even when she was a student, Carmen recognizes the inequality between men and women, particularly in the movement. Carmen also shares that they do not have women's issues in the agenda.

Rowena also says that her becoming a feminist was rooted in her experiences as a student activist since the First Quarter Storm. For the majority, feminism comes much later in the course of their involvement in nationalist organizations.

Susan adds that she started to become a feminist when she interviewed violence against women (VAW) survivors during a forum of the World Council of Churches in 1977.

Like Susan, Nita says her ideology then centered on nationalism, and not feminism. She adds that she did not experience oppression, only learned more about feminism when she was tasked to write a module on women's issues in the academe. She says, "feminism has nothing to do with my line of work. Our ideology is centered on nationalism. Because I have no experience of repression as a woman, I can do whatever I want."

Lina was introduced to feminism by a colleague. Carmen learns about the term, “feminism” when she joined a women’s organization. Rowena said her appreciation of feminism is more on the theoretical side. She says she has no feminist consciousness then, but she already had gender questions.

We were reading Kate Millett. Our appreciation of Kate Millett is theoretical. My friends and I were exposed to feminist literature but we never called ourselves feminists. It was taboo. We were not allowed to think within the movement. I mean there was not time and we were not encouraged.

Rowena adds:

But I [had] a question about marital relations. I [had] questions about why our bosses were males. I mean, we never called them “boss.” Anyway, so we were imprisoned. I think the sexual torture, it is another layer. So, there’s layering of questions like “why [were] women the [only] ones sexually abused although men were also tortured?”

Some of these women even went on to pioneer feminist or women’s organizations in their time. Carmen shares that Women for the Ouster of Marcos and Boycott or WOMB was formed before GABRIELA. Also prior to GABRIELA, Susan and three other women put up a women’s movement called FILIPINA, which was born after the UN Decade for Women, a parallel NGO forum alongside the government-sponsored forum.

Another organization called *Katipunan ng mga Kababaihan para sa Kalayaan* was formed which, according to Rowena, was the first mainstream feminist collective.

Lina shares that from their labor organization, they decided to organize a separate women’s organization, MAKALAYA. Because Lina was a member of an international union, her organization was also influenced by the international trend of having gender or women’s activities.

Intellectual Feminists

Four participants claim that the turning point of their feminism was through the academe. Although Melinda says that her feminism is deeply rooted in her experience of sexual abuse, being a feminist came much later.

According to her, “my experience of sexual abuse is a factor but my turning point as a feminist was when I entered school. It is in Women and Development degree program that I became a feminist. Although my first job was in ISIS, I do not categorize myself during that time as a feminist.” Remedios shares the same experience. She says she learned feminism from the books, and she describes her involvement in a women’s studies program as academic in nature. Loreta says she practically grew up in the academe.

Lani adds, “of course, UP education, your exposure, it helped reinforce what you think you already believe in. Because if you do not value women’s rights before, you [will] not [be] exposed to it, whatever you learn wouldn’t appeal to you.”

C. Formation of Feminist Consciousness

The formation of feminist consciousness is based from personal characteristics and life experiences of self-identifying feminists.

1. *Qualities of Being a Feminist.* The participants identify several qualities that they possess as feminists, like independence, decisiveness, assertiveness, integrity, and critical thinking. Participants also mention other qualities perceived as strengths and weaknesses. Strengths include self-trust, resilience, and objectivity; while weaknesses are lack of self-confidence and being emotional.

Independence

Lina claims: “I became independent because they let me have my way. I’m more open to exploring things. Because I was surrounded with many people in our home; many discussions were also allowed at a time when children should not be exposed to such discussions.”

Rowena also says it is important to be economically independent. She shares that her mother maintains a business up to now and always keeps herself busy.

Decisiveness

Susan says she stands by her decisions, even if they go against the opinions of the majority.

The moment you make your own decision, what you want to believe in, the absolute will no longer have a hold on you. You take it freely but then you are free to

believe in something else. Like what I said in my confession today, 'Father, there are many Church teachings that I had already put in the archives. I'm not throwing it away because it might be helpful to others, but it doesn't make sense to my life so it is there in the archives.

Assertiveness

Carmen says assertiveness is needed in fighting for women's rights. "Because it is no longer possible to have a strong women's movement that will set women and the people free without a kind of ethics requiring you to really stand and fight. And in fighting, there are many forms of assertiveness needed."

Integrity

Perlita discusses integrity in relation to how she values the insight that the personal is political. "You need to evaluate your own actions, as well as your responsibilities. At the same time, you are looking at the larger picture, the external or social reality. You should have integrity in both areas. There should be no conflict with what you do externally from what you do internally."

Critical Thinking

Perlita says critical thinking is important but, at the same time, it has emotional dimension. "Do not accept blindly what culture tells you. If you need to accept it, you have to make sure that you really thought about it. And if you think that it is not correct, that it is immoral, then go ahead and reject. From the very beginning, you already have a critical stance."

Other Qualities

In terms of strengths, some participants mention self-trust, resilience, and objectivity. Nita explains that self-trust emanates not from her skills but from her convictions. "My strength I get from self-trust; my self-trust I get not from my skills but from my conviction. It is more of conviction than skills." Lina says she has the ability to objectively view the issues at hand instead of being affected emotionally. Melinda says she is able to cope with any problems because she analyzes it.

In terms of weaknesses, Melinda and Lina say they lack self-confidence. Lina says she does not want to be in the limelight, and she knows that there are more deserving, who are more articulate in explaining issues than her.

Nita says she gets emotionally affected with the VAW cases she is handling. "My being emotional is my weakness to the point that I cannot handle objectively, for example, a VAW case—she's telling her story, I still couldn't help myself but cry. I will still cry."

2. *Feminist Values*. The participants talk about their values as feminists. Among the values they share are motherhood and family as well as work and contribution to society.

Motherhood and Family

Lina says being a mother is, in itself, an achievement. She adds that recognition from the family that she is an activist is also a personal achievement. Family is very important, and it has a critical role in the lives of some participants. It is described as a refuge and support group, especially during critical moments in the participants' lives, like Rowena's.

You know when I was an activist, I think family is less important. Although there were critical moments when I realized it's still my family that will be my support system. When I was with the UG movement, situations are very difficult for us. We were being chased. I realized, looking back, that during critical moments, my family is still my refuge. When we were being chased, my family is the first to be harmed. They have developed strategies just to protect us (me and my husband).

Because Carmen was busy with her activist work, she was not able to prioritize her children. Rowena says her family had no important role when she was an activist. All these changed when they each experienced personal dilemma. "Yes, it is only now that I realized that it is important. In fact, I realized how important my family is to me more than anything else when my twenty-two-year old son died. Of course, because I was a full-time activist, I realized late that, more than anything else, family is the most important for me."

Lina describes her family as very supportive and understanding of her activism and helpful anytime she needs help.

Work and Contribution to Society

For Nita, her greatest achievement is work-related: supervising a general education program at Miriam College, and receiving a scholarship. Carmen says managing a television station that is traditionally dominated by men is an achievement.

The participants also mention their contribution to society. Lina says the sisterhood in MAKALAYA enabled many women to find their own voices and assert their rights.

Here's a woman who is quiet at first, she almost wouldn't utter a word, then she will make her presence felt. She really asserts her opinion. I think it's not only the skills, but the sisterhood. They can speak out within the organization which they know will not judge or condemn them.

Susan says her legacy is creating awareness on women's issues. She also cites that her founding an institute helped a lot in creating awareness.

My contribution to society? In the Philippines, it's the awareness of the women's issue. I think that we contributed to [a lot of people's] awareness because we had many protests already in raising the consciousness of people on women. So, I think that's what I would consider as my legacy.

For Carmen, her work in a television station enables her to utilize the power of broadcast media to promote women empowerment.

I am able to use the power of broadcast media to change the view on women, and for media not to become a medium to further perpetuate the disempowerment of women. We were able to communicate well to the community that women have rights ... we have no programs on, or we impose strict policies in relation to, the portrayal of women as sex objects. We do not accept any advertisements with that kind of message. We are a community television and we conduct regular shows with discussion with the different sectors.

For Perlita, both she and her husband have a contribution to society. “Our great contribution to society is the fact that my husband earns more than enough so I can be free to engage in the social movement. He really provides most of the material goods for the family.”

D. Challenges to Mainstream/Male-centered Ethics

From the participants’ qualities of being a feminist and the feminist values they uphold, there are many challenges to mainstream ethics that emerged. These refer to non-traditional concept of family life, like same-sex relationship, and childlessness; and alternative to marriage like cohabitation, emerging feminist spirituality, and reflexivity of the nationalist and women’s movements.

Susan says patriarchy has been shattered; women have gone a long way, but we still have a long way to go.

I think we have gone a long way; the fact that a rape victim sues During old days, she will not sue. She will be ashamed. The fact that those guilty of incest are convicted. And the fact that we win cases in court. The fact that you’re doing this. And not only that, not only you, grade schoolers, high school. They come and interview about women. Oh, 20 years ago, they wouldn’t have known anything about women. You know that they are not conscious about women.

She adds:

I think we have shaken patriarchy. We have gone a long way. But, of course, we still have a long way to go. Because we haven’t reach[ed] many people. For me, we have made a breakthrough. We lobbied for women’s agenda with the government, with the church. They cannot anymore ignore it.

1. Alternative to Marriage

Five participants say they do not believe in marriage or they do not want to get married. However, Rowena recalls being pressure by her husband’s parents, who wanted them to get married. “I secretly got married only to please my husband’s family. That really was a cause of big disappointment to my husband’s family, my in-laws. Because he is the eldest

and a Batangueño which is very patriarchal. His father's dream is to prepare a huge feast."

Perlita shares that her husband threatened to leave her if she will not marry him. "He said he will leave me if I don't marry him. Because his vision in life is to get married. I don't want to be left behind; I love him anyway. So, I married him."

Melinda mentions marriage as not a guarantee of lasting relationship nor a guarantee that the partner will be faithful.

I don't want to get married. Fresh into separation, I thought if we became family, would he even think about cheating [on] me [with] another woman? I was also the one who answered, 'Yes.'" What is your guarantee, even if you're married? You cannot have [an assurance that] marriage will lead to an ever after. A lot of things can happen, and relationship is fluid. Even older people separate ways. There is no security.

Remedios recommends cohabitation, provided that it works for the couple, and it suits their personalities.

I think if they want to, why not? I'm not saying I will recommend it because I think it is the best but well, in any relationship, there are problems and issues. I'm sure mine is not without struggles. I don't think it has anything to do with the set-up; I think it would be basically personality. Supposedly, she will support my career; I will cheer her on her career. If there's a problem, we would just make sure that whatever happens, we split our properties equally.

2. Non-traditional Concept of Family

Jonet prefers same-sex relationship to a heterosexual one. "But I think it's easier for me to be intimate with a woman because of so many reasons. You're more at ease. In a way, it is less complicated because you will not get pregnant, it's easier to connect with another woman." Melinda adds that childlessness does not affect her idea of a complete family. "It's also a family ... even if childless and has no benefit of marriage."

3. Feminist Spirituality

For activists who have considered themselves atheist or agnostic, Rowena says there is a shift; they find themselves on a spiritual journey.

Another emerging, if it has not emerged yet, is feminist spirituality. Because I have a number of friends who came back to the religious framing of their spirituality. There are many KALAYAAN who went on spiritual journey ... In many ways when you joined a party or a strongly centralized group, as we say, it's probably a form of religion by itself. And then when you're out of it or trying to get out of it, and realign yourself with others, another movement, you look for something to hold on to.

Susan, a nun, says she learned to dwell into other religions aside from Roman Catholicism. She says there is no contradiction there if one can live with it.

Right from the start, contemplation is very important to me. When I became an activist, it softened a little because, I reasoned, the things I do, it's already prayer. But I realized it couldn't be. And do you know what gave me my contemplative life? I got into Buddhism. That led me to study all religions. I felt I have the right to gather what are the jewels in these religions. Because what I saw was, what is God? Is God so unfair that only Catholics will go to heaven? I saw the beauty in contemplation, and it did not go against my activism.

Why is everybody looking for artificial contradiction? Here is contemplation, here is action. Either you are an activist or a nun. "Why are you in GABRIELA when you are a nun?" When I'm with GABRIELA: "why do you meditate?" If I can live with it, then it is not a contradiction. No regrets at all. I could not have led a more meaningful life even if I tried to.

Rowena says her spirituality changes over time.

For a long time, I was [an] atheist. To soften the joust on my children, agnostic. When I was an activist, I'm an atheist. Lately, when my father died, and then, my brother, my views are changing because a lot of my friends after Martial Law years, and then activism, then

prison, many of them turned to religion. I suppose I'm also in a journey in the way of my generation. [*sic*]

4. Reflexivity of the Nationalist and Feminist Movements

In general, Perlita says the ethics of the nationalist and feminist movements should be challenged from time to time.

Even the movement needs to challenge itself all the time about ethics, even the ethics of the women's movement. It is not completely oppositional or resistive, right? As they say, no one died and went to feminist heaven. We are still part of this society and many of the things that we want to change, we bring with us, and maybe unconsciously it is still there. A most shallow experience here is that many feminists shout at co-workers, shout at household helps. Many feminists use the ideas of fellow feminists so they will become popular, so they will earn from it, elevate their career. On the other side, debate among feminists can get acrimonious and binary. It's not a question of the feminist movement against the male. The feminist movement in itself continues to be self-reflexive about what it's doing, what it's trying to achieve.

Ana shares her frustration with the feminist movement saying, "it's frustrating; I have no problem with differences in views but not to the extent that we will take it against each other. Sisterhood is powerful and it should unite women on issues affecting them."

Anabel also shares her personal conflict with another feminist when the latter became Anabel's husband's other woman. She says, "My husband's other woman is a feminist. She does not care if, in the process, another woman will suffer or a family will be broken."

Another issue that is prevalent in the feminist movement is the insight that the personal is political. Rowena says that before, marital problems and gay issues were not made public. Eventually, these issues are being addressed.

Some participants share their struggles on the inclusion of women's issues in the nationalist or revolutionary movements to which they belong. They also say the movement should also take into consideration women's control over their bodies. According to Rowena, "within the Party, it is not

allowed to have sexual intimacy. The Party is more Catholic than any Catholic. It has sexual rules.”

The Party does not allow unmarried couples living together. Although there is divorce, it is not easily granted. Rowena adds,

Although divorce is allowed, you cannot just separate. Even if you say your misunderstanding is too much to bear already, you don't agree anymore, because the question to you always is, 'Are you divided in political line?' When you answer no, then you are not allowed to divorce. Remember, it is not even allowed for partners to live-in. You need to get married.

Rowena says even getting pregnant is planned, “it has to be planned because resources will be needed for your personal security.” According to Rowena and Lina, the assertive women in the movement experienced criticisms from men, and even women. Lina says men belittle women's issues. Women were also branded different things: “we were attacked by our own comrades—peti-bourgeois, lesbian, nymphomaniac, bra-burning, unhappy housewife, all you need is good sex—we heard it all.”

Rowena says there should not be hierarchy of class over gender. She adds that women's freedom is not guaranteed by the country's freedom. Both Rowena and Lina went on to form autonomous women's movements. Feminists from different generations also have different concerns. Rowena points out that feminism is dynamic.

This young woman, she wants to establish a union for labor rights. But in the portion of sexuality, [in] our issues as women, she has no hang-ups. There's nothing wrong with flaunting your body, nothing wrong with having multiple sex partners. In fact, they find nothing wrong with prostitution. I think their ethical parameters are also changing. In my view, it is generational. Who am I to judge them?

In my view, the younger women, younger generation are building their own kind of ethics whether they're good or bad. Eventually the ethics of feminism will be defined by the activists themselves or the advocates in much the same way that the feminist literature in the West have. Then we also do not believe that feminism is static. We think it is changing.

V.

Ethical Issues in Filipino Feminists' Lives

Based from the findings, ethical issues arise out of intimate relationship, family life, and involvement in feminism. Women are expected to subscribe to traditional concepts of intimate relationship and family life; otherwise they will face ethical dilemmas. They are supposed to maintain a nuclear family; get into an intimate relationship only if married; keep the marriage and family intact at all cost; accept that it is alright for men to philander around; and manage the household tasks.

In addition, if they choose to be involved in feminism, they will, likewise, face ethical dilemmas. Women's issues are not prioritized in male-dominated movements whose main thrust is class and nationalist struggles. There is also unequal relation of men and women within the movement as reflected in unequal role assignments once women give birth. Women's pregnancy is planned, and there is little recognition of the reproductive rights of women. Why is this the case? Filipino women are viewed in Philippine society as weak, passive, submissive and dependent because of the patriarchal culture.

How Ethical Issues are addressed by Filipino Feminists

As feminists, they do not blindly and immediately accept or reject life decisions that are dictated by tradition. Instead, they critically examine and subject these life decisions to careful scrutiny and evaluation before they either reject or accept it. Rejecting it may mean total disregard of tradition, while accepting it may mean striking the balance between tradition and feminist values. Either of these may have good or bad consequences but what is important is that feminists stand by their informed decision.

The Emerging Filipino Feminist Ethics

The Filipino feminist ethics that emerged out of this study is what the author refers to as *reflexive-liberative*. It is reflexive because feminists have choices and understand the choices they make. They either reject or accept mainstream/male-centered ethics based on whatever works for them and other people. Reflexive further means continuous self-examination where ethical decisions are based on changing contexts and situations and in consideration of the greater good. It is liberative because the choice is supposed to be not only for the benefit of feminists as individual or group, but for humanity as a whole. The feminist as a moral agent determines the

liberative aspect. Being a feminist means there is recognition of the fact that women suffer from inequality, and there is conscious effort to change this situation.

Society's emphasis on marriage as a symbol of intimacy or intimate relationship has shifted with the rise of modern society. The concept of romantic love is present and is recognized in all cultures but, nowadays, it is not anymore necessarily linked to marriage. Some of the factors that contribute to this shift are the growing number of women who work outside the home, the rise of women's movements, and the spread of ideals of equality and rights.

Even in societies where marriage is still the rule, success in marriage is still considered as an end result of compatibility and companionship, rather than love and intimacy. Through the years, the presence of children adds up to the factors affecting successful marriages. In fact, it has become an extremely important consideration among couples' decision-making processes. In recent years, some unmarried couples (heterosexual or same-sex) practice cohabitation or living-in. Such practice goes beyond societal approval and/or recognition.

The abovementioned are factors that affect Filipino feminists' reflexivity and liberality. These factors, or developments, serve as reasons for the changing contexts and ethics in lived feminisms. Though women are exposed to liberal ideas (i.e. academe, movements and organizations), some traditional concepts remain, such as comparing intimate relationships to property relations (thinking in terms of property, investment etc.); suffering in silence in the face of abuse, violence or neglect (afraid of being humiliated or putting the family name in a bad light); or passively accepting that infidelity is natural among men.

Also, society measures a woman in terms of her relationships—if these relationships are long and fruitful (successful) or if they are short and fleeting (frowned upon) and by extension, the type of family a woman is able to manage/foster. If it becomes a 'broken family', this is perceived as a 'failure', the burden of which rests solely on the woman. While some women unconsciously hope for their version of happily-ever-after, of a man that will come along and 'take care of them,' others women realize that this could turn out to be a painful illusion if taken too far, thus, they would rather be their own person—a whole, fully-functioning being, rather than half of one.

Inside the family, each member has very defined roles based on society's expectations and standing mores. As women, they are expected by society to perform certain roles—care giver, nurturer, teacher, and household manager while the men/husbands are expected to be providers for the family unit. Though, as feminists, they express dissatisfaction in being relegated to such roles, they still conform to such expectations. Some do try to re-invent

these roles. Affluent women are able to hire helps to do the 'drudgery of housework' but this arrangement is far from the ideal, as it may also become a source of conflict later on.

Here are some snippets of Filipino feminists' lives from which a reflexive-liberative ethics has emerged:

1. The self-identifying feminist's lived experiences opened this woman's eyes to feminism. However, she has forgone formal membership to an organization of feminists. Her relationship reflects contrasting attitudes. For instance, possessing non-traditional views on marriage as an institution, possessing strength to let go of an unfaithful partner but takes back her partner, in spite everything, exhibiting the commonly-held attitude of married women to make the relationship work no matter what.
2. Her upbringing is reflected on her present family set-up. Her grounding in activism only strengthened the egalitarian nature of their family. She views feminism as a significant part of the struggle. Despite this, it shows that there are certain attitudes that do not depart from the norm: the double burden of wife and mother and the instances where she puts herself second.
3. Her upbringing, and her eventual exposure to social action and activism lay the foundation for her entry into an institution that seeks to empower workers through education. In the process, she found herself involved in gender and women's issues. It was not easy to gain the support and trust of the workers as they were too conservative and too patriarchal in managing the unions. But they eventually came to appreciate the work that the gender program does for them.
4. This was the backdrop of her personal life: family life and home life. She tries to do as she preaches such as raise her daughter cognizant of gender issues and conduct her relationship with her husband on equal footing.
5. Her upbringing, which was largely sheltered and privileged, hinged upon the importance of maintaining an honorable family name, and that one should always be cognizant of outward signs of good behavior and consideration for others.
6. Through her exposure in UP, she realized that she agreed with feminist ideas. This was done through a combination of academic learning, exposure to social realities of the volatile social situation at the time, and intensive reflection of her own life experiences. Although, this operates on an individual level and

never channeled through a formal setting such as an organization or movement.

7. Her openness and ideal of equality and justice led her to pursue social work in the context of a religious order. The training inside the convent and the orientation towards the poor only deepened her understanding of what it means to do God's work in the face of injustice and oppression brought on by the Marcos regime.
8. She went against the common concept of being a nun, of the religious being concerned with purely religious matters and becoming politically conscious as she joined in the struggle with urban poor as well as workers.
9. In time, she would realize that aside from societal inequality, there is gender inequality. In fact, her fight for justice now translates to fighting in behalf of the neglected half of society, the women.
10. Her feminist ideas were an offshoot of her involvement in the movement and its work to uplift oppression. She tried to apply this to her personal relationship as well as to her role as a mother.
11. Later in life, she admits that she performs traditional gender roles but seeks to stay true to her feminist ideals despite the change in circumstance.
12. Her parents and the values that they inculcated were the main influences in her life. Her entry to the social movement is due to her father's pro-poor stance and strong sense of justice in the face of oppression. Her alternative child-rearing techniques and efforts to mainstream women's issues is both a result of her upbringing in a very strict and patriarchal household; as well as issues arising from her lived experiences in the social movement.
13. In the end, she, along with like-minded women, blazed the trail for a lot of firsts, breaking ground to take women's issues to the public arena to be debated and discussed and acted on.
14. Being sensitized to women's issues and women's oppression, she has carried over this framework in her work in broadcast media, using the broadcast medium to inform, influence and hopefully, change the way women are being portrayed in television. In the process, she also aims to teach all the people working with her, by example, what is the right way to treat women.
15. Her relationship with fellow activists broke conventions at the time and went against the sensibilities of her religious mother but eventually sensitized her to take on the calling of teaching feminism in her alma mater. Her keen intellect and participatory and pluralist attitude were what she brought on board in

teaching feminism. She endeavors to sensitize her class not only to book theories but to their practical translation on the field via exposure to grassroots organizations.

16. She credits her relationship's success to application of feminist values that is reflected in the kind of upbringing she applied on her three children.
17. Her marriage to a revolutionary only enhanced her personal as well as their political involvement. Their children were strongly exposed to nationalist ideals as well as to the idea of serving the masses. Their egalitarian upbringing was also due to her belief in feminist ideals.
18. Although she is a loving mother, she was no typical wife, as she had her own life to live and no appendage or prop to her husband.
19. She continued her involvement to encompass not only women's issues but also issues like economic justice and development.

Culture, religion and education heavily dictate how a woman is treated in society. But once circumstances are changed i.e. a stay-at-home mom suddenly working or going back to school, other changes in their home life emerges. And no longer does the same conservative ideas apply. Though the self-identifying feminists are trying to change the traditional roles that women play both inside and outside the home, this remains a monumental task as they cannot truly break free of all deeply-ingrained conservative cultural conditioning, unless a more comprehensive change is forthcoming.

Throughout history, the role and status of Filipino women have slowly changed from non-participation in economic and political spheres, and confinement to domestic life, to their politicalization and involvement in the feminist movement to a great extent. Filipino women's reactions to their experiences of the patriarchal culture have also slowly changed their characteristics from being weak, submissive and passive to being strong-willed, independent and critical.

Indeed, history has taught Filipino women how they ought to live their lives. Everyday is a struggle in feminists' lives. They deal with ethical issues mindful, not only of their own, but also, of the collective good. The *reflexive-liberative* Filipino feminist ethics emphasizes choice and when applied, will lead to a more caring and just society. This kind of ethics could further shape the contours of feminism in the Philippines and provide guidance as to how women ought to act and work to further achieve empowerment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, two topics deserve further exploration, i.e., feminist spirituality, and the reflexivity of the nationalist and feminist movements. It will be very interesting to account for spiritual journeys of prominent women in the context of their feminism. At the same time, it is important to challenge the ethics of nationalist and feminist movements from time to time and be able to engage in critical self-reexamination.

It is also recommended that a similar research be conducted, this time with self-identifying feminist participants from the Visayas and Mindanao areas and later on, from other Southeast Asian countries.

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Research Data Sources

- Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on Family Life 1
- Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on Family Life 2
- Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on Intimate Relationships 1
- Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on Intimate Relationships 2
- Life Story Interviews with ten (10) self-identifying feminists

Iris Marion Young's 'Faces of Oppression' and the Oppression of Women in the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012

Marella Ada V. Mancenido-Bolaños

Abstract: In this paper, I wish to argue that it is necessary to have an earnest understanding of the plight of women before crafting laws that directly impact their lives. Against the backdrop of my discussion is the notion of “oppression” offered by Iris Marion Young in her book *Justice and Politics of Difference*. I recount Young’s description of the “faces of oppression” and use her notion of oppression to show that the process of policy-making in the Philippines is mired by the oppressive dominance of patriarchal bias. In her book, *The RH Bill Story: Contentions and Compromises*, Marilen J. Dañguilan provides the most comprehensive study of the role that Filipina women played during the drafting of the 1987 Philippine Constitution and The Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012. I draw on the work of Dañguilan in order to cite instances of oppression of women in policy making.

Keywords: Young, Dañguilan, faces of oppression, RPRH Act of 2012

“The philosopher is always socially situated, and if society is divided by oppressions, she either reinforces or struggles against them.”
—Iris Marion Young

Introduction

In 2004, after I received my baccalaureate degree, I took on a job as a staff at the Philippine NGO Council for Population, Health and Welfare. Here, I was immediately exposed to issues on family planning, HIV advocacy programs, and programs to battle violence against women and children. I then realized that academic feminism is not enough to push for the rights of

women. There is thus a need to work with women in the community if the intention is to help them address their life situations. In the academe, we write about women and the other, women's body and their choices, and women in the patriarchal society; in the community, however, we see how all these things are happening—how women are not able to take full control of their bodies, how they continue to submit to patriarchy, and how their plight is largely considered by government and society as secondary.

In "Gender as Seriality: Thinking About Women as a Social Collective,"¹ Iris Marion Young suggests that "the primary task of feminist theory and politics is critical: to formulate genealogies that show how a given category of practice is socially constructed."² She adds that "feminist discourse and practice should become and remain open, its totality permanently deferred, accepting and affirming the flows and shifts in the contingent relations of social practices and institutions."³ This serves to caution future feminists to avoid "excluding some women from its theories,"⁴ as there are instances when a theory only speaks for the privileged. This idea likewise extends to policymaking, because some women are excluded from the construction of these policies, especially when the members of the policy-making body are privileged people who could not identify with the plight of common women.

Young argues that, when conceptualizing about women, we must think of them as a group. This will allow us to understand oppression as a systematic, structured, and an institutional process.⁵ She adds that the affirmation of women as a group unites women because it stops them from believing that their sufferings are natural or merely personal.⁶ However, instead of a thinking of a group in which all differences are dissolved, Young follows Ann Ferguson who claimed that "it may be more helpful to posit different racial gender positions, and possibly different class gender positions."⁷ It matters to consider these nuances because people do not look at women fairly. A white woman may be regarded better than a woman of color, in the same way that a working-class woman is treated differently compared to a professional woman.

¹ See Iris Marion Young, "Gender as Seriality: Thinking About Women as a Social Collective," in *Signs*, 19:3 (1994).

² *Ibid.*, 716.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, 717.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 718.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Ann Ferguson, "Is There a Lesbian Culture?" in *Lesbian Philosophies and Culture*, ed. by Jeffner Allen (Albany: State University of New York), 114–115. See also Young, "Gender as Seriality," 720.

To address this problem, Young used Jean-Paul Sartre's concept of seriality. She discussed gender as a social series which provides a "way of thinking about women as a social collective without requiring that all women have common attributes of common situation."⁸ Young differentiates the group from the series, stating that a group is a unity of individuals who are able to acknowledge that they may undertake a common project together. A series, on the other hand, is considered as a social collective wherein they may be united by the same end or material object, the same history and identity, but do not necessarily have the same action and goals.⁹ Serial collectivity can be understood as the "obverse of the mutual identification of the group; each goes about his or her own business, but each is also aware of the serialized context of that activity."¹⁰ In serial collectivity, a woman is not defined by single category alone; by serializing gender, we can avoid the problems that emerge from saying that women form a single group and it also disconnects gender from identity.¹¹ It is important to understand that groups are formed out of a serialized condition.¹² Women's advocacy groups, for example, came into existence because of a serialized condition of women, e.g., violence against women or poor reproductive health care. It would be apt to say that serial collectivity shatters the ground of race, gender, and class because each individual is taken into account without defining him/her as a member of one particular group. The formation and distinction of groups could eventually lead to unjust relationships among people in the community. Young, in her book *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, notes that justice is not just about distribution but also the necessary condition that enables an individual to exercise his/her capacities and collective communication and cooperation. She adds that "injustice refers primarily to two forms of disabling constraints, oppression and domination."¹³

For Young, oppression is structural, since its causes are deeply embedded in "unquestioned norms, habits, symbols, in the assumptions underlying institutional rules and the collective consequences following those rules."¹⁴ It exists in our everyday lives with some oppressors being unconscious of their oppressive actions, partly because such actions and reactions have already been part of their systemic understanding, while some oppressors bear conscious intentions to oppress. There are those who resist oppression, while others willingly submit to it, because the oppressive

⁸ Young, "Gender as Seriality," 723.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 724.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 725.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 728–734.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), 39.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

relation is somehow beneficial for them. Young rightly claims that “for every oppressed group there is a group that is privileged in relation to that group.”¹⁵

A social group can be understood as a collective individual “differentiated from at least one other group by cultural forms, practices or way of life.”¹⁶ Members of the group identify with each other because a common experience binds them together. Young argues that this is because of the formation of groups that oppression takes place, one’s association with a group excludes him/her from another group. However, groups should not be extinguished just because we want oppression to stop. This kind of affinity is important because “group differentiation is both an inevitable and desirable aspect of the modern social process. Social justice ... requires not the melting away of difference, but institutions that promote reproduction of and respect for group differences without oppression.”¹⁷ We can only hope for that such form of social justice is achievable.

Young holds that members of the groups make use of the term oppression to describe their experiences of injustice. She claimed that “oppression names in fact a family of concepts and conditions”¹⁸ which she divided into five categories: “exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence.”¹⁹ “These criteria can be used as a tool to evaluate claims that a group is oppressed.

Faces of Oppression

Exploitation

Exploitation is the first face of oppression. It appears in a capitalist society and exists in class division and labor production. There is a transfer of power from the workers to the capitalist.²⁰ According to Young, “Workers suffer material deprivation and a loss of control, and hence are deprived of important elements of self-respect.”²¹ Furthermore, she says that, “Exploitation enacts a structural relation between social groups. Social rules about what work is, who does what for whom, how work is compensated, and the social process by which the results of work are appropriated operate to enact relations of power and inequality.”²² Young takes her cue from

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 49.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, 49–50.

Marx's concept of exploitation. However, she notes that it leaves "important phenomena of sexual and social oppression unexplained."²³

For Young, feminists would not have difficulty in showing how women are oppressed through a "systematic and unreciprocated transfer of powers from women to men."²⁴ The oppression of women is not just seen in the inequality of status, power, and wealth—all of which are a result of their exclusion.²⁵ In marriage for example, men's achievements are only possible because women work for them. Marriage can be considered a class relation where "women's labor benefits men without comparable remuneration."²⁶ This relation can be exploitative in nature: men are able to fully explore their creativity and maximize their capabilities because they are rid of domestic labor, while women are trapped to take on the task of managing the household and raising the children. These tasks deprive her of the time that could have been possibly utilized in accomplishing more fulfilling tasks for herself and her career. Young notes that women are considered as nurturers and yet when "they look to men for emotional support they do not receive it."²⁷

This argument is also presented in Young's *On Female Body Experience: "Throwing Like a Girl" and Other Essays*.²⁸ She notes that "women serve, nurture, and maintain so that the bodies and souls of men and children gain confidence and expansive subjectivity to make their mark in the world. This homey role deprives women of support for their own identity and projects."²⁹ She also argues that the notion of building and dwelling are implicitly gendered, and that the unnoticed labor of women is the basic activity of meaning maintenance. She emphasizes that the "patriarchal gender system allows man a subjectivity that depends on women's objectification and dereliction; he has a home at the expense of her homelessness, as she serves as a ground in which he builds."³⁰ This could be similar to Beauvoir's idea of housework: "the battle against dust and dirt is never won,"³¹ it is a never ending repetitive work which may be oppressive

²³ *Ibid.* 50.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.* See also Christine Delphy, *Close to Home: A Materialist Analysis of Women's Oppression* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 51. See also Barbara Easton, "Feminism and the Contemporary Family," in *Socialist Review*, 39 (May/June 1978), 11–36.

²⁸ See Iris Marion Young, *On Female Body Experience: "Throwing Like a Girl" and Other Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

²⁹ Iris Marion Young, "House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme," in *On Female Body Experience*, 123.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 127.

³¹ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. by H.M. Parshley (USA: Vintage Books Edition, 1989), 451–453.

to women without them being conscious about it just because they have come to accept the idea that it is a woman's job.

Exploitation can also be seen in the workplace. There are instances when women and men take on the same position, but women are given more workload and are underpaid. These instances lead to poorer job performance and lesser chances of getting a promotion.

Marginalization

This leads to the second face of oppression which is *marginalization*. This, for Young, is "perhaps the most dangerous form of oppression."³² People who are marginalized are those who are not given the opportunity to engage in useful participation in the society. The marginalized may be subjected to severe material deprivation. While redistributive social policies can address material deprivation, it is not the only problem of marginalization. She discusses two categories of injustice which are associated with marginalization.

First, the provision of welfare creates new injustice because it creates an environment where there are those who are dependent on the rights and freedoms that others have. Second, even when material deprivation is somehow mitigated by the welfare state, marginalization is unjust because it blocks the opportunity to exercise capacities in a socially defined and recognized ways.³³

We can say that when an individual is dependent on the state, on her employer, or on her partner, her "basic rights to privacy, respect and individual choice" are suspended.³⁴ Children, sick people, old people, and women recovering from childbirth are individuals who can have the moral right to depend on others for subsistence and support.³⁵ Their weakness, however, may be used by the other to dominate them and to completely strip them off of their basic rights. When we allow our government to make laws, we expect them to be mindful of the rights of its people. However, such is not always the case, and the marginalized are often left unheard.

The non-inclusivity of social organizations is also considered unjust. Young notes that marginalization does not just concern issues on distributive justice, "it also involves the deprivation of cultural, practical, and institutionalized conditions for exercising capacities in a context of recognition and interaction."³⁶ Allowing an individual into the circle may be

³² Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, 53.

³³ *Ibid.*, 54.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 55.

a superficial act of being just, but we must not forget to consider how this person is treated in order to determine whether we have become truly just. In other words, allowing women to take part in politics is not a guarantee that they are going to be heard.

Looking into the politics of positional difference and the politics of cultural difference might help in understanding the concept of marginalization. According to Young, "They both argue that where group difference is socially significant for issues of conflict domination or advantage, equal respect may not imply treating everyone in the same way."³⁷ It is because of this positionality that certain members of the society are marginalized. People experience culture-based injustice when they do not have the freedom to express themselves. This is also characterized in the third face of oppression which is powerlessness.

Powerlessness

Powerlessness is characterized by the inability to be autonomous. In a capitalist society, power relations exist between the capitalist, the professional, and the working class. Young describes the powerless as those who "lack authority and power even in this mediated sense, those over whom power is exercised without their exercising it; the powerless are situated so that they must take orders and rarely have the right to give them."³⁸ She adds that the "powerless status is perhaps best described negatively: the powerless lack the authority, status, and sense of self that professionals tend to have."³⁹ The professionals may be in a privileged status, for to be a professional requires a college degree and specialized knowledge; as such, they have a certain degree of autonomy over their work and authority over their subordinates. Their privilege is also extended beyond the workplace, such as in banks, restaurants, and hotels. These are not experienced by the nonprofessionals, rendering them powerless. Young cites the case of a black professional who may not immediately get respect from people they encounter because of their race while a nonprofessional white male immediately gets respect until people find out about his real status. This stereotyping extends to women's experiences as well. A properly dressed woman has a higher chance of being respected notwithstanding her

³⁷ Iris Marion Young, "Structural Injustice and the Politics of Difference," in Kwame Anthony Appiah, Seyla Benhabib, Iris Marion Young, Nancy Fraser, *Justice, Governance, Cosmopolitanism and the Politics of Difference: Reconfigurations in a Transnational World*, ed. by The President of the Humboldt University in Berlin (Berlin: Department of English and American Studies, Faculty of Arts III, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 2007), 81.

³⁸ Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, 56.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

profession, as opposed to a professional woman who is not decently or properly dressed in accordance to her profession. Nonprofessional women of color have higher chances of being oppressed as opposed to a nonprofessional white woman.

Cultural Imperialism

The fourth face of oppression is cultural imperialism. This involves the universalization of a dominant group's experience and culture, and its establishment as a norm.⁴⁰ The dominant group's values and experiences affect the other group's perception of things, and there is a superimposition of values and experiences without considering the plight of those who are not part of the dominant group. This domination may affect the decision-making process of the government. For example, in a predominantly Catholic country like the Philippines, where law makers and professionals are predominantly male, the motives behind the enacted laws can become suspicious. Will it benefit, we might ask, the public or the lawmakers? We think of policymaking as a political game. As Young maintained, "government policy and the allocation of resources, according to a pluralist theory, are the outcome of this process of competition and bargaining among interest groups."⁴¹ This is an unjust practice because interest groups do not allow individual citizens to actually take part in the deliberation and decision making. As in the case of the drafting of The Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012,⁴² legislators wanted to protect their own vested interest which is to uphold the position of the Catholic Church.⁴³

Young argues that "those living under cultural imperialism find themselves deprived from the outside, positioned, placed, by a network of dominant meanings they experience as arising from elsewhere, from those with whom they do not identify and who do not identify with them."⁴⁴ The sweeping argument that Catholic women must reject artificial family planning is an example of cultural imperialism. A woman's experience is being influenced by her being a Catholic and being a woman in a traditional society. Members of the dominant group, in this case men, cannot truly

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁴² See The Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012, Republic Act No. 10354, 15th Congress (2012), <<https://pcw.gov.ph/law/republic-act-10354>>.

⁴³ In a predominantly Catholic country, politicians often will not risk offending the Catholic Church because the people rely heavily on the Church's opinion during election. To offend the Catholic Church would only equate to fewer votes during election. By choosing to side with the Church, politicians would not enter the risk of losing their positions in the government.

⁴⁴ Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, 72.

sympathize because of their own privilege. Men do not go through the same obstacles that women go through. They have lesser chances of experiencing sexual assault, they do not go through the dangers of pregnancy, and they are not as physically exhausted as women when it comes to rearing their children, to mention a few. In the same way that a wealthy woman cannot fathom the need for a better reproductive health law for the underprivileged women of the society because she has no prior experience of the difficulties of these women which include having to go through pregnancy without receiving regular prenatal and postnatal care, having to give birth in an ill-equipped hospital or birthing clinic, and recover in an overcrowded recovery room. These are just few of the horrors experienced by underprivileged women that people who are not part of their group will never understand.

These unjust experiences can very well be described by Young as “the injustice of cultural imperialism”⁴⁵ because the experiences of the oppressed groups do not reach the consciousness of the dominant culture, and yet the experiences of the dominant culture is imposed upon the oppressed groups.

Violence

The fifth face of oppression is violence. For Young, theorists are usually silent about issues on violence, she believes that “theorists do not typically take such incidents of violence and harassment as matters of social injustice.”⁴⁶

Young notes that violence is systematic because it is “directed at members of a group simply because they are members of that group.”⁴⁷ Certain groups, such as women, people of color, and members of the LGBTQ community are susceptible to violence—and this violence is motivated by fear and hatred. This type of violence, according to Young, “approaches legitimacy ... in a sense that it is tolerated.”⁴⁸ Violence against women and children for example are taken lightly. When women and children become victims of physical and emotional abuse, it is easily dismissed as part of being married or being disciplined. Young believes that “cultural imperialism ... intersects with violence.”⁴⁹ This is caused by the division between the oppressed and the dominant group. Some members of the dominant group have a sense of entitlement which eventually leads to violence directed at the oppressed group. The male, being part of the dominant group might feel entitled when they demand women to submit to their orders. The rising cases

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

of racism, moreover, which resulted in violence, is another example. The case of Rodney King that triggered the L.A. 1992 riots and the recent death of George Floyd last May 2020 which resulted in the Black Lives Matter protests are examples of such cases. The nonrecognition of harassment cases filed by black women against white perpetrators can also be considered as a form of violence brought about by cultural imperialism. The silencing and killing of the indigents who are fighting for their ancestral domain is another example of cultural imperialism.

It is not necessary to have all these five types of oppression—namely, exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence—present to say that one is being oppressed. An inclusion of one type can already qualify as oppression. Oppression has become so systematic that it is hardly noticeable to many people. People who are oppressed no longer take it as oppression but as part of the normal structure of things. As such, they simply accept their situation as a given. Women who were abused would sometimes not retaliate for fear of complicating the situation further. This type of imposed structure made it possible for people to be oppressed. It is, therefore, not just about addressing the problem of distributive justice. There is a need to look into our positions in the society. As Young notes, “reform ... can come only through a change in cultural images, stereotypes, and the mundane reproduction of relations of dominance and aversion in the gestures of everyday life.”⁵⁰

Policies for Women

This next part of the paper shall present the manifestation of these faces of oppression in the way women are treated in policy-making in the Philippines, particularly in the drafting of the 1987 Constitution and The Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Law of 2012. The problematic debates in the interpellation of the RPRH Law is rooted in Article II Section 12 of the 1987 Constitution which states:

The State recognizes the sanctity of family life and shall protect and strengthen the family as a basic autonomous social institution. It shall equally protect the life of the mother and the life of the unborn from conception. The natural and primary right of the parents in the rearing of the youth for civic efficiency and the development of

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 63.

moral character shall receive the support of the government.⁵¹

The debate about the beginning of human life became so controversial that legal, scientific, and religious points were raised by the legislators. In the end, it was the religious perception that triumphed. Initially, they used the phrase “fertilized ovum” to refer to the beginning of life. Joaquin Bernas, S.J. wanted a more precise phrase that could protect the life of the unborn. Felicitas Aquino contradicted this by saying that “law and jurisprudence are settled that the person do not ripen until one is born.”⁵² She adds that to give right to the fertilized ovum would mean “to give rights to the potential rather than the actual.”⁵³ Bernardo Villegas was against the point raised by Aquino, and he made use of the genetic argument to prove his point. The committee wanted to make sure that this provision will safeguard the constitution from the possible inclusion of a law that legalizes abortion. Felicitas Aquino and Minda Luz Quesada wanted to secure the rights of women by arguing for the exemption of the cases of women whose pregnancies were a result of rape. Villegas insisted that such exemption “would be always the key to open the floodgates to millions of abortion ... cases of pregnancy resulting from rape are extremely rare.”⁵⁴ Instead of considering the suggestions of the women in the committee, what he wanted was to create a caring society to look after these broken women—a reactionary solution to an otherwise preventable problem. Such caring society, moreover, is a band aid solution. It cannot systematically address the problems present in a prejudiced community. Quesada gave a striking comment, “It is very easy for men who are not raped or who will never be raped to talk about a caring society who will take care of a child who is a product of multiple rape. What right have we to make a choice for women who are victims of multiple rape and what it does to them for the rest of their lives?”⁵⁵ With this, Blas Ople wanted his colleagues to reconsider the case. He asks:

Should the constitution interpose itself between this mother ... so that she is denied the right to life of peace and serenity and her own pursuit of happiness because

⁵¹ 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines, Art. II, § 12. See also Marilen J. Dañguilan, *The RH Bill Story: Contentions and Compromises* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2018), 11.

⁵² Dañguilan, *The RH Bill Story: Contentions and Compromises*, 16. Quotations from and references to lawmakers, as well as quotations from the Constitution, are hereafter taken from Dañguilan, *The RH Bill Story: Contentions and Compromises*.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

there is a constitutional provision that prevents her from correcting or rectifying a socially imposed wrong that had been committed against her?"⁵⁶

Quesada and Villegas once again exchanged arguments. Quesada questions whether Villegas was not "denying woman the equal protection of the law, the due process of the law? The Gentleman is giving due process to the unborn but not to the woman; that is, that she makes a choice."⁵⁷ Villegas replied that "There is absolutely no right to murder and therefore that woman has absolutely no right to murder the child."⁵⁸

Aside from Article II, Section 12, the committee also deliberated on Sections 9 and 11. Section 11 seeks to create an "agreement on women's right to equal protection with men."⁵⁹ Aquino adds that "the intent of this provision was to repeal all discriminatory and anti-feminist laws in the Civil Code and the Revised Penal Code."⁶⁰ Aquino clarified that the provision does not aim for absolute equality, what must be done is to "nullify the place of women on a pedestal ... the law has done very little except to perpetuate the myth that women are helpless and therefore should be put on a pedestal."⁶¹ Aquino also noted that in the Civil Code, if the husband's income is sufficient, he can object to his wife's profession. The wife's mobility is also subordinate to her husband's. The husband should manage the conjugal property while the wife takes care of the household.⁶² This idea was once again met with chauvinism. Adolfo Azcuna clarified the provision by saying that "I believe they are still within the ambit of reasonable classification since we cannot erase the difference between men and women."⁶³ Ambrosio Padilla agrees with Azcuna, and implies that men and women have predetermined roles in the family where the men shall provide while the woman takes care of the household. To him, this order is important to keep the family in order.⁶⁴

We can see that these arguments are only pointing to one direction: the predetermined role of women in the society, which is to become a housewife and bear children. A discussion on allowing a woman to decide for her body was immediately negated by the male-dominated committee. This kind of argumentation on the floor remained the same for the next decade.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 35.

The committee that drafted the 1987 Constitution was composed of forty-seven members wherein only five were women; among the five women, only two stood to voice out their arguments on pivotal provisions. A similar scenario was in place during the drafting of The Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Law of 2012. It took four congresses, from 2001 to 2011, to pass the law.

Bills to mitigate the population were filed prior to bills on reproductive health. Leticia Ramos-Shahani “filed Resolution 39 that urged the strengthening of national population program by implementing the Commission on Population’s Policy Statement of April 1987.”⁶⁵ Shahani intended to support Population Commission’s implementation of the “National Population Plan which included family planning and responsible parenthood Program for married couples of reproductive age.”⁶⁶ The resolution was approved but tapered to accommodate the demands of the Catholic Church. According to Shahani, her colleagues resisted on population-related issues because for them, advocacies on “population, development, and women are flower issues, unimportant, and essentially fluff.”⁶⁷

Shahani was later convinced that her colleagues will not rally behind her on these issues. Together with Benjamin De Leon, she organized the Philippine Parliamentarians Conference of the Philippine Congress where they “promoted the right of spouses to choose and plan their desired family sizes within their ethical beliefs, to empower women through education and incomes and to strengthen NGOs that would promote and provide family planning information and services.”⁶⁸

However, the congress remained unmoved even with the advocacies pushed for by PARLCON. They did not present any initiatives on population and women’s reproductive rights because they did not want to offend the sensibilities of the Catholic Church. Bishop Gilbert Garcera believes that “The huge Philippine population could be part of God’s plan for Filipinos to be caregivers to ageing nations whose populations had become stagnant. Many Filipino women would make good wives for foreigners in countries that have low population.”⁶⁹ To say that this claim is an insult to women is an understatement.

During the time of President Fidel V. Ramos, he appointed Juan Flavio as the Secretary of Health. Flavio’s programs caught the attention of the Catholic Church. He spearheaded the ABC campaign which stands for

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 38.

*“Abstain, Be faithful, but if you could not abstain and be faithful, use Condom.”*⁷⁰ For the Catholic Church, Flavier was “encouraging promiscuity and fostering a contraceptive mentality and immorality. They accused him of promoting abortion on the sly through artificial contraceptives.”⁷¹ When Flavier organized a delegation to attend the Preparatory Conference of the International Committee on Population and Development in New York, the Catholic Church claimed that the behavior of the delegates was “abominable, censurable and disgraceful. They accused the delegates of supporting the legalization of abortion on demand, institutionalizing homosexual relationship, and going against the family.”⁷² One of the delegates, Cecile Joaquin-Yasay, narrates “I had a miscarriage. I was 42 years old then. I was 5 ½ months pregnant and I was travelling a lot. And I remember what the Catholic Church said. The reason I had a miscarriage was that I was not behaving well, and God punished me.”⁷³ No words can explain how malicious the Catholic Church’s comment was.

From this point on, it was already a battle against religious beliefs; it was no longer a fight for women’s rights alone but a fight against the dogmas of the Catholic Church. Never mind if a woman gives birth to a dozen children and live in poverty, as long we follow the teachings of the Catholic Church. Never mind if the maternal mortality ratio in the country is not reduced, as long as we do not offend the sensibilities of the religious. These claims can be supported by senate hearings from 1992–1994 when Senator Francisco Tatad and Senator Jose Lina grilled every resource person on the grounds of religious beliefs, especially when these people, without looking into the scientific basis on the use of pills and IUD, have already concluded that these are abortifacient. They rejected the idea of providing funds for the purchase of contraceptives to be distributed through the family planning programs of the government. Tatad proposes “that private organizations should be free because private individuals should be free to practice contraception if they so desire. There is no law that should bind an individual to observe certain things inside the bedroom I don’t believe the taxpayers’ money should be spent on it (contraceptives) That’s how I interpret the Constitutional provisions. But private initiative, that’s ok.”⁷⁴ This statement clearly shows the demarcation line between the privileged and underprivileged women.

During the presidency of Ramos, the population bill in the Senate never made it to the plenary. “It was never calendared as part of a regular or

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 56. Emphasis added.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*, 61.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 84.

special conduct of business. In the lower house, the population bill was never taken up.”⁷⁵

The RH bill did not make any progress during the short-lived administration of President Joseph Ejercito Estrada and President Gloria Arroyo either. The latter was so determined to maintain a good relationship with the Catholic Church.

In 2001, Bellaflor Angara-Castillo, Kristel Lagman-Luistro, Darlene Antonino Custodio, Nereus Acosta, and Loretta Rosales filed the Reproductive Health Care Act of 2001⁷⁶ which aims “to institutionalize reproductive rights and health in the country through sexuality education, family planning, maternal death reduction and measures to prevent HIV/AIDS among others.”⁷⁷

When it was brought to the floor for its public hearing on 27 August 2002, the questions raised by lawmakers once again gravitated towards the possibility of legalizing abortion, as well as encouraging premarital sex through the introduction of the use of condoms and artificial contraceptives, not to mention its immorality. Angara-Castillo challenged the legislators to point which specific provision in the bill mentions such, in order that they could explain the intention of the provision. Rosales, on the other hand, points out that abortion is already happening to at least one in six pregnancies; she adds that the intention of the bill was to stop this from happening as it aims to “take care of the woman and her reproductive rights.”⁷⁸

The bill went through the second and third hearing, but the arguments posed remained the same until those who opposed the bill succeeded in stalling it in Congress.

On 3 September 2002, Senator Rodolfo Biazon “introduced the Senate Bill No. 2325, The Reproductive Health Care Act.”⁷⁹ Senator Aquilino Pimentel wanted the senators to reject the bill. He said that he was “not quite comfortable with the basic premise of the bills ... that women have absolute discretion on what they want to do with their bodies.”⁸⁰ During his speech, he was invoking religion as a basis for the bill. According to him, “there are limits to what women may do with their bodies—or men for that matter—and the limits are what the law imposes.”⁸¹ He cites that these laws are found

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁷⁶ An Act Establishing a Reproductive Health Care Act, Strengthening Its Implementing Structures, Appropriating Funds Therefor and for Other Purposes, House Bill No. 4110, 12th Congress (2001).

⁷⁷ Dañguilan, *The RH Bill Story: Contentions and Compromises*, 107.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 152.

in the Revised Penal code and even in the ten commandments. He adds:

When we talk of religious convictions in relation to founding of families we are talking here of policy. We are not talking of individual preferences or individual religions. We are talking of the fact that the Philippines is a very large Christian population, in matters of policy, one has to abide, if it is the government, it has to abide by the will of the greater number of people in a given community.⁸²

Was it not proper to also take into consideration the other 19% of Filipinos who are not Catholics? Was it not worthwhile to consider that this remaining percentage of the population are in favor of the RH Bill? Aside from the bill filed by Biazon, there were twenty-one more bills related to reproductive health. In one of the hearings, Senator Pia Cayetano stressed on the burden that women have to bear in raising a family of six to eight members. According to her, a family needs at least Php 18,000.00 to live in decent conditions. However, the minimum wage at this time was only pegged at Php 8,000.00. Women are thus burdened to make ends meet. Alma Infante, a DSWD representative, agreed with Cayetano. She notes how pitiful the state is as she urged senators that it must be upon them to help support women. Unfortunately, the twenty-one bills filed in the senate did not progress.⁸³

Despite the coldness of the administration to the bill, those who believed in the necessity of enforcing an institutionalized reproductive health law would not easily give up on their ideals. Esperanza Cabral, the newly appointed Department of Health secretary issued an administrative order “enabling midwives to administer lifesaving drugs and medicines to prevent maternal and newborn death and disabilities.”⁸⁴ During the 13th Congress, four representatives filed four different versions of the reproductive health bill. They were Edcel Lagman, Josefina Josen, Ferjanel Biron, and Eduardo Requero. During the 14th Congress, Edcel Lagman, Janette Garin, and Risa Hontiveros authored House Bill 5043.⁸⁵ This is a consolidation of three other bills filed in the Congress.⁸⁶ All these versions did not progress in Congress.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 215.

⁸⁵ An Act Providing National Policy on Reproductive Health, Responsible Parenthood and Population Development and for Other Purposes, House Bill No. 5043, 14th Congress (2008), <<http://www.congress.gov.ph/download/14th/hb05043.pdf>>.

⁸⁶ House Bill No. 17 was filed by Edcel Lagman, House Bill No. 812 was filed by Janette Garin, and House Bill No. 2753 was filed by Narciso Santiago III, Mark LLandro Mendoza, and Eleano Jesus Madrona. See Dañguilan, *The RH Bill Story: Contentions and Compromises*, 174

It was only during the administration of President Benigno Aquino III when the RH Bill was passed by both houses of Congress. Aquino believed in the importance of providing better reproductive health care for women. It must be remembered that though his family had a good relationship with the Catholic Church, this did not hinder him from supporting the RH Bill even as he received threats of his excommunication.⁸⁷

When Aquino was elected, he was determined to pass the RH Bill into law. In a speech delivered to the graduates of the University of the Philippines he said:

Naalala ko tuloy ang batang nakilala ko sa Baseco. Talagang nakapinta sa mukha nya ang hinagpis. Papaano ba naman, labing-anim na taon pa lang siya, dalawa na ang nagging anak niya. Paano niya papakainin ang mga bata, paano paaaralin, gayong wala silang trabaho ng kaniyang asawa? Sino po ba ang nagkulang? Sino ang nagtulak sa kanila sa ganitong sitwasyon? Paano nabagsak sa kanilang balikat ang ganitong pananagutan? At ang pinakamalaking tanong: Ano ba ang aking magagawa?

Buo ang loob ko na maisabatas ang prinsipyo ng Responsible Parenthood.⁸⁸

During the deliberations on the amendments, it shows that those opposed to the bill were using Church doctrines and religious beliefs to debunk the bill in toto. Fenny Tatad, for example urged the bishops to convince the members of the congress to vote against the bill. Amado Bagatsing was insisting on the link between contraceptives and abortion. Victorino Dennis Socrates even cited predictions of a visionary as he warned the congress of more disasters to happen if they continue discussing the bill. Mito Magsaysay had the same view saying "Heaven must be crying. We should undo what has been done."⁸⁹

While there was development in the Lower House, Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago together with Senator Pia Cayetano and Senator Panfilo Lacson authored the Senate Bill 2865 or, An Act Providing for a National

⁸⁷ Dañguilan, *The RH Bill Story: Contentions and Compromises*, 232.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 251. DSWD Secretary Corazon Soliman could attest that this encounter really happened as she was with Aquino when he visited Baseco.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 303. Both Socrates and Magsaysay are against the RH Bill. Their comments are their reactions after the Lower House voted on to end the debate and proceed to the drafting of the amendment on the bill. The votation happened a day earlier than scheduled.

Policy on Reproductive Health and Population and Development.⁹⁰ In Santiago's sponsorship speech, she focused on the primacy of conscience in Catholic theology, constitutional and international law, and socioeconomic aspects of reproductive health.⁹¹ Her lengthy sponsorship speech was delivered in three parts in anticipation of the questions to be raised by the supreme court.

During the debates, the senators raised questions on the same issues: the sanctity of life based on Article II, Section 12 of the 1987 Constitution, the beginning of life, the potential life in sperm cells, abortifacient effect of artificial contraceptives, and violation of the teachings of the Catholic Church, among others. All these issues were raised without any regard for the real intentions of the bill. Without considering the cases of women who were deprived of a comprehensive reproductive health care for decades. The determination of the advocates remains steadfast, the support of the president was discernible. Finally, on 21 December 2012 it has become a law.⁹²

Despite the approval of then President Aquino, James and Lovely Ann Imbong, filed a petition to the Supreme Court questioning the constitutionality of the RH Law. The Supreme Court then ordered a 120-day status quo ante order which means that the law is not to be implemented in the next 120 days. Oral arguments were held from July to August 2013, until the Supreme Court ruled that the RH Law was partly unconstitutional. In 2015, the Supreme Court was once again faced with a petition filed by the Alliance for the Family Foundation Philippines, Inc. This petition wanted to stop the purchase, sale, distribution, dispensation, and administration of artificial contraceptives. On 17 June 2015 a temporary restraining order was issued. Then, 10 November 2017, the Food and Drug Authority issued an advisory stating that the 51 contraceptives it reevaluated were not abortifacients. This has signaled the automatic lifting of the TRO.⁹³

Reports on the Implementation of The Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012

In the 4th *Annual Report on the Implementation of the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012*, published in 2017, it notes that there is an increase in budget allocation from Php 29.7 billion in 2016 to Php

⁹⁰ An Act Providing for a National Policy on Reproductive Health and Population and Development, Senate Bill No. 2865, 15th Congress (2011), < https://www.senate.gov.ph/lis/bill_res.aspx?congress=15&q=SBN-2865>.

⁹¹ Dañguilan, *The RH Bill Story: Contentions and Compromises*, 407.

⁹² See *The Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012*, Republic Act No. 10354, 15th Congress (2012), <<https://pcw.gov.ph/law/republic-act-10354>>.

⁹³ Dañguilan, *The RH Bill Story: Contentions and Compromises*, 496–520.

374 billion in 2017. This covers funding for Family Health and Responsible Parenting, Expanded Program on Immunization, Health Facilities Enhancement Program, as well as the RPRH-related programs of POPCOM. The government also allocated funds for gender and development-related activities of the Philippine Commission on Women and HIV/AIDS program of the DOH.⁹⁴ Maternal health care and services also improved, and there is an increase in the number of women giving birth in health care facilities which are staffed by trained health care professionals. It was also reported that the use of contraceptives among married women increased to 40.4%. There was, moreover, a decrease in the number of women, aged 15 to 19, who began childbearing. However, there is an increase of repeat pregnancy because there remains to be an estimated 1.4 million young women who are willing to avail of family planning but are unable to use any family planning method.⁹⁵ As such, while the numbers appear promising, it does not guarantee that the provisions are working well. There is always the threat of budget cuts during the annual budget hearings, and there are still institutions which are reluctant on the implementation of these policies. Although there is a decrease in the number of teenage pregnancies, there are still ten-year old girls getting pregnant, and there are still unreported cases of violence against young women. We can only wish for the continued support of the Congress and the local government units to conscientiously implement the law and allocate enough budget to fund it, because the battle should not end with the approval of the bill.

Faces of Oppression in the Drafting of The Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Act of 2012

From the foregoing discussions, one could easily recognize the fact that the state, rather than by sincerely looking at the problems experienced by women, have instead opted to prioritize its relationship with the Catholic Church, thereby extending a hand in the oppression of women. Women are continuously *exploited* through unpaid or underpaid labor, domestic or otherwise. Women are still dependent on others for their sustenance, which means that they still depend on the state or the private sector to keep them afloat. Being the primary nurturer in the household, the burden of poverty lies on the shoulders of women, as they are the ones who try to make ends meet. Women are still *marginalized* by not being able to fully participate in the society. During the 1987 Constitutional Convention only five of the 47

⁹⁴ See Department of Health, *4th Annual Report on the Implementation of the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012 (2017)*, <<https://www.doh.gov.ph/node/14093>>, 4.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 8–9.

members are women,⁹⁶ and the transcripts presented above show how women were silenced by the male members of the committee. We see the struggle of underprivileged women when they were denied access to better reproductive health services, when maternal deaths were not addressed, when poor birthing facilities were not noticed, and when access to artificial family method was banned from being sold and distributed. When Francisco Tatad emphasized that private individuals may access family planning methods but refused to fund the distribution of artificial contraception to underprivileged women using taxpayers' money, he has deprived them and their children of a better quality of life. All these incidents render a woman *powerless* because she is not given authority—not even the authority over her own body or even her own future. There may be laws and religious doctrines which speak of what women can and cannot do to their bodies, but is it wrong to argue that imposing these laws and beliefs violate women's rights to decide for themselves? Why must a woman not be in control of what happens to her body? When Bernardo Villegas denied the exemption of women who were victims of multiple rape to resort to abortion, and instead vouched for the encouragement of a caring environment in a prejudicial society, he has denied women to live a more psychologically sound life. Sandra Lee Bartky notes that in cases of an unwanted pregnancy, a woman bears something within, "an alien, something she doesn't want there, indeed, a parasite living within her body this sense of housing an alien and unwelcome other might well grow. The fetus is hers in a physiological sense, but not necessarily in a psychological sense."⁹⁷ Quesada's rebuttal was only fitting—Villegas will not understand the struggle because men like him will never be raped and bear the child of the rapist. Women can be powerless just by the fact that they are women. Her body is sexualized and objectified, she is predisposed to abuse even before she learns how to fight for herself. We see in the transcription above that even learned women in the committee were treated like preys by the predominantly male group. These are results of *cultural imperialism*, in which the predetermination of women's roles does more damage to herself than she can ever imagine. When the lawmakers refer to the doctrines of the bible assigning women to become wives and mothers, that already discounts her of all her other potentials. When a bishop rejects solutions to reproductive health and population issues, and instead argues that overpopulation in the

⁹⁶ "The 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines - Members of the Constitutional Commission," in *Official Gazette*, <<https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/constitutions/the-1987-constitution-of-the-republic-of-the-philippines/the-1987-constitution-of-the-republic-of-the-philippines-members-of-the-constitutional-commission/>>.

⁹⁷ Sandra Lee Bartky, "Iris Young and the Gendering of Phenomenology," in *Dancing with Iris: The Philosophy of Iris Marion Young*, ed. by Ann Ferguson and Mechthild Nagel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 45.

Philippines is God's plan, and that Filipino women can be sent abroad to become caregivers or marry foreign men from unpopulated countries, he is devaluing women. As former President Fidel V. Ramos said, "We had no prohibitions with Reproductive Health, because what we were always discussing or implementing here, from '92 to '98, was the quality of Filipino population."⁹⁸ Ramos saw the importance of protecting women, it is just that the country was not yet ready during his time. Data shows that there is a decreasing number of cases of *violence* against women in the country. However, this decreasing number is caused by the women's refusal to report their cases to the police, as there are notions that spousal abuse should be something settled between the married couples. According to the 2017 National Demographic and Health Survey, conducted by the Philippine Statistics Authority, "Women's experience of physical violence decreased slightly over time, from 20% in 2008 and 2013 to 17% in 2017. Similarly, women's experience of physical violence in the 12 months preceding this survey has declined slightly, from 7% in 2008 to 5% in 2017."⁹⁹ Moreover, according to Diana Mendoza, while the respondents were aware of the legal implications of Violence Against Women and Their Children (VAWC), they nevertheless sought help instead from family, friends, and neighbors. Unfortunately, only 6% of the women sought help from the police.¹⁰⁰ The fact remains that women are still susceptible to violence.

The discussions above show the "systemic character of oppression." As Young notes, the "oppressed group need not have a correlate oppressing group. While structural oppression involves relations among groups, these relations do not always fit the paradigm of consciousness and intentional oppression of one group by another."¹⁰¹ Such is the case because the division between groups have been so rooted in the consciousness of people that oppression has been normalized and thus, tolerated.

Women and women's rights advocates suffered the same form of oppression within the halls of congress during the deliberations on the RPRH Bill. They were accused of including certain provisions that were never there in the first place. They were accused of inserting provisions that would legalize abortion, encourage promiscuity and premarital sex, and promote

⁹⁸ See GatesFoundation, "A Patient Revolution: Reproductive Rights in the Philippines," in *YouTube*, 3:20 (29 May 2013), <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=chFCrK3R7a4>>.

⁹⁹ Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) and ICF, *Philippines National Demographic and Health Survey 2017* (Quezon City, Philippines and Rockville, Maryland, USA: PSA and ICF, 2018), 220.

¹⁰⁰ Diana J. Mendoza, "The problem of violence against women and children," in *BusinessWorld* (2 December 2019), <<https://www.bworldonline.com/the-problem-of-violence-against-women-and-children/>>.

¹⁰¹ Young, *Justice and Politics of Difference*, 41–42.

immorality by using artificial family methods. However, these were not part of the intention of the bill. Junice Melgar underscores that the law revolved on three things: maternal health, family planning, and sexuality education.¹⁰² More than anything else, we should consider the law as a basic right of every woman. The law is pro-woman: it protects women from unwanted pregnancy, it protects her from incurring sexually transmitted diseases, and it gives her the knowledge and the freedom to choose for herself. Moreover, the law pushes for the establishment of safe places for women, such as health facilities, thereby lessening maternal deaths. As Elizabeth Angsioco lamented, “how ironic that women gave life, but in such a process, many died.”¹⁰³ To educate the youth on sexuality is one way to increase awareness about the dangers of engaging in sexual activities at an early age. This kind of awareness will lessen the chances of unwanted and medically dangerous pregnancy among the youth. Teaching them about sexuality is not to encourage them to engage in the act, as those who strictly abide by religious doctrines might believe, but it is meant to teach them about its dangers. Clearly, the presumptions given by those who were against the law were never really part of the law.

If the provisions are properly implemented, they shall guarantee assistance that would enable women to take full control over their reproductive health. Moving forward, we can only wish that those who are members of the dominant group in the Congress will continue to allot funds for women’s health and that leaders in the local government units and all the agencies involved will see to it that all the provisions set forth in the law will be properly implemented for benefit of women. Let us remember Rosalie Cabiñan and her twenty-two children, as well as Nerissa Gallo and her sixteen children:¹⁰⁴ they could have had a better chance at life if only those who are in power listened to and recognized their story. Let us be reminded that “Social justice ... requires not the melting away of difference, but institutions that promote reproduction of and respect for group differences without oppression.”¹⁰⁵

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¹⁰² See GatesFoundation, “A Patient Revolution: Reproductive Rights in the Philippines.”

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ See *ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Young, *Justice and Politics of Difference*, 47.

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When Your Country Cannot Care for Itself: A Filipino Feminist Critique of Care-based Political Theories

Noelle Leslie G. Dela Cruz

Abstract: In this paper, I evaluate a number of care-based political theories, whose central project is to identify, frame, and address the so-called crisis of care. Three proposals emerge, which I characterize as the philosophical, economic, and political solutions. In light of recent transnational analyses, however, these solutions appear to be inadequate in addressing the global nature of the problem. Thus, there is a need to revise the political philosophy of care. To this end, I identify a set of preliminary questions to ask based on a careful consideration of the Philippine situation.

Keywords: care work, care ethics, social justice, transnational feminism

An irony familiar to many Filipinos is how their country is a prime exporter of care workers and yet there is a manifest dearth of carers and care services in the Philippines. According to Rhacel Parreñas, sociologist and prominent researcher on Filipina migrant labor,

care work is now one of the largest exports and sources of foreign currency for the country As a result of the systematic extraction of care from the Philippines, a great number of children there are growing up without the physical presence of their (migrant) parents.¹

This crisis points to the important philosophical work of laying down the foundations for a care-based political theory that is applicable in the

¹ Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, "Patriarchy and Neoliberalism in the Globalization of Care," in *The Force of Domesticity: Filipina Migrants and Globalization* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2008), 46.

Philippine context. However, existing studies addressing specifically Philippine problems tend to forego a detailed analysis of care work, focusing instead on materialist or postmodern critiques.² While these are useful theoretical lenses that bring out the salience of class factors and power discourses, care cannot simply be reduced to economic labor³ or to a disciplinary technology. Such analyses neglect care's relational nature and its origins in women's experience. On the other hand, turning to the most fully developed accounts of political theory that draw on feminist care ethics, one finds that these tend to be western-centered, mainly addressing the concerns of liberal societies in the Global North.⁴ There is a need to put these political proposals in dialogue with the Philippine situation, inasmuch as the care crisis is undeniably a worldwide phenomenon, one in which women from developing countries suffer the most. As Parreñas evocatively puts it in her description of the devaluation of care,

... the ideology of women's domesticity works to the disadvantage of the Philippines as a nation, because the low pay of Filipino women signifies the low pay of the Philippines in the global economy.⁵

In this paper, I evaluate the key claims of a number of care-based political theories, with a view to identifying gaps that may be filled through a consideration of the Philippine situation. In so doing, I hope to formulate the main questions that should be addressed on the way toward a care-based political theory that is applicable to the Filipino setting. It is my hope that the discussion would contribute to new ways of thinking about the global nature of care work and what this says about the prospects for a transnational feminism.

² See for example Anne E. Lacsamana, *Revolutionizing Feminism: The Philippine Women's Movement in the Age of Terror* (New York and London: Routledge, 2012); Robyn Magalit Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export: How the Philippine State Brokers Labor to the World* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); James A. Tyner, *Made in the Philippines: Gendered Discourses and the Making of Migrants* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004).

³ Selma Sevenhuijsen, *Citizenship and the Ethics of Care: Feminist Considerations on Justice, Morality and Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998).

⁴ See Joan C. Tronto, *Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality, and Justice* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2013); Daniel Engster, *The Heart of Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), Kindle; Daniel Engster, *Justice, Care, and the Welfare State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Eva Feder Kittay, *Love's Labor: Essays on Women, Equality, and Dependency* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999); Virginia Held, *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Nel Noddings, *Starting at Home: Caring and Social Policy* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2002).

⁵ Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, "Gender Ideologies in the Philippines," in *The Force of Domesticity*, 38.

Defining and Politicizing Care

Fine notes that in ordinary language, “care” has at least three main senses: as a mental disposition, as an activity or form of work, and as a relationship between individuals or groups.⁶ All three connotations are involved in theories of care work—sometimes referred to as dependency work—that have emerged separately from two main discourses: the woman-centered American feminism of the 1980s, on one hand, and disability studies, on the other.⁷

The feminist ethics of care has its roots in Carol Gilligan’s landmark critique of psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg’s theory of moral development. She contested Kohlberg’s privileging of an ethics of universal principles over an ethics of relationships, arguing that these distinct ways of moral reasoning—justice and care—reflect the gendered socialization of boys and girls.⁸ However, it was Joan C. Tronto’s work that transformed Gilligan’s *feminine*-centered view of care into a fully developed *feminist* theory. In other words, Tronto shifted the debate about care ethics from the issue of gender difference to its adequacy as a moral and political theory.⁹ This augured the politicization of the ethics of care, which has led to its application to social issues by such philosophers as Eva Kittay, Daniel Engster, Nel Noddings, Virginia Held, and Fiona Robinson.

The central project of a care-based political theory is the identification, framing, and addressing of the so-called “crisis of care.” This crisis is a product of demographic trends that may be attributed to modernization. More women joining the workforce means a diminishing pool of individuals who traditionally perform the work of caring in the domestic sphere. Far from ending gender inequality, this modern development has resulted in the so-called “second shift” for women. Due to cultural expectations, women find themselves having to perform caring work in addition to work outside the home. According to a 2018 study by the International Labor Organization, “Women perform 76.2 per cent of the total amount of unpaid care work, 3.2 times more than men.” Furthermore, “in no country in the world do men and women provide an equal share of unpaid

⁶ Michael Fine, “Eva Feder Kittay: Dependency Work and the Social Division of Care,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Social Theory in Health, Illness and Medicine*, ed. by Fran Collyer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 631.

⁷ Michael Fine and Caroline Glendinning, “Dependence, Independence or Interdependence? Revisiting the Concepts of ‘Care’ and ‘Dependency,’” in *Aging and Society*, 25:4 (July 2005), 602.

⁸ Kirstein Rummery and Michael Fine, “Care: A Critical Review of Theory, Policy and Practice,” in *Social Policy & Administration*, 46:3 (2012), 321–343.

⁹ Joan C. Tronto, “Beyond Gender Difference to a Theory of Care,” in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 12:4 (1987), 646.

care work.”¹⁰ If they have class privilege, some women are able to afford to pass on their reproductive labor to *other women* from socially disadvantaged groups. Ultimately, this means that “Most care workers are women, frequently migrants and working in the informal economy under poor conditions and for low pay.”¹¹

Before examining key proposals from care-based political theories, let us first delve deeper into the meaning of “care work.” A useful and frequently cited definition is one by Tronto and Berenice Fisher: “a *species activity that includes everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible.*”¹² The advantage of this definition is that it is broad enough to include two overlapping activities, namely: “*direct, personal and relational care activities*, such as feeding a baby or nursing an ill partner; and *indirect care activities*, such as cooking and cleaning.”¹³ Nancy Folbre has produced a comprehensive table of care work that identifies four main categories running the gamut from unpaid work to paid employment; divided into two types (direct and indirect); and which may be performed for any of five specific recipients, namely, children, the elderly, the sick and disabled, adults other than the self, and the self.¹⁴

Other definitions of care work are narrower, focusing on the direct kind. For example, Kittay defines “dependency work,” which she elsewhere refers to as “dependency care,”¹⁵ as the work of caring for those who are inevitably dependent.¹⁶ This definition excludes personal services, such as massage therapy or yoga instruction, which are provided to adults who are not inevitably dependent. Meanwhile, Engster qualifies Tronto’s definition which he argues is too broad. For him, caring is

everything we do directly to help individuals meet their basic needs, develop or maintain their basic capabilities, and live as much as possible free from suffering, so that

¹⁰ Laura Addati, Umberto Cattaneo, Valeria Esquivel, and Isabel Valarin, Executive Summary to *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2018), xxxix.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, xxvii.

¹² Tronto, *Caring Democracy*, 19.

¹³ Addati, Cattaneo, Esquivel, and Valarin, Executive Summary to *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*, xxvii.

¹⁴ Nancy Folbre, “Measuring Care: Gender, Empowerment, and the Care Economy,” in *Journal of Human Development*, 7:2 (2006), 188.

¹⁵ Eva Feder Kittay, Bruce Jennings, and Angela A. Wasunna, “Dependency, Difference and the Global Ethic of Longterm Care,” in *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 13:4 (2005), 443.

¹⁶ Kittay, Preface to *Love’s Labor*, ix.

they can survive and function at least at a minimally decent level¹⁷

Such a definition excludes practices that may help “to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world,’” such as house building and plumbing, which are not caring activities per se though they may be caring in their aim and virtues.¹⁸ Unlike Kittay, Engster makes no distinction between necessary care and personal services.¹⁹

For the purposes of this paper, I shall adopt the broader definition, as it better captures the *reproductive labor* performed by Filipino women. According to Parreñas, reproductive labor is wider than (direct) care work, since it includes such tasks as “purchasing household goods, preparing food, laundering clothes, dusting furniture, sweeping floors, maintaining community ties, caring for adults and children, socializing children, and providing emotional support.”²⁰ Parreñas criticizes the traditional definition of care work, which emphasizes the experiences of privileged women and excludes the so-called “dirty” or menial work usually performed by migrant care workers or women from socially disadvantaged groups.²¹

In sum, this section has traced the development of care ethics from the women’s movement and disability studies, and then shown how—through the pioneering work of Tronto—the concept of care has been incorporated into political theory. As my paper is primarily concerned with a broad evaluation of care-based political theories, it was necessary to show the provenance of this type of perspective, as well as to qualify my definition of “care work.”

¹⁷ Daniel Engster, “Rethinking Care Theory: The Practice of Caring and the Obligation to Care,” in *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 20:3 (Summer 2005), 54.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

²⁰ Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, “The Reproductive Labour of Migrant Workers,” in *Global Networks*, 12:2 (2012), 270.

²¹ Hanes offers a similar criticism of the traditional definition of care work. According to him, the concept of care has been valorized as an Other to male-dominated concepts and activities. As a result of this valorization, it ignores other, “non-caring” forms of labor that women do—for example, feminized commodity production—which are underpaid, exploited, and excluded from politics. For him, the care/non-care division of feminized labor reproduces hierarchies among women. In light of the expanded definition of “care” that I am adopting in this paper, however, the division Hanes identified is more appropriately captured by the direct/indirect opposition between types of care work. See Douglas William Hanes, “Left Out/Left Behind: On Care Theory’s Other,” in *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 32:3 (May 2017), 523–539.

Framing the Care Crisis

In addressing the care crisis, philosophers associated with the major care-based political theories have offered similar diagnoses of what is wrong with liberal democratic societies and similar proposed solutions. They also share blind spots that, I argue, may be corrected through a more global perspective that recognizes the plight of developing countries such as the Philippines.

We may begin with the care-based critique of the liberal state as being founded on an erroneous assumption about human nature. Liberalism, with its values of equality and freedom, relies upon universalist moral principles. These presume moral subjects to be independent or autonomous actors making rational choices in a free market. For example, John Rawls's theory of justice, which applies Kantian deontology to the political realm, presumes that in a hypothetical original position, people would rationally opt for the fairest possible society. However, in light of Thomas Piketty's analysis of the contemporary trend of rising social inequality, the ideal of justice has clearly not come to pass.²²

The care crisis is one pervasive instance of injustice. In the post-Enlightenment world, there remains an inequitable distribution of care responsibilities between women and men. Even though women have long since joined men in the public sphere, the values associated with the public and private realms remain hierarchically gendered. Care is still traditionally relegated to the domestic sphere, the sphere of so-called "women's work," which is thought to have little or no economic value. Thus, those who perform care work are either not paid for it or are paid comparatively little. Professional working women assume the burden of care responsibilities in the home. If they are economically privileged, they pass these responsibilities on to other women who need the work, which pays far less than other types of jobs in the labor market.

The care deficit has a pernicious effect on freedom and equality. Tronto sees it as intertwined with what she calls the "democracy deficit," or the incapacity of governments to reflect the values and ideas of their citizens. Because of the disproportionate burden of care, not all citizens can equally exercise their political rights.²³ For example, instead of being able to attend a political referendum, some have to stay home and take care of a bedridden elderly parent. Or instead of being able to read the news, some have had to forego schooling in order to economically support their younger siblings.

²² Engster, *Justice, Care, and the Welfare State*, 5.

²³ Tronto, *Caring Democracy*, 17–18.

Tronto concludes that the move toward democratic inclusion through paid work has left unanswered the question of who does the care work.²⁴

Kittay and Noddings share Tronto's critique of liberalism. For Kittay, "[a] conception of society viewed as an association of equals masks inequitable dependencies, those of infancy and childhood, old age, illness and disability."²⁵ Meanwhile, Noddings observes that liberalism begins from the wrong start, i.e., the thoughts and actions of mature rational beings who make unencumbered choices in order to satisfy their needs and wants. Such an erroneous assumption about how people actually are over a great deal of their life spans leads to dilemmas of freedom and equality.²⁶ By contrast, a care-based political and moral position begins not with independence or autonomy, but with *dependency*. Engster considers dependency to be the ground of our obligation to care. We must care for others, not because they are vulnerable to us, but because we are dependent (and have been or will be) on others.²⁷ This entails that care is foundational to justice and that values such as freedom and equality are secondary to care.²⁸ In other words, freedom and equality can only be realized in a caring society.²⁹

A number of interrelated proposals have been put forward in order to achieve such a caring society, which may be summarized as follows: (1) recognizing the fundamental value of care, and equal participation in care work; (2) creating a robust welfare state in which care, rather than being privatized or commoditized, is seen as a public responsibility; and (3) adopting a critical attitude toward the traditional public/private split, such that the values associated with either sphere are seen not in opposition to, but in harmony with, each other. I consider these to be the philosophical, economic, and political solutions, respectively.

The Philosophical Solution: Recognizing the Value of Care

Drawing on the tradition of disability studies, Kittay, Jennings, and Wassuna propose a transvaluation of dependency, in which it is seen not as

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

²⁵ Kittay, Preface to *Love's Labor*, xi.

²⁶ Noddings, *Starting at Home*, 77.

²⁷ Engster, "Rethinking Care Theory: The Practice of Caring and the Obligation to Care," 59.

²⁸ Engster, *Justice, Care, and the Welfare State*, 29.

²⁹ Engster notes that although care theory has commonalities with communitarianism, in that they both value interconnectedness and view moral obligations as nonvoluntary, care theory nonetheless departs from it in important ways. Unlike communitarian theories, care theory recognizes an independent moral criterion—i.e., the practice of caring—for judging the validity of institutions and traditions. Also, its aim is not so much to strengthen communal ties or promote social solidarity as ends in themselves, but to ensure a basic level of care for all. See Engster, *The Heart of Justice*.

a deficiency or problem, but as an opportunity for flourishing.³⁰ Thus, dependency care is not menial work that no one powerful should want to do, but a vital task that empowers all of us. Meanwhile for Tronto, the meeting of caring needs is the very basis of equality; democratic caring means we are equal in being *care receivers*.³¹ The moral quality she calls “caring with” embodies what it means to be a citizen in a democracy, which is to care for citizens and to care for democracy itself.³²

The Economic Solution: Creating a Robust Welfare State

In keeping with its intrinsic universal value, care is a matter of public interest. The equitable distribution of caring responsibilities is thus a question of social justice. Accordingly, in *The Heart of Justice*, Daniel Engster advocates government action in facilitating the care of dependents, such as in parenting, education, health care, elder care, etc. After all, government is our best means to enforce the duty to care for everyone, since only government can effectively assure peace, security, and protection. It can coordinate care and compel people to contribute their fair share of caring work.³³ For their part, Kittay, Jennings, and Wasunna introduce the principle of *doulia*,³⁴ according to which “[j]ust reciprocal relations require that a third party provide for the caregiver what neither the cared for nor carer can provide for herself as she turns her attention to the cared for.”³⁵ Their important contribution to care ethics is the addition of a third subject position to the traditional care worker-care recipient dyad, i.e., “the provider,” or the one who cares for the carer, mainly through economic means. In a robust welfare state, government plays the paradigmatic role of provider.

Since care is a public interest, care theorists reject the neoliberal trend of privatizing care. Tronto characterizes neoliberalism, which favors free-market capitalism, as a “disastrous worldview.” It wants to reduce the state’s care costs, sees people as workers and consumers who already have autonomy and clear ideas about their preferences, and makes care into a private matter.³⁶ According to Tronto, “[w]hen unequal citizens only care privately, they deepen the vast inequalities and the exclusion of some from

³⁰ Kittay, Jennings, and Wasunna, “Dependency, Difference and the Global Ethic of Longterm Care,” 468.

³¹ Tronto, *Caring Democracy*, 29.

³² Tronto, Preface to *Caring Democracy*, x.

³³ Held, *The Ethics of Care*, 270.

³⁴ Kittay coins the term *doulia* from the Spanish word for the postpartum caregiver, the *doula*, who cares for the mother as the mother cares for the newborn.

³⁵ Kittay, Jennings, and Wasunna, “Dependency, Difference and the Global Ethic of Longterm Care,” 460.

³⁶ Tronto, *Caring Democracy*, 38–40.

the real prospects of being full citizens.”³⁷ Held adopts a similar stance, claiming that the exchange or market value of caring work is one of the least appropriate ways to think of its value.³⁸ Running on the principle of profit maximization, the market cannot adequately promote the value of caring concern, which is integral to an array of human practices: for example, education, child care, health care, culture, and the protection of the environment.³⁹ However, this does not mean that she opposes paid care work. She writes,

We can grant that of course caring labor deserves not only decent but excellent pay without agreeing that the expansion of the market is usually or inherently appropriate or justifiable or liberating. Often it is not.⁴⁰

Kittay echoes Held’s view. While care work should be compensated, serious moral difficulties arise when care is considered to be a commodity like any other. The problem is that care is not fungible, for it matters who cares for whom.⁴¹ The issue of the commodification of care is beyond the scope of this paper, but the ambivalence expressed by Kittay and Held points to state-sponsored care as the morally preferable solution to the care crisis, as opposed to privatization or marketization.⁴²

The Political Solution: Adopting a Critical Solution Using a Private/Public Split

The two proposals so far discussed already constitute an implicit critique of the traditional opposition between the public and private spheres, or matters considered to be “political” as opposed to “personal”—to allude to a major Second Wave feminist slogan. Recognizing the universal value of care raises work of an intimate and relational nature to the level of public concern, and hence a matter for which government must assume a great degree of responsibility. In her radical application of care ethics to social theory, Noddings further demonstrates the porous border between “public” and “private.” Her main thesis is that a number of values and attitudes

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 96.

³⁸ Held, *The Ethics of Care*, 109.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁴¹ Eva Feder Kittay, “The Global Heart Transplant and Caring Across National Boundaries,” in *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, XLVI (2008), 149.

⁴² For a nuanced investigation of the commodification of care, see Rutger Claassen, “The Commodification of Care,” in *Hypatia: The Feminist Journal of Philosophy*, 26:1 (2011), 43–64.

learned in the ideal home may be carried over to the wider world. Consider the basic attitude encapsulated by the response, "I am here." A social policy that is guided by this basic attitude "would reject any principle or rule that makes it impossible for people in responsible positions to respond with care to those who plead for care or obviously need it."⁴³ A world that turns on the values of the ideal home emphasizes process rather than fixed goods; insists on caring relations as fundamentally good; justifies intervention in certain situations in order to prevent harms to self as well as harms to others; and favors policies that allow choices, though these choices are collaborative and are not anchored in rights.⁴⁴

In sum, feminist applications of care ethics to political and social theory, which primarily identify and address the crisis of care, constitute a major criticism of the prevailing order of neoliberal capitalism. However, recent transnational analyses⁴⁵ have exposed their insularity and failure to address concerns beyond the paradigmatic liberal nation-state. These critiques situate the care crisis in the context of globalization, citing empirical studies that reveal the stark inequalities in north-south relations. As the care deficit in developed countries is filled by migrant workers from poor countries, it becomes clear that the "pass-on" approach to care transcends national boundaries: "Care in our society is passed on from men to women to poorer and yet poorer women, from wealthy nations to poorer and yet poorer nations."⁴⁶ Indeed, there is copious literature on "global care chains," a phrase coined by Arlie Russell Hochschild based on the work of Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, who refers to the phenomenon as "the international division of reproductive labor." This refers to

the three-tier transfer of reproductive labor among women in sending and receiving countries of migration. Whereas class-privileged women purchase the low-wage household services of migrant Filipina domestic workers, these women simultaneously purchase the

⁴³ Noddings, *Starting at Home*, 231.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 241.

⁴⁵ See Olena Hankivsky, "Imagining Ethical Globalization: The Contributions of a Care Ethic," in *Journal of Global Ethics*, 2:1 (August 2006), 91–110; Parvati Raghuram, "Locating Care Ethics Beyond the Global North," in *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 15:3 (2016), 512–533; Allison Weir, "Global Care Chains: Freedom, Responsibility, and Solidarity," in *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 46 (2008), 166–175; G.K.D. Crozier, "Care Workers in the Global Market: Appraising Applications of a Feminist Care Ethics," in *The International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics*, 3:1 (Spring 2010), 113–137; Lise Widding Isaksen, Sambasivan Uma Devi, and Arlie Russell Hochschild, "Global Care Crisis: A Problem of Capital, Care Chain, or Commons?" in *American Behavioral Scientist*, 52:3 (2008), 405–425.

⁴⁶ Weir, "Global Care Chains," 171.

even lower-wage household services of poorer women
left behind in the Philippines⁴⁷

Thus, from a transnational perspective, feminist care-based political theories, such as Tronto's citizenship model of care, overlook "the most significant harm," i.e., the care drain in developing countries.⁴⁸ The "push" and "pull" factors motivating south-to-north migration are products of global capitalism, and unless these are recognized, "it will not be possible to address the needs of those who are truly worst off in this global care regime—those in the source countries who need care."⁴⁹ Isaksen, Devi, and Hochschild characterize this problem in terms of the erosion of the "commons" of the South, which is the real injury of global capital: the distortion and erosion of the family ties of the South in order to support the market of the North.⁵⁰

The View from the Philippines

In the preceding section, I have identified at least three main proposals from the major care-based political theories, while also showing that these may be inadequate in addressing the larger problem of the *global* care crisis. A revision of the political philosophy of care is thus in order.⁵¹ To this end, a careful consideration of the Philippine situation may point the way to relevant moral and political questions.

According to Parreñas:

⁴⁷ Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, "The International Division of Reproductive Labor," in *Servants of Globalization: Migration and Domestic Work*, 2nd ed. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 29.

⁴⁸ Crozier, "Care Workers in the Global Market," 127.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁵⁰ Isaksen, Devi, and Hochschild, "Global Care Crisis," 419.

⁵¹ In more recent works, Kittay mentions the problem of global care chains and refers to Parreñas's extensive study of Filipina migrant care workers. (See Kittay, "The Global Heart Transplant.") Thus, she points to the obligations of rich nations to poor nations as caregiving and care workers across national boundaries; identifies four key questions for a global ethics of care; and highlights the dependency-related hardships suffered in particular by women of the Global South. (See Kittay, Jennings, and Wasunna, "Dependency, Difference and the Global Ethic of Longterm Care.") However, these preliminary remarks are far from a fully developed "global ethics of care" that can be on par with her *Love's Labor: Essays on Women, Equality, and Dependency* (1999). In regard to the possibility of such a study, Fiona Robinson's *Globalizing Care: Ethics, Feminist Theory, and International Relations* (1999) fills the gap in care ethics in an international context. [See Fiona Robinson, *Globalizing Care: Ethics, Feminist Theory, and International Relations* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999).] However, its main concern is international relations. There remains a lack in care-based political theory of a philosophical study that specifically and fully addresses the care crisis in the context of the Global South.

A culture of emigration is pervasive in the Philippines. Migrants include land- and sea-based workers. Women primarily work on land, and the majority of them are domestic workers like nannies, housecleaners, and caregivers for the elderly Filipina women are the domestic workers par excellence of globalization.⁵²

The incapacity of the Philippine economy to provide jobs for Filipinos may be traced back to the country's long history of exploitation by colonizers, in particular the United States, with which it remained stuck in a neocolonial relationship long after independence was granted in 1946. Today, more than a quarter of Filipinos fall below the lower middle income poverty line of \$3.20 per day.⁵³ The Philippines, like other countries in the Third World, "exemplifies the failures of over two decades of neoliberal economic globalization policies."⁵⁴ As preconditions for granting loans, financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have imposed structural adjustment programs on developing countries. To ensure the priority of debt servicing, these measures force governments to cut down on social programs, liberalize trade, encourage the exportation of certain agricultural products, devalue the local currency, and privatize state enterprises. These measures "open up developing nations' economies and peoples to imperialist exploitation," hence leading to poverty-driven out-migration.⁵⁵

Relying on the remittances of overseas workers to keep its economy afloat, the Philippines maintains an aggressive labor export policy. Lacsamana blames the Marcos regime for the eventual development of this exploitative practice. Its more than two decades of reckless economic strategies and rampant graft and corruption exacerbated the debt burden first incurred by the Macapagal administration, which took out a \$300 million stabilization loan in 1962.⁵⁶ As of March 2018, the Philippines' external debt stands at \$73.2

⁵² Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, "The Global Migration of Filipino Domestic Workers," in *Servants of Globalization*, 2.

⁵³ Ralf Rivas, "Persistent high inflation may slow down poverty reduction - World Bank," in *Rappler* (4 October 2018), <<https://www.rappler.com/business/213517-high-inflation-slow-down-poverty-reduction-world-bank>>.

⁵⁴ Lacsamana, *Revolutionizing Feminism*, 9.

⁵⁵ Grace Chang, *Disposable Domestic: Immigrant Women Workers in the Global Economy* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000), 123.

⁵⁶ Lacsamana, *Revolutionizing Feminism*, 55.

billion.⁵⁷ Almost 10 percent of the national budget is dedicated to servicing the interest on this debt.⁵⁸

To help pay the national debt, the Philippine state relies on the labor of Filipino women; after all, women dominate the labor force both in export-manufacturing production and migrant employment.⁵⁹ However, this has not really benefited women in the Philippines, since the labor market remains highly segregated and they have only become stereotyped as naturally suited caregivers.⁶⁰ Indeed, the continuing exploitation of Filipina migrant laborers is legendary. The tragic deaths of Flor Contemplacion in Singapore, Maricris Sioson in Japan, and, most recently, Joana Demafelis in Kuwait make headlines and cause public outrage, but only reactionary stopgap measures are put into place.⁶¹ While only a minority of Filipino migrant workers come home in a coffin, their widespread abuse and the violation of their human rights are well-documented. For example, in her interview-based study, Constable describes the situation of Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong, where they are subjected to various forms of control and discipline by their employers, recruitment agencies, and the Chinese government, including being forced to eat leftovers, staying in a stifling and cramped room no bigger than a closet, not having access to communal places like the living room, being locked inside the house while the employers are away, and being made to cut their hair or not wear any makeup.⁶² Meanwhile, Liu presents the “embodied crises” of two migrant Filipino domestic workers in Taiwan. Elsa, a carer for her employers’ elderly parents, was diagnosed with stage three breast cancer in the middle of her contract. Without the benefit of health care or paid leave, she was forced to return to the Philippines after accepting a termination fee from her employers, which was not enough to cover her

⁵⁷ “Philippine external debt down to \$73.2B in Q1 2018,” in *Rappler* (15 June 2018), <<https://www.rappler.com/business/205034-philippine-external-debt-q1-2018>>.

⁵⁸ Department of Budget and Management, “2018 National Budget: A Budget that Reforms and Transforms,” in *DBM*, <<https://www.dbm.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/Our%20Budget/2018/2018%20QUICK%20GLANCE%201172018.pdf>>, accessed 3 November 2018.

⁵⁹ Parreñas, “Gender Ideologies in the Philippines,” 27.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 29–30.

⁶¹ Following the murder of Demafelis by her employers, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte imposed a brief ban on labor deployment to Kuwait, which was lifted after a labor pact was signed between the two countries. See “Philippines’ Duterte orders lifting of labor deployment ban to Kuwait,” in *Reuters* (16 May 2018), <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-kuwait-labour/philippines-duterte-orders-lifting-of-labor-deployment-ban-to-kuwait-idUSKCN1IH20R>>.

⁶² Nicole Constable, “Filipina Workers in Hong Kong Homes: Household Rules and Relations,” *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*, ed. by Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2002), Kindle, loc. 2020-2500, *passim*.

treatment and the needs of her family.⁶³ Meanwhile, Jocelyn, who had sought work abroad in order to escape from her abusive husband in the Philippines, found herself escaping from her employers' house as well, where she had been subjected to 24-hour camera surveillance and sleep deprivation from working 20 hours a day.⁶⁴ By far the worst places to be in for migrant domestics are the countries in the Middle East, which, among the top labor destinations for Filipinos, paid the lowest average wages and offered the least labor protection.⁶⁵ In a 2010 study, Human Rights Watch documented the abuses suffered by migrant domestic workers in Kuwait, which included nonpayment of wages and overwork; sexual, physical, and psychological abuses; denial of adequate food and health care; passport confiscation; and forced confinement in the workplace.⁶⁶

It will take so much more space than I have here to detail other cases of abuse suffered by Filipino migrant workers. However, this is only half of the picture. The other half is the story of the care drain in the Philippines as its citizens—the traditional care workers of society—leave the country *en masse* in order to support their families and the national economy. As Parreñas details in her study of the international division of reproductive labor, women who go abroad to take care of privileged dependents in developed countries, in turn employ poorer women in their country of origin to take care of the dependents that *they* themselves leave behind.⁶⁷ But what of the dependents of the carers in the lowest status? Nothing is said about their fate. The children who overrun the narrow, garbage-strewn and pollution-choked streets, the beggars who weave in and out of traffic on the major thoroughfares, the out-of-school youth who are summarily executed in the Duterte administration's so-called war on drugs, the emaciated women and girls who are forced to sell unprotected sex, the soot-covered and often mentally imbalanced homeless people who wander the streets, the sick and elderly who have to line up for hours on end at understaffed public hospitals, the students who have to work part-time in order to afford private education—these are a common sight in the Philippines. This is a crisis that cannot be addressed by the care-based political theories crafted by philosophers in the Global North, inasmuch as their frameworks neglect the complicity of their own countries in sustaining this worldwide inequality and lack of care.

⁶³ Wen Liu, "The Embodied Crises of Neoliberal Globalization: The Lives and Narratives of Filipina Migrant Domestic Workers," in *Women's Studies International Forum*, 50 (2015), 83.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁶⁵ Parreñas, "The Global Migration of Filipino Domestic Workers," 7.

⁶⁶ Priyanka Motaparthi, *Walls at Every Turn: Abuse of Migrant Domestic Workers through Kuwait's Sponsorship System* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2010), 48–57.

⁶⁷ Parreñas, "The Reproductive Labour of Migrant Workers," 269.

As the crisis is global in scope and most gravely affects developing countries, the philosophical, economic, and political proposals mentioned in the preceding section are inadequate and unworkable. The economic solution—the creation of a robust welfare state—underpins the other two solutions. Following a materialist analysis, the economic conditions of society tend to have a bottom-up effect on the philosophical and political ideas that prevail. But as we have seen, the Philippines cannot afford the provision of adequate welfare for its citizens, because its agricultural, labor, and fiscal resources are being siphoned off into other parts of the world. In light of the economic conditions, even an intellectual paradigm shift that revalues care and the concerns of the private sphere will not be enough. Recognizing the intrinsic value of care work, as well as adopting a critical attitude toward the public/private dichotomy, will remain largely the intellectual province of the privileged few.

Coda: Questions to Ask toward a (Filipino) Political Philosophy of Care

A care-based political theory that is applicable to the Philippine setting must significantly reframe the care crisis. To this end, the following preliminary questions point to meaningful philosophical directions:

On the value of care work:

- How significant is the conceptual distinction between direct or face-to-face dependency work and indirect or non-nurturant reproductive work? What accounts for the implicit hierarchy between these two types of care work? How should we conceive of their value? Does justice require equal compensation for all types of care work?

On agency and responsibility:

- What degree of responsibility should non-state actors like transnational companies and international lending institutions bear for the public welfare of citizens of developing countries?
- What degree of agency should be attributed to migrant care workers? What are the implications of diminished agency for immigration and labor law reforms?
- How should the gains from permanent residency and citizenship rights for migrant workers be measured against the losses from the care drain in their origin countries?

On the prospects for a transnational feminism:

- Given the inequalities between women revealed by the global care crisis, can any common advocacies form the basis of a transnational feminism?
- To what extent does care work remain gendered? How useful are gender-based concepts such as the feminization of labor (and of the Philippines as a primer exporter of domestic workers)? Do such gender-based analyses obscure intersectional issues?

I enjoin Filipino philosophers interested in the global care crisis to reflect on these most pressing of questions.

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Aesthetics, Politics, and the Embodied Political Subject¹

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Abstract: This paper draws out an aspect of the subject of politics in the later works of the philosopher Jacques Rancière, particularly his writings on aesthetics and politics. One of the reasons why Rancière is an exemplary thinker is the relationship between aesthetics and politics that informs his theory of politics and political subjectivity. For Rancière, politics is aesthetics in as much as the contestation of the right to speech involves the assertion of a visible body that demands to be included in the count. I will proceed with the discussion by first explicating the general idea of aesthetics and how it is related to politics in Rancière's oeuvre. Then I will specifically address the question of political subjectivity in Rancière's work in relation to aesthetics and politics by discussing the anonymous subject in aesthetic modernity. In doing this, I aim to present an alternative view of politics as focused on embodied political subjects and find the use of bodies for political contestations in both its active and passive form. Using the work of Rancière, I emphasise that political activity can be based on the body's experiences of suffering and emotions. These experiences in turn provide us with a rich material for reflection about what politics can mean today.

Keywords: Rancière, aesthetics, politics, embodied political subject

Introduction

This paper draws out an aspect of the subject of politics in the later works of the philosopher Jacques Rancière, particularly his writings on aesthetics and politics. One of the reasons why Rancière is an

¹ This article is part of a larger project on an alternative reading of Rancière which proposes that underneath the famous model presented in *Disagreement*, which is premised on a formal theory of the subject and the principle of the equality of intelligence, there lies a thick layer of subjective experiences. In my project, I focus on passages in Rancière's writings that point towards a theory of political action, which emphasises embodied experiences, feelings, and dreams as the beginning of politics.

exemplary thinker is the relationship between aesthetics and politics that informs his theory of politics and political subjectivity. For Rancière, politics is aesthetics in as much as the contestation of the right to speech involves the assertion of a visible body that demands to be included in the count. I will proceed with the discussion by first explicating the general idea of aesthetics and how it is related to politics in Rancière's œuvre. Then I will specifically address the question of political subjectivity in Rancière's work in relation to aesthetics and politics by discussing the anonymous subject in aesthetic modernity. In doing this, I aim to present an alternative view of politics as focused on embodied political subjects and find the use of bodies for political contestations in both its active and passive form. Using the work of Rancière, I emphasise that political activity can be based on the body's experiences of suffering and emotions. These experiences in turn provide us with a rich material for reflection about what politics can mean today.

The Link between Aesthetics and Politics

By "aesthetics," Rancière means "the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it."² This pertains to two senses of aesthetics: one is aesthetics as perception and the other is aesthetics as a social practice.

Aesthetics is the sense perception of social realities—ways of perceiving, doing, and making of the various actors involved in the social and political realm, the part of those who have no part, the worthy and the unworthy subjects, those who are counted and those who are excluded—in other words, what Rancière calls the 'distribution of the sensible.' In relation to the distribution of the sensible, Rancière defines aesthetics as:

... a system of a priori forms determining what presents itself to the sense experience. It is a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise that simultaneously determines the place and stakes of politics as a form of experience.³

On the other hand, aesthetics also pertains to aesthetic practices or the ways through which subjects express, entrench, and challenge the distribution of the sensible. For instance, in *Proletarian Nights*, as the workers appropriated the words of bourgeois poets to express their experiences and thoughts in

² Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. by Gabriel Rockhill (New York: Continuum, 2004), 12.

³ *Ibid.*, 8.

their own narratives, as they turned their nights into time for writing and other activities, which were not expected from them as laborers, they demonstrated that their expressions are concrete manifestations of aesthetics as a practice. Aesthetics in this sense is political because it disrupts the social. But it is a political action that is still within the social as it questions what is perceived and suggests new ways of perceiving and doing.

Here the link between aesthetics and politics is obvious as Rancière demonstrates that the assertion of equality is a political move of challenging the existing configuration of structures and entities (both real and perceived) in a community. Aesthetics is politics in as much as it has to do with the move to be perceived and recognised as subjects who were not originally counted as parts of the community and thus it challenges structures of exclusion. Politics is also aesthetics in the sense that it is about speaking and demanding to be recognised as part of the whole. This assertion in turn brings up an awareness of the distribution of the sensible which pertains to existing ways of doing, making, and seeing in the community.

Thus, the 'distribution of the sensible' is Rancière's unique way of framing the aesthetics of politics and the politics of aesthetics. Rancière describes aesthetics not just as a theory of affects and sensibilities or as a theory of artistic practices, but also as being directly linked to politics. Aesthetics for him primarily has to do with what is made visible, perceivable, and speakable by existing symbolic and material divisions, separations, and hierarchies within society. Hence, it is historical, material, and political. What is sensible, what can be perceived by the senses, and what can be the subject of discourse is dependent on the structure that allows it to be seen or conceals it. Artistic practices can reveal what can be seen, said, and done in a given historical period. They can also show how this order can be challenged, notably by showing another way of being, doing, and making. There is always a parallel between the artistic and the social as revealed by the distribution of the sensible. In the following section, I am going to discuss in detail the dynamics of aesthetics and politics in Rancière through his notion of the regimes of the arts, which pertain to his alternative approach to aesthetics which take into consideration the overlapping paradoxes and contradiction in its development.

The Politics of Aesthetics

Rancière's early writings from *Reading Capital* to *Disagreement* have made explicit that the central concern of his oeuvre is the question of politics. However, the links that he establishes between aesthetics and politics have also been present in his work from these early writings. The definition of politics as having to do with challenging hierarchies and changing the

distribution of the sensible through the assertion of equality by individual subjects and communities, as well as Rancière's focus on the writings of the proletarians in his archival work, demonstrate the connection that he proposes between aesthetics and politics.

In his later texts, after the publication of *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Rancière deepened his analysis of the link between aesthetics and politics. Still taking equality as the fundamental assumption, Rancière's discussions now focus on what he calls aesthetic modernity or the aesthetic regime of arts as a period where democracy has become a real possibility. The politics of aesthetics highlights the emergence of a new aesthetic experience given the numerous, complicated relation between social and political actions on the one hand and the conditions of perception and expression on the other within the historical development of artistic representation and the new 'distribution of the sensible'. Rancière devotes the discussion to the history of the paradoxical links between the aesthetic paradigm and the political community.⁴

The view of aesthetics as primarily pertaining to what is visible and speakable, hones in on the interplay between perception, representation, aesthetic practices, and the implications of these in a broader configuration of a society. At the core of Rancière's aesthetics is that it is in fact political. In order to show this alternative view of both aesthetics and politics, he uses a descriptive approach or what he calls the regimes of the arts to fully take into account the various elements of the interrelation across hierarchies and paradigms of aesthetic practices. For Rancière: "The important thing is that the question of the relationship between aesthetics and politics be raised at the level of the sensible delimitation of what is common to the community, the forms of its visibility and of its organization."⁵ The three regimes of the art is a counternarrative to histories of modern aesthetics that aims to delineate clearly the specific character of art in particular time frames and how the aesthetic configurations affect the politics of the time. Gabriel Rockhill describes that for Rancière, "Rather than there being determined systems that indiscriminately impose themselves on the totality of artistic production within a given time frame, there are competing and overlapping regimes that are racked by internal and external contradictions."⁶ The regimes of the sensible reveal that artistic and social practices overlap and are not strictly chronological as other histories of art describe it. For instance,

⁴ Jacques Rancière, *Aisthesis: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art*, trans. by Zakir Paul (London: Verso, 2013).

⁵ Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 13.

⁶ Gabriel Rockhill, "Introduction: Through the Looking Glass, the Subversion of the Modernist Doxa," in Jacques Rancière, *Mute Speech: Literature, Critical Theory, Politics*, trans. by James Swenson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 16.

there are forms of representation and expression in the modern aesthetic regime which function on the ethical principle.⁷ The regimes of the art show the tensions, paradoxes, and contradictions that arise out of the interplay between aesthetics and politics in each specific regime. These contradictions are themselves meant to show us opportunities for new ways of doing things both at the social level and at the level of representation and expression.

Rancière wants to offer a counternarrative or counterhistory of aesthetic modernity against influential histories and philosophies of art that champion linear accounts of the history of aesthetic practices. He is critical of the approaches to aesthetics that fail to take into account the overlaps and paradoxes within the development of aesthetic representations and the historical context within which they developed because many of these approaches forgot to take into consideration the relationship between artistic practices and society. The regimes approach is the method to contest common approaches to art in the humanities, which tend to focus on the development of art alone without taking into account the context in which this development took place. In particular, Rancière aims at criticizing formal histories of art that argue that the development of art is towards the perfection of a medium, for example, from classical to abstract painting, or the metaphysical/teleological view about the end of art.⁸

As a counternarrative, Rancière employs a descriptive method that carefully defines the basic features of the historical understanding of art and art forms in each historical configuration which he calls the regimes of the art. The regimes of the art describe specific ways in which a given epoch conceives of the relationships between discourse, reality, especially nature and society, those relationships defining the structural conditions of meaning and expression at each historical time.⁹ The three regimes of the arts are the ethical regime of images, the representative or poetic regime, and the aesthetic regime of modernity. Rancière puts much emphasis on the third regime because it summarizes the modern understanding of aesthetics. Through the aesthetic regime, Rancière identifies specific features of the understanding of art characteristic of modern society, including its contradictions and paradoxes.

Summarising the three regimes will give us a broader perspective of the relationships between the social realm, the frames of social perception, and the aesthetic practices that run parallel to it. Such move will also allow

⁷ Some novels, poetry, theater, and screenplays written in the modern period that are focused on projecting coherent narratives meant to portray the tragic hero as a noble character to be emulated.

⁸ Jean-Philippe Deranty, "Regimes of the Arts," in *Jacques Rancière: Key Concepts*, ed. by Jean-Philippe Deranty (Durham, UK: Acumen, 2010) 117.

⁹ *Ibid.*

us to see what opportunities are opened for subjects in the current historical context. Understanding how Rancière interprets the historicity of our current aesthetic regime is therefore fundamental to understanding his concept of political subjectivity.

The Regimes of Art

Ethical Regime

The ethical regime of the arts is concerned with the origin, truth content, purpose, and uses of images. Rancière describes this regime, thus: "In this regime, it is a matter of knowing in what way images' mode of being affects the *ethos*, the mode of being of individuals and communities."¹⁰ Images are believed to affect the ways of doing and making in a particular community and therefore the question revolves around its truthfulness. Plato's criticism of art as an imitation twice removed from truth and of the artist who simulates reality in false images and transforms it into poetry, painting, and theatre is the archetype of this regime.

There is no such thing as an isolated work of art as artistic representations take place within ways of doing and making. Images thus have direct implications on social reality as they take place in the division of labor in the society. In this regime, art is not understood as mere art but always in conjunction to how it could possibly shape the individuals within a community and the community as a whole. Artistic images have an instructional value for the citizens. This is the reason why Plato puts the artists who make copies of simple appearances among the lowest citizens of his republic. The ethical regime is not limited to ancient Greece but also applies to the analyses of representations in the present which assess the value of art forms in terms of their influence on the mind of their audiences.

Representative Regime

The second regime of the arts is the representative regime which traces its main influence from Aristotle and flourished in the period of the *belles lettres* during the 17th and 18th centuries.¹¹ This regime identifies the substance of the arts *via* the couple poiesis/mimesis. It is "mimetic" inasmuch as it is in this period that art developed forms of normativity that stipulated the conditions of good imitation and defined art as the practice of good

¹⁰ Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 16.

¹¹ Rockhill, "Introduction: Through the Looking Glass, the Subversion of the Modernist Doxa," 10.

imitation. In this regime, imitations are recognized as exclusively belonging to art and assessed within this framework. This regime is at the same time “poetic” since it identifies art through a classification of ways of doing and making.¹² Most importantly, this regime is called “representative” because it is the notion of representation that organizes the connection between the ways of doing, making, seeing, and judging. The representative regime “establishes the singularity of art but also the identity with the forms of life that it is connected to.”¹³

There are four major principles that structure the representative regime of arts as described by Rancière in *Mute Speech*. The principle of fiction pertains to the emphasis on the representation of action through stories. As Rancière writes in *Mute Speech*, “the essence of the poem is the representation of actions and not the use of a certain language.”¹⁴ Fiction gives the license to portray a narrative that makes sense of the world within a given space and time, thus breaking away from Plato’s concern with the truthfulness of the artistic image. The second principle is the principle of genericity which pertains to the arrangement of actions following a specific genre. The genre provides “the necessary inscriptions of the functional arrangements of action.”¹⁵ It dictates the rules on how actions should be represented in a narrative, how a story should be told, and how characters should be made to act and speak. This connects it to the third principle which is the principle of appropriateness. This principle structures the “hierarchy of represented subjects,”¹⁶ how the actions of the characters should be appropriate to what they are representing, how they should speak, and what language is proper to the character being represented. This institutes a division between high and low, noble and common, superior and inferior. Lastly, the fourth principle is the principle of actuality. This principle dictates the primacy of speech as act and performance in the present. Speech is the highest expression of intelligibility, “a rhetoric of contemporary existence, a way of life.”¹⁷ Artistic practices in this regime focus on the verbal articulation of the meaning of the world. In the representative regime, above any other form of expression and representation, speech is of primary importance since it is the medium through which the meaning of the world is made to make sense. Rancière summarizes all these four principles in the following way:

¹² Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 16–17.

¹³ Rockhill, “Introduction: Through the Looking Glass, the Subversion of the Modernist Doxa,” 17.

¹⁴ Rancière, *Mute Speech*, 43.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

... the primacy of action over characters, narration over description, the hierarchy of genres according to the dignity of their subject matter, and the primacy of speaking, of speech in actuality—all of these elements figure into an analogy with a full hierarchical vision of the community.¹⁸

These four principles are those from which the third regime, i.e. the aesthetic regime of the arts, breaks away. Even in the present times, however, it remains operative just like the ethical regime. For instance, the Hollywood film industry have produced commercial films with standardised plots where audiences can identify with the characters because of what these characters represent based on an implicit normative view of propriety.¹⁹

The Aesthetic Regime

The third and the most important regime of the arts for Rancière, since it is at the heart of contemporary period, is the aesthetic regime of the arts. The aesthetic regime of the arts is Rancière's name for artistic modernity, in contrast to the Platonic ethical regime and the Aristotelian representative regime. It is characterized by the reversal of the four principles that structure the previous representative regime. The principle of fiction gives way to the primacy of language. The emphasis is no longer on stories that are told to make sense of the world but rather in the power of expression. The genre is dismantled by the principle of the equality of all objects of description. Anything can be spoken about and there are no more prescriptions about who is supposed to speak and about what particular topic. The principle of decorum is overturned by the indifference of style in relation to the subject represented. Style becomes an absolute manner of seeing things, in which there are no longer base or beautiful subjects. Lastly, writing replaces performative speech. In the aesthetic regime of the arts, "the privileged space of the theatre, the consecrated domain of speech as act and efficacious rhetoric gives way to the novel as the democratic letter that wanders without a privileged place."²⁰ Silent things take on a language of their own and meaningless objects become systems of signs.²¹ The identification of art no longer occurs *via* a division of ways of doing and making but is based on

¹⁸ Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics* 16–17.

¹⁹ Jacques Rancière, *Film Fables*, trans. by Emiliano Battista (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 3.

²⁰ Rockhill, "Introduction: Through the Looking Glass, the Subversion of the Modernist Doxa," 14.

²¹ A particular example that Rancière repetitively uses is Victor Hugo's cathedral of stones. See *ibid.*

distinguishing a sensible mode of being specific to modern aesthetic regime. Rancière describes it thus:

In the aesthetic regime artistic phenomena are identified by their adherence to a specific regime of the sensible, which is extricated from its ordinary connections and is inhabited by a heterogeneous power, the power of a form of thought that has become foreign to itself: a product identical with something not produced, knowledge transformed into non-knowledge, logos identical with pathos, the intention of the unintentional, etc.²²

The overturning of the principles of the representative regime by the aesthetic regime which I have just highlighted is thus premised upon a new sensorium, that is to say, a new connection between how individuals feel the world and how the world appears to them. The fundamental consequence of this new sensorium is that there is a detachment of discourse and meaning from any secure, essential, fixed, hierarchy-based reference which could be supported by an absolute objective or social reality. Thus we have a new regime of thinking about art in which “art is defined by its being the identity of a conscious procedure and an unconscious production.”²³ In this new regime where logos and pathos become intertwined, the movement from meaninglessness to meaning is coupled with the constant possibility of a movement from meaning to meaninglessness. Writing is the practice that typically captures and fully realizes this new vision of meaning.

Writing is thus the new favoured mode of speech in the aesthetic regime of arts. It takes hold and mobilizes the erring letter that wanders nomadically and is orphaned from its essential origins. By doing so, it asserts equality as it dismantles all the hierarchies established in the previous poetic regime. From now on, anything can be said about any topic by anyone. There is never a closure of discourse and everything is potentially meaningful. Anyone can express themselves and is entitled to witness their own situation or discuss external situations through their own words. Since there is no longer an essential and hierarchical basis that anchors meaning and definition to either an objective or social reference, the letter is available to anyone. Rancière refers to this new expressive material made available in the new regime as the democratic letter, the orphan or the erring letter, which has no specific origin and pre-determined structure. It “sets the stage for subsequent

²² Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 22–23.

²³ Jacques Rancière, *The Aesthetic Unconscious*, trans. by Debra Keates and James Swenson (UK: Polity Press, 2009), 28.

confrontations between the anarchic power of literarity and the hierarchical distribution of bodies.”²⁴ The democracy of the erring letter is thus not merely descriptive of its wandering nature but, more importantly for us, is normative and political since it inherently challenges authorities and contests the exclusions of the representative mode of seeing and saying in the world.

In talking about writing as the medium of the aesthetic regime of the arts, Rancière took his cue from Plato who criticized writing as a form of mute speech. For Plato, Rancière argues, writing is “considered to be a mute *logos*, speech that is incapable of saying what it says differently or of choosing not to speak.”²⁵ Writing is thus ‘mute speech’ in two different ways. First it is the capacity of signification that is inscribed in all bodies. For instance, in Victor Hugo’s novel *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831), a cathedral of silent stones that speak replaces the speech of the human beings and becomes the heart of the novel.²⁶ In this sense, writing is mute speech as it brings *logos*, meaning and signification to nonhuman bodies and objects, thus attesting to the Romantic assertion, ‘everything speaks.’

There is however another dimension of mute speech. It pertains to the movement from *logos* to *pathos*, from what speaks and what is meaningful to the absurdity at the heart of meaning. Rancière describes this second form of ‘mute speech’ as “a soliloquy, speaking to no one and saying nothing but the impersonal and unconscious conditions of speech itself.”²⁷ It is the voiceless speech of an objective power which resists full expression in *logos*. There is a force in the things themselves that resists meaning. *Logos* can never fully capture the world, the sensible, precisely because everything is potentially meaningful. The world resists a full transparency of *logos* because infinite scope for meaning in the world means that *logos* can never get to the bottom of its own conditions, can never reach to a final principle where it goes free in full transparency.

The aesthetic regime of the arts thus mirrors the reality of democracy regime. In principle, where anyone and even anything can speak, equality is asserted. The present condition of modernity and the atmosphere of political equality brought about by democracy therefore come with a freedom of expression in a very radical sense. This proliferation of the heteronomous sensible brought about by the aesthetic revolution is precisely what Plato was

²⁴ Rockhill, “Introduction: Through the Looking Glass, the Subversion of the Modernist Doxa,” 8.

²⁵ Rancière, *The Aesthetic Unconscious*, 32.

²⁶ Rockhill, “Introduction: Through the Looking Glass, the Subversion of the Modernist Doxa,” 13.

²⁷ Rancière, *The Aesthetic Unconscious*, 393.

wary of in his critique of the orphan letter. For Rancière, Plato's critique of writing is an early sign of the realisation of the risks of democratic literarity.²⁸ Democracy is the regime of the orphan letter which does not follow any pre-given rules and continuously asserts equality that results to a democratic distribution of the sensible. The letter distorts already established spaces of meaning wherever it travels as it opens discourse to multiple possible meanings and is available to multiple speakers for a multiplicity of audiences. Rancière interprets Plato's fear in the following way: "Democracy is the regime of writing, the regime in which the perversion of the letter is the law of the community. It is instituted by the spaces of writing whose overpopulated voids and overly loquacious muteness rends the living tissue of communal ethos."²⁹

Amidst the democratic, aesthetic regime of the arts stands a subject who speaks but whose speech is resisted by the pathos of the world. She who speaks encounters the pathos in logos through a body with feelings and experiences. And being part of this modern regime of the arts, the subject can speak meaningfully about her experiences. Furthermore, what makes this possible is the world itself because the pathos of speech within the subject is also the pathos of things which have meaning. When individuals speak, they are not talking about just their individual subjective experience but at the same time they present the world as a space of contestation. Underneath the psychology of the subject is a world that is open to anyone.

However, the same subjects experience moments of self-doubt and helplessness because while the erring letter allows individuals and objects to speak, "the pure suffering of existence and the pure reproduction of the meaninglessness of life" are also at work.³⁰ This ambiguity of the modern predicament sets the limitations to the political power of aesthetics. Since the aesthetic regime of the arts is both at the same time the realm of pathos and logos, the subject is caught up in a struggle within it.

The only way out of this contradiction is through the assertion of creative action by the subject that is in the middle of it all, the subject who experiences the sensible. Despite the fact that this subject can always be overwhelmed by pathos, overwhelmed by the absence of a secure foundation for logos, the same subject can always struggle to find means to make sense of its experiences. In this limitation and obscurity at the heart of the discourse of modernity, who is exactly the subject of politics and what is the role of the subject for politics?

²⁸ Rockhill, "Introduction: Through the Looking Glass, the Subversion of the Modernist Doxa," 16.

²⁹ Rancière, *Mute Speech*, 95.

³⁰ Rancière, *The Aesthetic Unconscious*, 39.

The Political Subject in the Aesthetic Regime of Arts

Given that the aesthetic regime is the realm of the letter, which both at the same time disrupts established hierarchies and opens up a new world of sensibilities, what becomes of the political subject? What does it mean to be a political subject in a period of multiple available meanings? The aesthetic regime of the arts reveals a dimension of the political subject that seems to contradict Rancière's position in his early works where he defined politics as an act of discourse and claiming one's right to speech.³¹ Caught up in pathos and logos, the subject unfolds as a subject who does not know, shaken by the loosening of ties between bodies and meanings brought about by the aesthetic revolution yet struggling to make sense of all these experiences. Rancière shows that the subject's struggle to get out of the contradiction does not stop it from being a political subject. In fact, the definition of what is 'political' now involves the realm of sensibilities. The capacity to feel, dream, hope, and even refuse action is very much part of political mobility and political subjectivity. The subject through its bodily commitment, whether in choosing to act or to be passive, "speaks" not necessarily through words.

The Aesthetic Subject: Logos in Pathos, Pathos in Logos

Rancière has made it clear that the aesthetic regime has liberated the subject from the hierarchies and structures of representation. And yet in this new revolution which has brought about an anarchy of sensibilities, the subject is in danger of losing its own voice. Rancière who is aware of the possibility of the subject being lost in obscurity, poses the question in *The Flesh of Words*: "How can the wondering 'I' of the poet who has been liberated from the hierarchies of representation become visible and hearable in aesthetic modernity where there is both passivity and movement?"³² The question makes us aware of the contradiction that the subject is caught up in the aesthetic regime. On the one hand, the subject has been freed from the constraints of hierarchical structures of the representative regime and yet, on the other hand, the democratic character of the aesthetic regime itself threatens to drown this very subject into meaninglessness, notably the meaninglessness of action.

Rancière first explores this phenomenon of subjectivity within the aesthetic regime through literature. In *Mute Speech*, he talks about "writing" and the notion of the 'orphan letter' as playing a major role in the displacement of the subject amidst modernity. What the orphan letter does is

³¹ Here, I am specifically referring to *Disagreement*.

³² Jacques Rancière, *The Flesh of Words: The Politics of Writing*, trans. by Charlotte Mendell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 9.

bring the subject into a sensory level of experience, awaken her sensibilities through words or what Rancière describes as the “sensory coming into being of reason” that would eventually allow the poet to “wander like a cloud.”³³ In short, the orphan letter allows for the subject to confront her experience by materially representing her thoughts and her experiences. As Rancière describes in the following words: “A principle of the politics of the sensory: against the hierarchies of representation, poetics is identified with a general aesthetic that expresses the laws of feeling, the conveyance of sensation in general.”³⁴

Indeed, the aesthetic regime of the arts is a regime of sensation and the orphan letter dictates the new rule of this regime which is itself the lack of any pre-given rules. The subject is brought face to face with the intensity of her experience, the validity of her thoughts and the depth of her misfortunes which in other regimes of art would have been deemed as foolish and insignificant. Since the pathos of the subject is also the pathos of the things in the world, the world itself is a key component of this unfolding of sensibilities. As the subject discloses itself in the world, it also reveals the logos of the world where it belongs. By grabbing hold of the letter, the subjects can now express themselves and account for their place in the world. Nonetheless, they remain stuck in the world. This is what we can draw from the example of the carpenter Gauny. Gauny’s days in the workshop are lost in the grim hours of labor. Yet he finds the time to write about trees, birds, the towering buildings outside the workshop windows, and about his imagined ownership of the room whose floors he himself installed. This paradigmatic example shows how the ‘erring’ letter functions as the tool of the subject to make sense of the meaninglessness of his experience. Gauny writes in the manner of the great bourgeois poets of his time about the forlornness of his working conditions, hence we witness how the pathos of the worker’s condition is translated into logos.

This seemingly chaotic description of the subject as caught up in logos and pathos is best described in *The Aesthetic Unconscious*. No longer is the subject the subject of reasoned and logical utterances but she is the carrier of the power of thought and non-thought, the pathos of not knowing and the unconscious drive to know. Rancière likens the subject of the aesthetic regime to the tragic hero Oedipus whom he describes as the defective subject whose drive is “the pathos of knowledge: the maniacal relentless determination to know, the furor that prevents understanding, the refusal to recognize the truth in the form in which it presents itself, the catastrophe of unsuitable knowing, a knowing that obliges one to withdraw from the world of

³³ *Ibid.*, 13.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

visibility.”³⁵ Oedipus best represents the experience of the subject within aesthetic modernity as he embodies the “tragic identity of knowing and not knowing, of action undertaken and pathos undergone.”³⁶ As Oedipus withdraws from a world of visibility, we come to an understanding of how the pathos of the things threatens to overwhelm the subject:

The aesthetic unconscious, consubstantial with the aesthetic regime of art, manifests itself in the polarity of this double scene of mute speech: on the one hand, a speech written on the body that must be restored to a linguistic signification by a labour of deciphering and rewriting; on the other hand, the voiceless speech of a nameless power that lurks behind any consciousness and any signification, to which voice and body must be given.³⁷

Oedipus in fact embodies a way of knowing that is in contradiction to how in general we have always been taught about knowledge being a subjective act of grasping an objective reality. Instead, he demonstrates a kind of knowing by way of affectation, passion, or even sickness of a living being all the while aiming for rational understanding.³⁸ Going back to the example of the 19th century workers who managed to produce their own writings, these workers ‘know’ their conditions which may not necessarily be similar to how the thinkers knew—an objective, abstract, matter-of-factly kind of knowledge. The workers know subjectively through their bodies, passion, and experiences; a kind of knowing that is full of pathos and of subjectivity, being borne out of the very fabric of the affects, passions, and embodied experience of the workers themselves. Yet these workers also signify their pathos through logos. They revealed meaning in their experiences through their journals and poems.

Within the aesthetic regime of the arts, there are different regimes of sensibility and activity, which are either positive or negative for the subject. There is the manic, hyperactivity without logos as exemplified by Oedipus. He is the hero who does not know, wants what he does not want, acts by suffering, and speaks through muteness.³⁹ Hence, we have a subject who acts without a clear goal or does not know what it wants, who speaks without any intended meaning. There is also the passive subject who withdraws into the

³⁵ Rancière, *The Aesthetic Unconscious*, 19.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 41.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁹ Rancière, *Mute Speech*, 52.

total opposite of this manic activity, a subject who lacks a drive to do anything, inactive, apathetic, as exemplified by some examples that Rancière described in *Aisthesis*.⁴⁰ The positive side of this is that these limitations of the subject also open the door to endless potentialities for the same subject who possesses a body. The embodied subject can engage in the political act of dissent by interrupting the logos not just through the flesh of words but also through the flesh of the body.

This is the case of the subject in the aesthetic regime of arts. The subject is trapped in the dilemma of having the means of pure expression about its thoughts, feelings, and sensations and yet the opening of the multiplicity of sensibilities around this very subject presents a formidable challenge. In fact, Rancière's questions include how can the sensible fabric of subjective experience find means of expressions in the aesthetic regime wherein the sensible is disclosed and discloses a world where everything is up for grabs? Or how many ways are there to be both at the same time logical but not really understand one's meaning? After outlining the basic characteristics of the aesthetic regime through literature in *Mute Speech*, Rancière extends his questioning into how bodies become the vessel of the sensible in everyday experience. Here we see Rancière moving beyond politics as discourse to a politics which involves the subject's material body. The next section explores another dimension involved in this aesthetic modernity, which is focused on finding out what bodies can possibly teach us about politics.

Speaking Bodies

In the texts that followed *Mute Speech* from *The Flesh of Words* until *Aisthesis*, Rancière began to increasingly focus on what he called in *Aisthesis* as "bodies that speak." This expression pertains to the embodied subject of aesthetic modernity who, as described above, is confronted by a deep, mysterious, unconscious sensible that seeks to incarnate itself in the fabric of our sensible experience. Rancière identifies the different ways of being a body that arrests established logos, messes up the distribution of the sensible, and opens up new modalities of "poietic" action. He issues an invitation to explore this alternative way of becoming a political subject in the aesthetic regime. In the aesthetic regime of arts, we can begin to explore how bodies speak and thereby challenge established dimensions and invent new forms of life. The purpose of this exploration is to show how, through the discovery of various potential dimensions of the body, new meanings become possible.

⁴⁰ Jean-Philippe Deranty, "The Symbolic and the Material: A Review of Jacques Rancière's *Aisthesis: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art* (Verso 2013)," in *Parrhesia* 18 (2013), 139–144.

This idea of speaking bodies could first be glimpsed in *Proletarian Nights* and then re-emerged in Rancière's later writings on mute speech and literature. In the proletarian encounter with literature, he described how the new language of the aesthetic regime became merged with bodies. We have proletarians who were suffering in the work that they do and who, upon encountering the erring letter, became aware of how their own subjective utterances were also political. As a paradigmatic example, Rancière's favorite joiner-philosopher Gauny, in his journals, suggested that one must walk from morning to night.⁴¹ This body that insists on walking claims its independence by revelling in the enjoyment of the physical space where it exists. Gauny's body occupies the space that is being deprived from it as a worker. He rebels by trying to be everywhere where he is not expected to be. Underneath the words used by Gauny to articulate his "cenobitic" philosophy and beyond the words of the philosopher who rediscovers them, it is through the simple actions of the body that one becomes a visible political subject. The suffering proletarian's body, his gesture of putting down his tools and looking outside the window and the practice of spending his time in walking around the city is as equally political as appropriating the words of the bourgeois poets in his journals. Political subjects are in fact embodied subjects, subjects who are enclosed within bodies, physical subjects made of flesh, bones, and blood, who engage in politics by mobilising bodily experiences and affects.

We find the same use of bodies in the works of poets who began to incorporate in their poetry figures of dead and abandoned children, as well as sweaty bodies and idiotic utterances of the proletarian. The best example of this for Rancière is Rimbaud's references to the conditions of the workers in the century within which he lived:

New poetry for Rimbaud must be identified with the whole of language. His fate is necessarily linked to the utopia of the new language and of reconciled bodies. Rimbaud travels through this utopia and undoes it by accompanying it with other music: the speech of an uncounted, the idiot romance of obscure misfortune.⁴²

This new poetry that emerged found a way to bring together the embodied experiences of workers and the suffering and misfortunes of the proletarian class with the lyric verses of the poets. These workers who are depicted in the

⁴¹ "When one disposes of oneself in absolute independence, one must walk from morning to night." Gauny quoted in Jacques Rancière, *Proletarian Nights: The Worker's Dream in Nineteenth-Century France*, trans. by John Drury (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 84.

⁴² Rancière, *The Flesh of Words*, 65.

representative regime as being beneath meaningful relevance are suddenly subjects who speak through their bodies in the new regime. This means that the passivity and apathy which are attributed to them by the representative regime are not sophisticated enough. There is something essential in this newfound attention to the embodiment of the subject of the aesthetic regime. Aside from the poets awakening the proletarians to their capacities to think, Rancière brings to the fore the contrast between the representative versus the aesthetic regime's treatment of the body of the subject and the new potentials for expression and action.

In fact, in *Aisthesis*, Rancière performs an exhaustive study of the type of bodily potentialities opened up by the aesthetic regime. In his review of the book, Deranty has defined the many norms that are at play in Rancière's quasi-phenomenological description of the subject's representation and place in the aesthetic regime in contrast to the representative regime: (1) the contrast between the active and the passive where passivity is viewed as low status and a pathological state; (2) the body as means and medium of action in contrast to a functional body caught up internally and externally in the logic of means and ends, cause and effect; (3) the body as an organism obeying the laws of good proportion between its different parts versus a principle defining beauty as harmony without necessarily any care about proportion; (4) the body as one fully articulated and integrated entity in contrast to the anarchy of parts; and finally, (5) the body as unitary, expressive centre of affect, perception, and thought versus anarchy of affects and passions.⁴³

The shift in the representation of bodies within the aesthetic regime of arts ushers in a new dimension of political subjectivity, which takes the material condition of the body as a means of expression of the sensible within itself when the body becomes something outside of itself. One of Rancière's more recent works, *Aisthesis* shows the different ways of being an embodied subject that disrupts the distribution of the sensible in the aesthetic regime of arts. For this article, I will discuss Loïe Fuller's serpentine dance as an example of this idea of the embodied subject within the aesthetic regime.

In Loïe Fuller's "Dance of Light," the 'figure' of the body, according to Rancière, sums up two things in one. "It is the literal, material, presence of a body that is at the same time, the poetic operation of metaphor, condensation and metonymic displacement: the body outside itself condensing the late evening, the body in movement writing the latent poem of the dreamer 'without the apparatus of a scribe.'"⁴⁴ In Fuller's performance, the body represents the complex layerings of the sensible inside of itself

⁴³ Deranty, "The Symbolic and the Material," 142.

⁴⁴ Rancière, *Aisthesis*, 99.

through a manner of expression that is outside of itself. The movement made by the dancer in the centre is invisible but what becomes visible are the many different shapes that are formed through the absent figure of the dancer. The body of the dancer merged with the fabric with which it is clothed becomes invisible and transforms itself into various forms, a butterfly or a flower through a play of movements, light, and shadows, far from the body of a human being that it really is. The *Serpentine Dance* defies the laws of good proportion through its constant movement and fluidity without necessarily representing any sort of wholeness and geometrical symmetry. This is a body that is energetic, dynamic, but lacking a unity within itself. Here is a frenetic body that destroys common representations of what role bodies should play in a dance performance. There is no narrative but constant movement which is devoted to its own disappearance as a body and a combination of theatrical lights and movement. In its frenetic pacing and creation of numerous sensible forms, it shows the constant transformation of logos into pathos, the transition from meaning to a reproduction of the meaninglessness of life that is however meaningful.

Fuller's serpentine dance thus, in the analysis of Rancière is political because in general, it shatters the laws of the regime of representation about what it means to be a body that is expected to follow the laws of good proportion. More interestingly, it does this destruction through the use of the body itself, by showing another way of being a body. Fuller reinvents the body in classical representation by shifting the focus of attention from the central figure of the dancer to a condensation of the subjective will and action where the mass of flesh that is the dancer and the movement of this dancer becomes a pure act, which is entirely material. Subjectivity therefore becomes a pure movement, thus a subjectivity without a subject but a pure abstract form. The dance becomes a pure form of contestation of the hierarchy of representation according to causality, symmetry, and good proportion. Moreover, the use of "industrial accomplishment" (light, electricity, smoke) in Fuller's performance to destroy the monotony of machine and the production of what makes sense, the beautiful and the useful, is the critique of the industrial period that itself feeds on the logic of causality also contributes to this contestation of the industrial stage itself. Rancière avers that, "through artifice they re-invent the very forms in which sensible events are given to us and assembled to constitute a world."⁴⁵ And in the reinvention, more importantly, it opens the possibility of being a new body in the aesthetic regime.

Fuller's example demonstrates how every single body has a political potential to contest visibility and perception. She reinvents her own body in

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 100.

order to critique the mechanical logic of everyday life in the capitalist structure of production. They demonstrated possibilities of how the pathos of the aesthetic regime is embodied to destroy the logos of mechanical reproduction by mimicking the frenetic movement and energy of this mechanical life.

From Rancière's aesthetic writings we can pinpoint the role that bodies play in politics. If politics is about the subject's dissensus, the arresting of organised time and structured space, and a rare moment of interrupting already established hierarchies and structures, Rancière demonstrates in *Aisthesis* how politics is not performed by wills and words alone, but just as importantly by embodied subjects whose gestures, and not just speeches, can be modes of revolt. The affect of a body in a state of non-stop movement captures the pathos and the loss of reason that is characteristic of aesthetic modernity and thus functions as a critique of logos, order, hierarchy, and structure that in many ways create various forms of oppression. Modern art, not just high art as in the case of the *Serpentine Dance*, demonstrates new modes of being embodied subjects that participate in transforming our understanding of the pathos of the modern aesthetic regime.

Conclusion

The link that Rancière establishes between aesthetics and politics demonstrates to us that there are various ways of being a political subject in modernity. The erring letter has made meaning possible although it always entails an obscure dimension at the end which collapses and does not quite capture experience. The subjects that Rancière highlighted in *Aisthesis* are far from accepted representations of what political subjects are supposed to be since they deviate from the pregiven standards in their practices and this is precisely what makes them political. In their digression and disidentification, they challenge the distribution of the sensible and invent new forms of practices that traverse the obscure dimension of meaning in order to make visible the hidden pathos of life. Their manner of digression is not done merely at the level of discourse but in the level of the body and the sensible. Rancière seemingly contradicts his official position in *Disagreement* and moves beyond politics as discourse in his works on aesthetics and politics. The plastic form of a sculpture, the camera, immobile theatre, dance of light—all of these are forms of revolt against established representations and at the same time an attempt to capture the dilemma of the subject in the regime of arts.

Politics is never apart from embodied subjects. Despite the efforts of some thinkers to reduce politics to the notion of pure rational discourse, Rancière shows that the very core of politics can be rooted in the struggle and

confusion of the individual. The passive body in its unwillingness to do anything is a very powerful vessel of political action because it goes against expectations of how a body should behave. The same is true for overly active bodies, fragmented bodies, mechanical bodies, and so on. Their frenetic movements are visible critiques of the logic of the mechanical causality in the same manner that political disruptions transform the mechanisms of politics as police. This is the reason why the fragmented sculpture of a torso which represents a laid-back state of a hero is equally as powerful as a 19th century woman who forms an association of women workers. Both bodies demand perception as they both question existing perceptions; both bodies interrupt logos.

Artistic practices are political not necessarily because they represent virtues and values that should be emulated by their audiences but because of their break from representation by asserting other possibilities which require presumption of equality. Artistic practices teach the possibility that anyone can say (or not say) anything at any given moment. They therefore give way to moments of surprise that can shatter already established standards and rules. The artists and artworks that Rancière highlights in *Aisthesis* are similar to the proletarians of *Proletarian Nights* who acceded to forms of experience that had been denied them before. Now the worker is not the sole representative of the struggle for emancipation because artists too are political subjects who struggle to make sense of aesthetic modernity. These artists have shown in many ways how bodies can be utilised and they lived to dis-identify from standard norms by exploring a different side of fragmentation, passivity, fluidity, and silence—in other words, the infinite possible forms and state of the body.

All of these compelling ideas are present in Rancière's work on aesthetics and politics but the predominant reading of Rancière is mostly focused on the debate about his notion of politics. It seems that the understanding of Rancière's work on politics have been reduced to *Disagreement* along with scattered interest on his writings about film and education.⁴⁶ Reading his rich aesthetic writings can alert us to the way in

⁴⁶ Many of these uses of Rancière emphasize the radical democratic theory of disagreement, which first made him famous in the English-speaking academe when *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* appeared in an English translation in 1995. It was this translation of *Disagreement* that propelled Rancière into the limelight, whereas many of his writings up until then had remained limited to French readers. Prior to the translation of *Disagreement*, Rancière was already well known among labor theorists and post-Althusserians because of his work on *The Nights of Labor*, later re-published as *Proletarian Nights*. It was also because of the attention on *Disagreement* that an "official" orthodox reading of Rancière's work developed. This reading focused around the clarification of his idea of 'politics' and its discursive, eventual character rather than on the experiences of the political subjects, which he had substantially described notably in his earlier works. And although it made Rancière

which forms of experiences or artistic practices can be innovative tools for politics, most especially if the goal is to move away from representative politics. While there are attempts to put together aesthetics and politics, many of these efforts are still fixed at either the ethical or the representative regime. Rancière teaches us, however, that if effective changes are to be made and old ineffective systems are to be transformed, we must give space for creativity in a precarious wide variety of experiences and practices.

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influential among English-speaking thinkers, the focus on *Disagreement* generated a partial interpretation of his oeuvre that is concentrated on the discursive aspect of politics and political subjectivation.

A Revisiting of Heidegger's Thinking- Thanking and Zen's Non-rationality

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Abstract: This article is a comparative study between Heidegger's essential query in *What is Called Thinking* and Zen's Non-rationality. It takes its cue from Heidegger's pronouncement in *What is Called Thinking* that the most thought-provoking thing is that we are still not thinking. This article claims that bereft thinking, a product of our technological age, brings about the collapse of our essence, instead of ushering in authentic existence. In the process, we revisit Heidegger's question of Being that will ultimately lead us to the examination of the distinction between calculative and meditative thinking. The idea of thinking as a form of thanking—that is, a kind of thinking infused with thankfulness—is also highlighted as meditative thinking. Essential principles in Zen such as the *koan* is discussed to point out Zen's non-rationality, which frowns upon purely logical, discursive, pragmatic, and calculative thinking. This article claims that bereft thinking can be eliminated by taking the stance of meditative thinking and applying Zen's non-rationality. Hence, philosophy remains important as it allows us to challenge our current ways of thinking.

Keywords: Heidegger, Zen, calculative thinking, meditative thinking

Introduction

Martin Heidegger, in his work *What is Called Thinking?*, claims that the “most thought-provoking is that we are still not thinking.”¹ Following the path that Heidegger took when he questioned the entirety of western ontology, this re-evaluation of thinking also calls for a re-orientation and re-alignment of the way we understand thinking.

Heidegger writes:

¹ Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, trans. by J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 4.

On the basis of the Greeks' initial contributions towards an Interpretation of Being, a dogma has been developed which not only declares the question about the meaning of *Being* to be superfluous, but sanctions its complete neglect.²

According to him, ontology as we know it, from the Greeks, cannot account for the question of *Being* except in so far as beings appear as entities. However, he says, "The Being of entities 'is' not itself an entity."³ Hence, Heidegger's purpose in *What is Called Thinking* is to revisit, and ultimately, to clarify the role of philosophy today.

In the process, this paper will do a comparative analysis of what Heidegger means by thinking and what Zen calls non-rationality as an attempt to address the 'bereft thinking' observed in our society.

What is the role of philosophy in our time? How does Heidegger's thinking and Zen's non-rationality figure out in all of these? This Zen non-rationality points to the way of enlightenment of Zen or *satori*. The *satori* experience is rooted on the sudden enlightenment of the Buddha, which manifests itself as a silent transmission and is not the same as the calculative mind's acquisition and accumulation of knowledge.

Alfredo Co writes that "there is in Buddhism, a message that rises above the categories of reason, beyond the convention of everyday language."⁴ There is only so much that the calculative mind can do, but to be arrested in such a fashion is not the path of sudden enlightenment. "Shakyamuni did not gain enlightenment in a gradual ascent of degrees of knowledge, but rather attained it all at once."⁵ We may also recall how the chief disciple of the Buddha, venerable Mahakasyapa was awakened to the entirety of the Buddha's teachings by simply witnessing the Buddha smile as he raised and held a flower in silence.

It is the essential tradition of Zen that what cannot be conveyed by speech can nevertheless be passed on by 'direct pointing,' by some nonverbal means of communication without which the Buddhist experience

² Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1962), 2.

³ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁴ Alfredo Co, *Under the Bo-Tree ... On the Lotus Flower Philosophy of the Compassionate Buddha* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas, 2003), 44.

⁵ Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Enlightenment Origins and Meaning*, trans. by John C. Maraldo (Boston: Shambhala, 1979), 15.

could never have been handed down to future generations.⁶

According to DT Suzuki, this sudden enlightenment or abrupt seeing does not follow the rules of logic. He writes: “This does not take place as the result of reasoning, but when reasoning has been abandoned as futile, and psychologically when the will-power is brought to a finish.”⁷ Thus, by revisiting Heidegger’s *What is called thinking?* and Zen’s non-rationality, the status of philosophy is examined, showing why a re-evaluation of the current brand of thinking is a necessary and urgent task of contemporary philosophy.

What is Called Thinking?

In his collection of lectures, Heidegger presents the striking claim that, “*Most thought-provoking is that we are still not thinking*—not even yet, although the state of the world is becoming constantly more thought-provoking.”⁸ Here, Heidegger is saying that the task of thinking has become problematic in the sense that we are still not thinking. Thus, by saying that the most thought-provoking is that we are still not thinking, he indicates something alarming about what at present we consider as thinking. Is thinking like a chore that should be done for the sake of results? Can thinking be only a matter of scientific experiments to validate theories and hypotheses? Isn’t thinking that which has propelled our world to be what it is now, loaded with advanced technologies and art systems that have put man in a seemingly better position than in the past? Isn’t thinking the task of philosophers and have they not traced the history of thought to the time of Plato and Aristotle? Whereas the Aristotelian *sophia* is prompted by wonder at the nature of things, the Heideggerian *Seinsdenken* is prompted by wonder at the very fact that there is something.⁹ Now, if we are to equate thinking with any of these components or even slightly consider thinking as that which makes for an easy and ready fix for all possible contrivances of our being in the world, then perhaps. Heidegger was right all along—that what is most thought-provoking is that we are still not thinking.

“To answer the question “What is called thinking?” is itself always to keep asking, so as to remain underway.”¹⁰ This statement brings us to an

⁶ Allan Watts, *The Way of Zen* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 45.

⁷ Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, *Zen Buddhism: Selected writings of D.T. Suzuki*, ed. by William Barrett (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 223.

⁸ Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, 4.

⁹ Ted Sadler, *Heidegger & Aristotle: The Question of Being* (London: Athlone Press, 1996), 159.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 169.

earlier endeavor of Heidegger to revisit the question of Being. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger confronts the question of Being. Although the question has been examined and pursued, what it all amounts to is the presupposition of Being as the most universal concept, indefinable and self-evident. Now, given these prejudices, one is no longer tempted to ask: "What is Being?" Yet, Heidegger doggedly insisted on retracing and going back to that question.

"What Heidegger proposes is the study of Being from the starting point of Dasein, an authentic existence."¹¹ The authenticity of Dasein stems from the ontical and ontological priority of the question of Being. To be ontic is to consider all objects or entities but only in so far as they are things; whereas to be ontological is to ask about what it means *to be*. Thus, in order to reformulate Heidegger's question of Being, we do not just ask about being as ontic but we also strive to go deeper and proceed from an ontological inquiry of Being. This means that we have to start and come from all possible entities present in the world. We have to start with the ontic, and from there, sift through and pick that which is ontological. We do not just name any random object or thing; we have to come from that one, among all things, that has the capacity and is entirely equipped to inquire about Being. "Being cannot be analyzed as an entity, and hence the ontical analysis that makes use of categories—by which we describe entities—is in principle inadequate."¹² To see Being only in the form of categories will be limiting the possibilities of even the entirety of Being. To ask what it means *to be* at all is more than just subjecting the question to genus and differentia, as what Aristotle is doing. As we consider all possible entities, it is man that is most qualified and fit to be that entity which has the potential to be Dasein. Thus, it is man who is in the position to ask about himself. There is the potential for an honest inquiry about what it means *to be*—this, coming from a genuine vantage point, reveals man as Dasein, an authentic Being in the world.

And so, to go back to Heidegger's urgent claim that the most thought-provoking is that we are still not thinking, and to respond to this by saying that to think is to remain underway, draws a striking resemblance to his reformulation of the question of Being. To be underway is to continually ask about and be always in the process of thinking. Just as the title pointedly asks, "What is called thinking?" Heidegger took it upon himself not to directly answer this query by describing thinking to be this or that but rather, by immersing himself even further in thought. "The title question is designed

¹¹ Emerita Quito, "The Historical Concept of Being and Truth," in *A Life of Philosophy Festschrift in Honor of Emerita S. Quito* (De La Salle University Press, 1988), 562.

¹² Michael Gelven, *A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time* (Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1989), 29.

not to elicit an answer but to effect a transformation, a deepening of thought”¹³

Further, to return to Heidegger’s claim that what is most thought-provoking is that we are still not thinking, two things could be pointed out: it is one thing to claim that we are still not thinking, and it is quite another thing to also claim that the state of the world is most thought-provoking. To clarify these two points, we consider first the inquiry into what thinking is. Usually, the term thinking has something to do with the intellect at work for an intended output.

“Thinking becomes reduced to a ‘rationality’ that is a means to an end.”¹⁴ This kind of thinking is calculative thinking, and does not amount to anything but instrumental reasoning. In the *Discourse on Thinking*, Heidegger differentiates between calculative and meditative thinking:

Calculative thinking computes. It computes ever new, ever more promising and at the same time more economical possibilities. Calculative thinking races from one prospect to the next, Calculative thinking never stops, never collects itself. Calculative thinking is not meditative thinking, not thinking which contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything that is.¹⁵

Given these two kinds of thinking, one cannot discredit the importance of calculative thinking. Perhaps to a certain extent, in so far as the world needs to function, the calculative mood of thinking is appropriate. “Scientific thinking is classed by Heidegger as ‘calculative’ thinking, the kind of thinking that can be done by computers.”¹⁶ But then again, calculative thinking can only do so much. Although results may accumulate, no amount of calculative thinking can properly respond to the question of Being or what it means *to be*. The same is the case with the ontical nature of being. If we recognize objects merely as things in the world, then no great value or meaning may be drawn from them. Entities should be taken in an ontological manner in order to gain a deeper understanding than a mere checklist of what are at-hand. Thus, Heidegger’s reconsideration of the question of Being is pivotal to our

¹³ David Loy, *Nonduality A Study in Comparative Philosophy* (New York: Humanity Books, 1988), 165.

¹⁴ Brendt Dean Robbins, “Joyful Thinking-Thanking: A Reading of Heidegger’s *What is Called Thinking?*” in *Janus Head Journal*, 13 (2012), 13–21.

¹⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. by John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), 46.

¹⁶ John Macquarrie, *Heidegger and Christianity* (New York: Continuum Publishing, 1999), 78.

understanding of thinking beyond its operative, technical, and rational meaning. Such ontological thinking must come from a primordial pulse.

Heidegger says that our time is thought-provoking. "When Heidegger speaks of 'our thought-provoking time,' he is referring to our technological age."¹⁷ In an article titled "On the Origin of Nihilism—In View of the Problem of Technology and Karma," Akihiro Takeichi reiterates what Heidegger claims of the essence of technology: that it is not even technical. "Rather, it has a transcendental character which is unmanipulated by man, tools, or machines produced by man. It claims man and thereby, controls him."¹⁸ The article argues that both karma and the essence of technology are all about a repetition of human actions devoid of any sense and has its roots on ignorance, which Takeichi refers to as nihilism itself. Indeed, if we try to stand at a distance from ourselves and wonder how advanced we have become over the years, perhaps, the expected reaction would be one of pride and joy over what we have accomplished in the field of science and technology. But exactly how great have we become? Erich Fromm, in his book entitled *The Revolution of Hope*, writes:

A specter is stalking in our midst [a] completely mechanized society, devoted to maximal material output and consumption, directed by computers; and in this social process, man himself is being transformed into a part of the total machine, well fed and entertained, yet passive, unalive, and with little feeling.¹⁹

In the first part of *What is Called Thinking*, there is a repeated mention of Nietzsche and what the prophet Zarathustra calls the "wasteland."

With greater clarity than any man before him, Nietzsche saw the necessity of a change in the realm of essential thinking, and with this change the danger that conventional man will adhere with growing obstinacy to the trivial surface of his conventional nature²⁰

¹⁷ Robbins, *Joyful Thinking-Thanking*, 14.

¹⁸ Akihiro Takeichi, "On the Nature of Nihilism—In View of the Problem of Technology and Karma," in *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, ed. by Graham Parkes (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), 184.

¹⁹ Erich Fromm, *The Revolution of Hope: Toward a Humanized Technology* (New York, Evanston, and London: Harper & Row Publishers, 1968), 1.

²⁰ Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, 57.

It was Nietzsche who already saw a foreshadowing of what was to come, which was this steady downtrodden path thinking has become. Indeed, the wasteland grows as the vast gap between conventional thinking and that more primordial call to think, which is a going back to and a retrieval of Being from our forgetfulness of it. "Being withdraws in our technological age as the experience of thinking is reduced to calculative rationality."²¹ According to Heidegger, the technological worldview of our age (*Gestell*) drives essential thinking away from Being. So, the most thought-provoking time is at hand, the time of *Gestell*, and this is so because thinking has become merely calculative. Such calculative thought can bring us only to beings, never to Being. "Only thinking that is 'an event of Being' can be both means and goal, for only such thinking is sufficient unto itself and needs to accomplish nothing else."²² Thus, to remain in calculative thinking only widens the wasteland and intensifies the most thought-provoking thought that we are still not thinking.

Four-fold Way of Asking the Question

1. What does the word "thinking" signify?
2. What does the prevailing doctrine mean by thinking?
3. What is needed in order for us to accomplish thinking with essential rightness?
4. What is That which calls us into thinking?²³

The first question simply asks about the meaning of thinking. By asking what thinking signifies, we take a closer look at what thinking does. The second question calls to mind all the possible histories of the term "thinking" as we attempt to go back to the very first origin of thought and thinking. Such an endeavor brings us back to the Greeks and their highly esteemed concept of *logos*. The third question necessitates certain prerequisites before we can think with essential rightness. The fourth question points to *that* which calls us to think, or that which is the impetus for us to enter into the task of thinking. Heidegger considers the fourth question as the most important one. Once examined, one will come face to face with these conclusions:

1. Thinking does not bring knowledge as do the sciences.
2. Thinking does not produce usable practical wisdom.
3. Thinking solves no cosmic riddles.

²¹ Robbins, *Joyful Thinking-Thanking*, 14.

²² Loy, *Nonduality*, 166.

²³ Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, 157.

4. Thinking does not endow us directly with the power to act.²⁴

From here, it is evident that the question, "What is called thinking?" deserves more than a cursory glance; rather, it calls for a deepening of thought. To be called to think means to enter into something which is not a falling away from our nature, such as when we subject ourselves to mere scientific and calculative thinking. To be called to think involves a moving closer to this relationship which we are supposed to have not so much with beings as with Being. "For Heidegger, that which is worthy to be called 'thinking' must have a relation to Being."²⁵

Thinking-Thanking and Memory

After having gone through a myriad of possible approaches, Heidegger finally finds sanctuary in language where we can hope to clarify what we call thinking. He seems to be taking his cue from the language that is being presented to us which is reminiscent of his Letter on Humanism claiming that "language is the house of Being."²⁶ There seems to be a need to pay heed to language and listen to it before reading the signification of its terms.

The Old English *thencan*, to think, and *thancian*, to thank, are closely related; the Old English noun for thought is *thanc* or *thonc*—a thought, a grateful thought, and the expression of such a thought; today it survives in the plural *thanks*. The "thanc," that which is thought, the thought, implies the thanks.²⁷

Looking at the language makes one ask if thinking really is a form of giving thanks. And, if we continue further with our analysis, we will find the term memory coming very close to the equation since to thank someone is actually to think of that someone in remembrance. Such reminiscence is a thinking in the form of a memory. Thus, to have a memory is to remember someone or something in a recollection that is held closely with gratitude, with fond remembrance. "Originally, 'memory' means as much devotion: a

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 159.

²⁵ Macquarrie, *Heidegger and Christianity*, 78.

²⁶ Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. by David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1993), 217.

²⁷ Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, 139. "Closely connected with these words are the German *danken* and its English equivalent 'thank'; to thank someone is to have that person in one's memory and to think gratefully of him." Macquarrie, *Heidegger and Christianity*, 81.

constant concentrated abiding with something—not just with something that has passed, but in the same way with what is present and with what may come.”²⁸ Thus, we can say that real and non-compartmentalized thinking involves a standpoint of gratitude, a giving thanks. To think, to arrest our attention unto this calling is a gathering of thought, which allows for a communion with Being. This kind of thinking is clearly not done by the traditional and conventional calculative thinking; rather, it is what Heidegger calls meditative thinking. “A true thinking is more than an intellectual operation, it is a disposition infused with thankfulness.”²⁹ To remember a teacher, for example, is not only to memorize the instructions on certain ethical principles given, but also, in the process, allows the student to arrive at some level of insight about what it means to live. Thus, true thinking is more than just an intellectual play. Here, thinking is more than just the intellect at work, but rather, it is also infused with thankfulness, in the sense that the actual remembering fills one with an overwhelming sense of gratitude and meaning.

So far, we have retraced Heidegger’s question of Being in order to clear the way for the examination in *What is Called Thinking?* We have also pointed out the difference between calculative and meditative thinking, where meditative thinking is more original and more meaningful, infused with gratitude. We now cross to the other shore and look at Zen’s non-rationality. From here, we try to assess the importance or non-importance of reason and rationalization, of thinking and non-thinking in view of the state of philosophy today.

Zen’s Non-rationality

When we think of Zen Buddhism,³⁰ we may recall the story of how the Buddha, instead of his usual practice of dharma service in front of the entire congregation of monks, raised a flower and smiled, uttering nothing. Such an act was startling to everybody except for Mahakasyapa, who understood the full intent of the Buddha, and smiled back to his Master. No word was said, no handing down of teachings, except for the raising of the flower and the exchange of a smile between master and disciple that paved

²⁸ Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, 140.

²⁹ Macquarrie, *Heidegger and Christianity*, 82.

³⁰ Although Buddhism started in India, it is best to consider China to be the soil which cultivated Zen Buddhism. The kind of Buddhism that flourished in India was not exactly the kind that bloomed in China. Some aspects of Indian tradition did not blend well with the consciousness of the Chinese. So, what was purely and originally Indian awareness has been combined with the Chinese consciousness, and it is this special mixture that led to the growing awakening of Ch’an, also known as Zen, in Japan. See Christmas Humphreys, *Zen Buddhism* (London: Allen & Unwin Publishers, 1976), 20.

the way for the silent transmission of Zen. "The satisfaction the Buddha experienced in this case was altogether too deep, too penetrating, and too far-reaching in result to be a matter of mere logic."³¹

It is incidents like this which enable us to see the leanings of Zen to the non-rational, which requires the observance of silence and direct seeing or sudden enlightenment. Zen Buddhism is known for its irrational nature. It categorically rejects rationality, logic, and the conventional use of syllogistic assumptions to arrive at conclusions. It is beyond reason and is not under the clutches of the intellect in the articulation of its tenets. "... Zen thought is in opposition to the western rational way of thinking, an irrational, non-rational way of thinking."³²

Koan

One of the essential features of Zen is a *koan* that is supposed to be a method that would lead towards enlightenment. The Japanese Rinzai master Issh Miura writes:

The koan is not a conundrum to be solved by a nimble wit. It is not a verbal psychiatric device for shocking the disintegrated ego of a student into some kind of stability. Nor, in my opinion, is it ever a paradoxical statement except to those who view it from the outside. When the koan is resolved it is realized to be a simple and clear statement made from the state of consciousness which it has helped to awaken.³³

The nature of the *koan* lies between the Zen master and the pupil. The training that follows is supposed to be strictly adhered to as a form of reverence to the Zen master. "The pupil is expected to accord absolute obedience and authority to the master, and to hold him in almost higher respect than his own father—and in Asian countries this is saying a great deal."³⁴ And so the process goes such that the pupil receives the *koan* from the master and from there the pupil will meditate upon it usually in the Zen style of meditation.

Although it has been noted that Zen is beyond reason and logic, there is, in fact, a feature in Zen that, at first glance, would readily show that it is irrational and illogical. But a careful assessment of its nature will make one

³¹ Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism* (New York: Grove Press, 1949), 122.

³² Torataro Shimomura, "D.T. Suzuki's Place in the History of Human Thought," in *A Zen Life: D.T. Suzuki Remembered*, ed. by Masao Abe (New York: Weatherhill, 1986), 66.

³³ Dumoulin, *Zen Enlightenment*, 65.

³⁴ Watts, *The Way of Zen*, 163.

realize that it is a matter not just of distrust for the intellect and reason, but of a simple acknowledgment that both the intellect and reason are not sound instruments and mechanisms for enlightenment.

The problem with reason, according to the Buddhist seers, is that it becomes trapped in a limited, arbitrary, conditioned view of the world. Reason becomes entangled with our conditional biases, desires and aversions. It is limited by the categories we have been conditioned to accept by our linguistic and cultural communities, and our personal histories. This conditioned version of reason sets itself up as a tyrant, channeling our perception into limiting, pre-conceived categories and censoring all inputs from reality that would tend to reveal a bigger picture.³⁵

J.C. Cleary justifies why the Zen *koan* does not adhere to traditional thinking. In his book, *Meditating with Koans*, Cleary attempts to correct the common notion that the *koans* and Zen in general are anti-reason. In fact, it is not so much the case that Zen is anti-reason as that reason has its limitations and simply cannot embrace the breadth and depth of true enlightenment.

The enlightened wisdom which Buddhist teaching aims to activate includes the capacity for what is called 'differentiating wisdom'—the ability to accurately perceive the workings of complex, interlocking webs of cause and effect, and to formulate effective strategies for accomplishing the teaching mission of the Buddhas.³⁶

Further, Cleary asks how—if indeed Zen is anti-intellectual—has Zen managed to make such a profound impact on the intellectual world of East Asia?³⁷ And not just in East Asia but most especially in the West, since it is the Japanese Zen Buddhism that thoroughly attracted a large following even in the West.

Examples of *koans*:

1. When both hands are clapped a sound is produced; listen to the sound of one hand clapping.

³⁵ J.C. Cleary, *Meditating With Koans* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1992), 11.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

2. There is nothing true anywhere,
The true is nowhere to be seen;
If you say you see the true,
This seeing is not the true one.

3. Where the true is left to itself,
There is nothing false in it, which is Mind itself.
When Mind in itself is not liberated from the false,
There is nothing true, nowhere is the true to be found.³⁸

4. An example of the first koan that was directed to the sixth patriarch by the monk Myo (Ming) goes like this: When asked what Zen was, he said: *When your mind is not dwelling on the dualism of good and evil, what is your original face before you were born?*³⁹

Reading the different *koans*, one gathers that answering a *koan* directly would be impossible. Indeed, it is not in the nature of *koans* that one can answer them directly, especially if one is using one's conventional calculative mind. It may also seem like the answers to the *koans* may call for many distinct levels and that no immediate answer is readily available. "[D.T.] Suzuki repeatedly emphasizes that the Zen koan is nothing more than a paradox of rational thought, and is a method of breaking through from such rational thought."⁴⁰

Bereft Thinking

Although our age is technological, and we are far more advanced than any other period in our history, still, there is a call to pause and somehow detach ourselves from where we are and just observe what has become of the world. This may be hard indeed, for how can we actually be detached if we are already too deeply involved in what this world has made of us. Still, the call has never been more urgent, never been more dire and earnest, than today. The Socratic "know thyself" and "an unexamined life is not worth living" ring even more loudly in our times than ever before. Nietzsche's warning should never leave any stone unturned, "the wasteland grows!"⁴¹ In her book, *Eastern and Western Cultural Values: Conflict or Harmony*, To Thi Anh writes:

³⁸ Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, *Manual of Zen Buddhism* (London: Forgotten Books, 2007), 83.

³⁹ Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (New York: Grove Press, 1964), 104.

⁴⁰ Torataro, *D.T. Suzuki Remembered*, 79.

⁴¹ Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, 49 cites Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

Thus, the main protest against technology are put out in the name of nature, society, and the human person. Nature is devastated, forests are denuded, rivers, harbors, seacoasts polluted, the landscapes become ugly. Society is ravaged by the harsh imperatives of competition, the dissolution of family, of traditions, of faith. Human beings themselves are alienated from the environment and society, as well as from their own individual beings. The person is in danger of becoming a mere cog in the production-consumption thinking.⁴²

It is in this light that this article claims our time to be a time of bereft thinking. Our technological age may be bringing about the collapse of our essence, instead of authentic advancement. "Why can technology, which has lightened in a quasi-magic way human existence, be at the same time so dehumanizing?"⁴³ What seems to be praiseworthy, even wonderful, about technology, such as the recent scientific breakthroughs and their latest applications, could actually spell a drawback to our Being. This trend in thinking, which is highly calculative, is the kind that Heidegger deeply frowns upon. "The current conception of technology, according to which it is a means and a human activity, can therefore be called the instrumental and anthropological definition of technology."⁴⁴ This human activity, the call to endless repetitive action, faster speed, more demand, is exactly what Takeichi claims as nihilism itself; and just like karma, it reaps and sows as it is grounded on ignorance. This definition is not something that stands any dispute for even Heidegger would claim that it is uncannily correct.⁴⁵ He uses the word "uncanny" as a fitting description—indeed, a very strangely correct anthropological definition—of technology. But up to what extent is technology really only a means to an end? "Technology, which has been regarded throughout the length of Western history as an instrumental cause or means in the production or attainment of something, is now under question."⁴⁶

If we try to trace the history of such instrumental thinking of technology, we situate its beginnings during the time of the Greeks—the same time when thinking and logos first became conveniently misconstrued.

⁴² To Thi Anh, *Eastern and Western Cultural Values*, 62.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁴⁴ Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, 312.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 312.

⁴⁶ Romualdo E. Abulad, "The Role of Philosophy in the Technological Age," in *Karunungan: A Journal of Philosophy*, 21 (2004), 172.

Since then, thinking has been equated and identified with mere logic and technology, easily taken for a means to an end.

Heidegger attempts to illuminate by tracing what was lost in translation when the Greek word for thinking, *legein*, was translated into the Latin, *ratio*. He finds that two significations for *legein* are not found in *ratio*: a) thinking as speaking and b) thinking as gathering.⁴⁷

From here, there seems to be the reduction of philosophy, as well as thinking, to reason and rationality. Somehow, calculative thinking has stepped on meditative thinking, which is supposed to be a being-thoughtful. Thus, Heidegger was right when he claimed that we are still not thinking even at our most thought-provoking time! This thought-provoking time, our time which is technological, is still not thinking because calculative thinking has trumped meditative thinking.

Heidegger's *On Time and Being* further declares that our thinking is not authentic thinking since it is only up to the level of instrumental or calculative thinking. "Unconcealment is, so to speak, the element in which Being and thinking and their belonging together exist."⁴⁸ For Heidegger, the term, "unconcealment" points to his notion of truth as *aletheia* or undisclosedness. In this sense, what is revealed is the relation between Being and thinking. Thus, thinking should not only be seen as a means to an end. So far, in our history and in all our technological advances, thinking is seen only as something that can produce an end. While it is not totally wrong to view thinking as such, there is still some truth in Heidegger's claims that compels us to re-evaluate and rethink our notion of thinking as something more than that which produces something. Heidegger's thinking Being is not to be identified with a being who thinks or thinks about Being. Thinking Being is an unconcealment of Being, an *aletheia*, because they—thinking and Being—belong together. This is why Heidegger insists that we are still not thinking; and this is why this article describes our traditional way of thinking as bereft thinking. "In contrast to calculative thinking of modern instrumental reason, it is a meditative thinking which, according to Heidegger, was there in the beginning of philosophy, but was very soon forgotten."⁴⁹ It is only meditative thinking that can erase this downtrodden way of thinking—this thinking that is not thinking. And it is only meditative thinking that will

⁴⁷ Robbins, *Joyful Thinking-Thinking*, 15.

⁴⁸ Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. by Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 69.

⁴⁹ Bo Dahlin, "On the Path Towards Thinking: Learning from Martin Heidegger and Rudolf Steiner," in *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 28:6 (2009), 540.

usher in a re-evaluation and re-orientation of thinking. What is this meditative thinking? What is there in the beginning that has been forgotten? What is unconcealment?

It is in this light that Zen Buddhism's non-rationality is being considered. Heidegger is popular for his self-identification with oriental thinking. "Heidegger's reported enthusiasm over the Zen Buddhist approach to such questions suggests that he believed in a path or a meditative practice leading to such experience."⁵⁰ We find in the language of Zen's anti-reason, which simply translates to a non-reliance on reason, something akin to Heidegger's distrust of calculative thinking. There is a certain familiarity and similarity between Heidegger and Zen Buddhism. It seems like there is a leap from the traditional way of thinking, which is common and at-hand today. But Heidegger frowns upon such type of thinking in the same manner that Zen essentially considers a sudden enlightenment to be like a crossing over to a province that is open, spontaneous, and is not bounded by any biases, claims, or thinking of any sort. "The leap itself seems also similar to what is called *satori*, or "enlightenment", in Zen."⁵¹ This enlightenment experience does not come from being too full and loaded with thought, with thinking and reasoning, but from being empty, from not being consumed by tenets, mechanizations, instruments, and systems. "Reasoning and scriptures are not necessary for enlightenment; one must meditate on *sunyata* (emptiness) and sudden enlightenment results."⁵²

What is obvious in Zen is that it defies logic and reason by agreeing that when it comes to the unconcealment of the truth, there is something about the use of reason that disquiets the revealing. "Silence speaks" is a Zen ideal, which means that no amount of words or language will unconceal that which has been concealed. Enlightenment can only happen if there is a leap from these processes.

It is not logos but silence as 'basic mood / voice' (*Grundstimme*) that encounters the wonder of the presencing of Being, being attuned (*gestimmt*) by the silent voice (*lautlose Stimme*) of Being, and responding (*abstimmen*) from it.⁵³

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² P.T. Raju, *Introduction to Comparative Philosophy* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Press, 1962), 146.

⁵³ Tetsuaki Kotoh, "Language and Silence: Self Inquiry in Heidegger and Zen," in *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, 210.

The silence that ensues is fuller than any articulation with words but has become a *koan* where it calls one to the presencing of thought. "A silence that is not intellectually understood as the mere absence of sound, but as one that is experienced as the palpable presence of the here-and-now of being-time."⁵⁴

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper considers Heidegger's *What is Called Thinking?* as its primary text to uncover what is meant by thinking. To think is not equal to something that is meant in an operational manner so as to get results. To think is not calculative, but meditative. This meditative thinking comes from the gathering of thought, which is, in actuality, a kind of thanking, thanking that springs from memory. Remembrance is brought about by a sense of fondness for that which is being remembered. To think is a form of worship of that which is being remembered and thanked—that which is thoughtworthy and thought-evoking.⁵⁵

That thinking ought not to be calculative is linked to the non-rationality of Zen which goes beyond reason, rationalization and logic. The very essence of Zen is to do away with the calculative mind and to see directly. This direct seeing is known as *satori* or sudden enlightenment. No intellectualization is needed, just a direct seeing. Bringing together Heidegger's thinking as thanking and Zen's non-rationality opens up to the unconcealment of Being, which is revealed in that silence where there is only oneness with Being. This unveiling, therefore, is not just a recount of things that are in the world in the sense of objects and entities, but it speaks of the revealing of Being that is not a random showing of parts and categories. Instead, this unveiling is a revelation of the truth of Being, an *aletheia*, where the possibility of Being, as seen in the horizon of time, constitutes an awareness of meaning, of owning up to something which is not just an accumulation of concepts, but a showing of a deeper truth of the character of Being. This unconcealment is the Zen ideal of seeing into one's own nature, a *satori* experience, a revealing and a taking hold of truth that really is beyond calculative thinking.

This closeness or oneness with Being is that which we hope to recover in our thought-provoking time, which is the time of the machine. Technology and modernity deepen this bereft thinking—thinking that is not thinking.

Bereft thinking in our supposed highly technological age should heed Heidegger's caveat that we are still not thinking in our most thought-provoking time. It is here that we consider Zen Buddhism's non-rationality

⁵⁴ Parkes, *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, 527.

⁵⁵ Macquarrie, *Heidegger and Christianity*, 82.

as a sudden enlightenment which can be likened to Heidegger's meditative thinking. It brings forth silence as a gathering of that which calls us into thinking. There is a shared connection between that which is non-logical and also what is non-linguistic in Zen and in Heidegger. Meditative thinking in the light of both Heidegger and Zen is what the society needs to reaffirm the role of philosophy today.

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Argument from Psychological Difference: Why It Makes Sense to be a Scientific Realist than an Instrumentalist

Vida Mia S. Valverde

Abstract: This paper contends that psychological factors of cognition and affect come into play in determining which philosophical framework, scientific realism (SR) or instrumentalism, makes more sense in the practice of science through history. The proposed Argument from Psychological Difference (APD) asserts that the scientific realist has a stronger impetus than the instrumentalist to pursue science that is anchored in existing underlying reality and cognizant of how the human person practices such science. The APD is threshed out in recognizing transcendence as manifested through history; in affirming the human quest for truth and certainty; in the stand that is taken in history when the science is more mature and certain. SR is especially made more comprehensive and coherent when it considers the interplay of the observable and unobservable aspects of reality and of how the human person is in the scheme of things. Scientific realism is the more superior stance compared to instrumentalism because, ultimately, it makes more meaningful sense by being grounded in existing material reality that has the power to move us rather than in convenient fictions that operate on utility.

Keywords: cognition, scientific realism, instrumentalism, psychological difference

Scientific Realism, Instrumentalism, and Methodological Indifference

There is a contention that there is no need for choosing scientific realism (SR) or instrumentalism as a philosophical framework with regards to reality. Devitt defines his doctrine of SR as: “Most of the essential unobservables of well-established current scientific theories exist mind

independently.”¹ On the other hand, instrumentalism, which is a form of antirealism, puts forth that scientific theories and their posited unobservables are instruments for predicting observable phenomena.²

One philosophical framework, scientific realism, could just as well serve as an alternative to the other, instrumentalism. If we accept that science aims to provide true explanatory accounts of the phenomena as a realist description, the instrumentalist’s description would be the same except that empirical adequacy would substitute for truth. We then believe in the empirical adequacy of predictively successful theories, not in their truth. So if the realist says that science provides true explanatory accounts, the instrumentalist would say that science provides empirically adequate accounts. It has thus been contended that the practice of science shows no distinction at all between a realist outlook and an instrumentalist one. A realist explanation of a scientific practice may be turned into an instrumentalist explanation.

There are no aspects of scientific practice that a realist can explain and an instrumentalist could not. Robin Findlay Hendry, however, argues that the epistemic stance of the scientist, whether realist or instrumentalist, colors her practice.³ Hendry refers to a historiographical intuition that suggests that realism or instrumentalism influences what practices scientists employ but Arthur Fine and André Kukla propound that realism and instrumentalism are indifferent to the practice of science.⁴ There is explanatory indifference which implies that for every realist explanation of the success of a scientific practice there is also an instrumentalist explanation of its success. There is the motivational indifference which implies that for every realist reconstruction of a scientific practice there is also an instrumentalist reconstruction. In the former, the phenomena to be explained involve the success of scientific theories. In the latter, the phenomena to be explained are the scientific practices themselves.

These two types of indifference stem from Fine’s metatheorem to support his claim that arguments based on the ability of scientific realism to explain certain aspects of scientific practice do not provide support for realism to be a better stance against instrumentalism: if the phenomena to be

¹ Michael Devitt, “Scientific Realism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Philosophy*, ed. by Michael Smith and Frank Jackson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 769.

² Michael Gardner, “Realism and Instrumentalism in Pre-Newtonian Astronomy,” in *Testing Scientific Theories*, ed. by John Earman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1983), 238.

³ See Robin Findlay Hendry, “Are Realism and Instrumentalism Methodologically Different?” in *Philosophy of Science*, 68:3 (Supplement, 2001), S25–S37.

⁴ See Arthur Fine, “Unnatural Attitudes: Realist and Instrumentalist Attachments to Science,” in *Mind*, 96 (1986), 149–179; André Kukla, *Studies in Scientific Realism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

explained are not realist-laden, then to every good realist explanation there corresponds a better instrumentalist one.⁵ Hendry, however, holds that a practice one finds rational to involve oneself in is different from being motivated to actually engage in the practice. The explanatory indifference may find merit but not the motivational indifference. It can happen that the explanatory indifference of realism and instrumentalism may also bring about motivational indifference. There are corresponding realist and instrumentalist reconstructions to the realist and instrumentalist explanations. Fine's metatheorem, however, does not afford an instrumentalist explanation for every phenomenon, only for those that are not realist-laden. Realist-laden here means having beliefs and inferences available only to the realist. Even if the instrumentalists do not have the inclination to recognize such realist-laden phenomena, they can still acknowledge realist-laden practices. Though instrumentalists may find merit in the explanatory indifference, they do not need to accept the motivational indifference.

The difference between the explanatory and motivational types of indifference further gives credence to the irreconcilability of the realist and instrumental accounts of science. The efforts to find a working compromise between the two epistemic stances do not result in a coherent and consistent outlook that satisfies both sides of the debate. Neither does the collapse of scientific realism into instrumentalism or vice-versa hold merit. There can be a choice of one over the other and this is rooted in the human person's hankering and hungering for a truth that one can really hold on to and stick one's neck out for. The reality that science is a continuously evolving field does not make belief and acceptance of theoretical entities an exercise in futility. Theories and their posited unobservables may later be proven false but we are not wrong in positing them. Sticking only to the observables of the instrumentalists lets us miss a great part of reality.

Argument from Psychological Difference (APD)

The lack of motivational indifference established in the previous section points to an integral facet of the human person as a psychological being that operates mentally and intellectually as a function of awareness, feeling, or motivation. Cognitions and affect color our decisions and action. Cognition refers to conscious and analytical evaluation of a situation. Affect concerns emotions and feelings. APD contends that such psychological factors come into play in the evaluation of a framework. Material content is not sufficient basis from which a philosophical stance is taken. Even if there

⁵ Arthur Fine, "Unnatural Attitudes," 154.

may be explanatory indifference between instrumentalism and scientific realism, motivational indifference does not necessarily follow because the human person is driven by different psychological factors that are attractive to her sense of self as a being in the world. There are psychological differences upon which she tackles and takes certain stances. Instrumentalism and scientific realism may both provide rational frameworks from which to understand phenomena. It would just as be perfectly reasonable to be a scientific realist or an instrumentalist in order to apprehend and comprehend the world. There are, however, psychological underpinnings that favor one framework over the other.

A scientific realist has a different psychological impetus from that of an instrumentalist. Knowing that there is an underlying reality and existence to be uncovered, the scientific realist is more compelled than the instrumentalist to pursue it to its brute core. If instrumentalism were right, it would be appropriate for the scientist to be complacent about his theory as long as it was working on the surface.⁶ The atheistic instrumentalist does not have an underlying reality that one can stick out one's neck for. The APD affirms the strength of scientific realism over instrumentalism because it supports a holistic reality that takes into consideration how the human person acts and decides given her place in the larger scheme of things. This argument takes into consideration the human person's recognition of transcendence, the human quest for truth and certainty, and the need to make meaningful sense out of any human undertaking. This argument holds that our mental activities and frameworks are molded not just by logical material content but by a deeper sense of awareness of self and reality. APD acknowledges the back and forth between person and reality. It is not solely contingent on the human person but is appreciative of the natural stirrings within of the person as she makes her way in the world.

Scientific Realism as Recognition of Transcendence

It is more rational to believe in scientific realism than in instrumentalism because it is in congruence with the way we think and discover more about the world. We look for what underlies our experience of the world. Bernard Lonergan expresses that the rationally conscious enters a dynamic state in which dissatisfaction with mere theory manifests itself in a demand for a fact, for what is so.⁷ There is a driving insight to discover beyond what is observable. We are struck by insight in our inquiries and investigations about the world and we make a judgment that there is an

⁶ Michael Devitt, *Realism and Truth* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press), 131.

⁷ See Bernard J.F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study in Human Understanding* (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1956).

underlying existing reality and make the decision to commit to such reality. Scientific realism lets us go beyond the capacity of our senses and triggers the insight that points us to uncover further aspects of reality that are seemingly mysterious. From observable phenomena, there is a movement and recognition of different, perhaps richer, reality.

Recognizing the existence of the unobservable seems like holding to a transcendence⁸ which is not a regular aspect of science. It is transcendence in that it takes insight to appropriate it. It is transcendence in the sense that it goes beyond and is not defined by science. Instead, science improves our access and understanding of such transcendence. History of science shows how we know more and more about the unobservable. The unobservable is not just a convenient fiction we posit to make sense of the observed phenomena. The realist, in effect, deals with transcendence. On the other hand, the instrumentalist deals with convenient fictions that systematize his experience of the world.

Weighing between transcendence and convenient fictions is a choice between scientific realism and instrumentalism. If we delve deeper, the realist transcendence is more meaningful than the instrumentalist convenient fictions. Having something real underlying observed phenomena is a better explanation than having a convenient fiction. Even if instrumentalism provides useful information, it limits our knowledge by defining our knowledge within the parameters of usefulness. Reality is then reduced to what is pragmatic, to what makes theories work.

The process and history of science and human knowledge cannot be divorced from technology. The human person develops technology that helps him discover more about the world. The feudal culture of the Middle Ages that was rife with superstition progresses into a culture where the scientific method is a means of understanding the world better. Scientific realism, in a sense, is a product of the advance of technology. What is uncovered and discovered of the world through technology may not be immediately useful, but it is still knowledge that represents reality.

The accumulation of knowledge throughout history is not only an accumulation of well-functioning posits that save the phenomena. There is a building of the picture of the world through time and the scientific method that continuously builds it operates with the recognition that there is an underlying reality that girds observable reality. Our knowledge and picture of the world develop in an upward spiral where new knowledge builds on previous knowledge to come up with something more synthetic, comprehensive, and consequently, elevated understanding of the world. It

⁸ Transcendence is not taken in the sense of the spiritual but in the sense of going beyond the limits of ordinary experience and inherited concepts.

will only be a matter of time when this underlying reality comes to the fore with advances in technology.

History shows that reality impinges on the human person whether she likes it or not, affirming the existence and independence dimensions propounded by Devitt. Furthermore, history affirms that material reality and idea are joined. The more we discover matter, the more we have ideas; that there is indeed a world, though currently unobservable, that triggers insight and gives knowledge. Such materialist philosophy grounds scientific realism and imbues it with a rationality that is not found in the same extent in instrumentalism.

The rationality of scientific realism is borne out in history, in the evolution of how we know more and understand the world we live in. The scientific realism-instrumentalism debate cannot just be settled through armchair theorizing but more so through looking at established history. Having this picture of scientific realism in history exhibits the theoretical virtue of comprehensiveness. There is a holistic understanding of the different aspects of reality and how they work together as a whole. Matter, transcendence, history, knowledge, reality, and the scientific method all come into play with each other and lend greater strength and rationality to scientific realism. Physical substance existing in space and time is apprehended by the human person who further realizes that such physical substance means and points to something more. Just as the human person is a physical substance who is something more than what is observed of her, she intuits the same of the matter that she observes, of the world she lives in. In time, refinement of knowledge ceaselessly occurs because reality keeps on unveiling more of itself with the development of science and technology. Such intertwining of the different facets of existence makes for a richer philosophical framework that encompasses a larger spectrum of reality than instrumentalism ever will.

With greater value of comprehensiveness in scientific realism than in instrumentalism, the former is the more viable position to take.

Human Quest for Truth and Certainty

In asserting that one can have knowledge of the scientific unobservables, scientific realism may be engaging in a metaphysical speculation that runs counter to the practice of empirical science. Scientific realism as this empirical hypothesis that scientific theories are true and the entities they postulate are real looks as if it is dealing with straightforwardly scientific question and has nothing to do with philosophizing. The philosophical dimension comes in when philosophers add their interpretations on the methods and results of science. The theories,

observable facts, modes of inference, and other aspects of the scientific method as accepted and used by the scientific establishment plus the interpretations of the philosophers call for philosophizing. Instrumentalists add on their interpretation of accepted scientific theories as tools for prediction and control of the environment. Realists add on their interpretation of accepted scientific theories as true descriptions of the world. The former holds on to what works or has utility while the latter holds on to what is true. There is the tension between what is empirically adequate and what is true. Truth for instrumentalism is not an ideal to be striven for. Truth for scientific realism can be held on to even if Devitt asserts that the issue of truth is not constitutive of scientific realism.

Laudan writes that we would like to think that science works because it has got a grip on how things really are.⁹ This grip happens because there is something to hold on to. There is a truth to be gripped; there is an existence to be gripped. Our world develops constantly, so does philosophy, and most especially, so does science. Science, with all its changes and developments, has become an influential institution from which we view the world. Is it enough for us that what we can hold on to is empirically adequate and thus, works and gives results? Or must there be truth, though an ideal, that lets us have a grip on the world? The truth that is spoken of here is not a sophisticated conception that is arrived at through the different theories of truth- correspondence theory, semantic theory, coherence theory, pragmatic theory. It is a functional conception of truth that something is, that something is real; the truth that a non-specialist in philosophy would understand.

Sankey's statement of the first core doctrine of scientific realism which is aim realism is that the aim of science is to discover the truth about the world.¹⁰ Progress of scientific theories moves us closer to the truth. Science as an ongoing historical progress is still far from reaching such aim of truth. Current scientific theories, at best, may be close to the truth or they may be approximately true. This is in contrast to the claim of instrumentalism that scientific theories are neither true nor false. The truth that science seeks is of an explanatory nature and is also that which is discovered by science. It is not something that we construct or invent or manipulate.

It must be recognized, however, that giving a true account of what the world is like, no matter how scientific the process, will always have a metaphysical aspect that goes beyond experience. With Devitt's scientific realism being a metaphysical doctrine, as earlier mentioned, human

⁹ See Larry Laudan, "A Confutation of Convergent Realism," in *Philosophy of Science: The Central Issues*, ed. Martin Curd and J. A. Cover (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1998), 1114–1135.

¹⁰ See Howard Sankey, *Scientific Realism and the Rationality of Science* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008).

inhabitants of the world speculated upon are relevant objects of analysis and reflection. It is an exigency of being that the human person seeks for a truth. What works or has utility is not sufficient. If the theories produce results and predict phenomena, the instrumentalist can already live with that. This pragmatic stance asserts that there is no need for truth. It is an ideal that is not needed or may not be even reached at all.

Though scientific realism asserts that it is able to give true descriptions about the world, there is also an implicit recognition that such truth is asymptotic. One cannot really reach the limit, the ideal; one can only approximate. The closer one approximates the truth, the better. This does not mean, however, that aiming and wanting to hold on to a truth is an exercise in futility. Instrumentalism appreciates that there is uncertainty in scientific theorizing and chooses to stick with what works. Truth, in effect, is not given up as an ideal but because it is ideal that it is given up. Nevertheless, it is still a standard we try to compare with what has been achieved so far and get close to as much as possible. It is not something we tend to be agnostic or atheistic about in scientific theorizing and experimentation. It is also not the Wittgensteinian truth which must always be conceived to lie within the bounds of attainable knowledge or linguistic expressibility.¹¹

Aristotelian metaphysics states that all men desire to know. There is this Kantian exigency of being that we want truth and the certainty that comes with it. Such is exemplified in scientific realism. Even as theories change and evolve, there is truth that is not just empirically adequate but something one can stick out one's neck for. It seems that even when it comes to taking a stand about scientific realism and instrumentalism, the tenet that nature abhors a vacuum still holds. Anytime there is a lack, nature rushes in to fill it up. Where there is lack of certainty, one wants certainty. Where there is ignorance, one desires to know. Settling with what gives the results is not just enough. This is a transcendental ideal in that it is a norm that governs but cannot be really proven. This may seem as if it runs counter to Devitt's physicalist and naturalist philosophy, but it provides a ground for the rationality of scientific realism. It is still also in the realm of first-order issues in ontology. Devitt always urges to put metaphysics first. To try to address scientific realism in terms of second-order issues of language and reference is putting the cart before the horse. According to Devitt,

Realism is an overarching empirical (scientific) theory or principle. It is initially plausible. It is supported by arguments that make no appeal to theories of language

¹¹ Christopher Norris, *On Truth and Meaning: Language, Logic, and the Grounds of Belief* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006).

or understanding What firmer place could there be to stand than Realism, as we theorize in such undeveloped areas as those of language and understanding? In contrast, the poor state of theories in those areas, whether verificationist or not, makes them a bad place from which to start theorizing, particularly in determining overarching principles about the nature of reality. To think otherwise is to put the cart before the horse.¹²

Devitt's scientific realism is primarily metaphysical and to refocus the issues of truth, rationality, and knowledge towards a philosophy of language with referent and semantic concerns is getting the priorities wrong. Central to his arguments for realism is that the metaphysical doctrines can and must be disentangled from all epistemic and semantic issues. When faced with the question, what has truth got to do with realism, Devitt states "On the face of it, nothing at all. Indeed, Realism says nothing semantic at all beyond, in its use of 'objective', making the negative point that our semantic capacities do not constitute the world."¹³ Though truth is not a constitutive of Devitt's realism, it is an anchor for realism in that we believe that truth is what ultimately explains. With instrumentalism, the question of truth is not relevant to theorizing and scientific evaluation. What is important is that the observable consequences of the theories are in consonance with experience. Truth belongs only to the observational parts of theories for instrumentalism.

Scientific Realism Makes Meaningful Sense

J.J.C. Smart speaks of philosophy and the elimination of nonsense.¹⁴ Together, philosophy and science endeavor to have a comprehensive and meaningful view of the world. Both science and philosophy share a tentative character and we must thus not rest easy on the supposed laurels of each because the so-called final truth will always be at the horizon, and we hope that both will bring us closer to such truth. It has been argued that certain quarters of philosophy are not concerned, as scientists are, between truth and falsity, but with that between sense and nonsense.¹⁵ Such is put to the fore with the viewpoint of instrumentalism. Whether what is posited is true or false is not the issue in contention. One might think then that instrumentalism

¹² Devitt, *Realism and Truth*, 284.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁴ See J.J.C. Smart, *Philosophy and Scientific Realism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1963).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

falls under the category of making sense. It is neither true nor false; it just makes sense because it makes the theories work.

Smart asserts that philosophers, together with scientists and historians, must ensure that we do not fall into nonsense. Nonsense must be eliminated. This nonsense, Smart says, has not even achieved the distinction of an intelligible falsehood.¹⁶ At the very least, one must be able to express an utter falsehood, not a nonsense masquerading as a truth, especially when such nonsense is dressed up in seemingly technical and intelligent language. It may be too simplistic, but it seems that instrumentalism is flirting with nonsense.

It is intelligible in the sense that it makes us grasp what needs to be grasped given limited knowledge and resources; but it is unintelligible in the larger scheme of the interplay of science, humanity, and the world. The fact that philosophy is also more than just the elimination of nonsense,¹⁷ then it is but right that we look far beyond the logic that is found in the technical such as language and data. This is precisely what we do when we look at the scientific realism-instrumentalism debate as a human person in the world doing science. If we endeavor to “grasp the whole range of reality, the whole person must be involved in the act of philosophizing... must accommodate the various aspects of reality within an integrated whole.”¹⁸ This integrated whole encompasses the unobservable, the observable, the human person practicing science in the world, and the practice of science in history. We do not deem extraneous that which exceeds our apprehension, that which goes beyond our natural and technological capacities. The integrated whole recognizes that which is not immediately material and quantifiable but, at the very least, impinges on our consciousness.

We want to understand the world we inhabit not just so we can deal with it but also because we want to become better versions of ourselves. Interestingly, we become better versions of ourselves when we take on the materialist metaphysics of Smart that allows us to recognize that the human person is part of nature, not above or better than it. When we appreciate being part of nature, we do not destroy it. This materialist metaphysics checks the arrogant notion that man is the measure of all things. Such philosophical clarity and scientific knowledge make us recognize that we are not at the center of the cosmos from which all reality revolves. Seen and unseen, the reality is out there for us to discover and uncover using our best science. This reality is not constructed nor invented. What is of note in Smart’s materialist metaphysics is that from his conception of the human person as just a

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁸ Rainier Ibana, *Solidarity and Social Analysis (A Dissertation on Max Scheler’s Social Philosophy)* (Quezon City: Sublime Paralytic Publications, 1993), 58.

complicated physical mechanism that is part of nature, his realist thought encompasses the nature of unobservables such as electrons to a human person's ethics. Scientific realism then is deemed integrative of the multiple aspects of reality, of which the human person is only a part of.

Instrumentalism, Scientific Realism, and the Maturity of a Science

Gardner suggests that a blanket interpretation of all theories from a scientific realist or instrumentalist perspective should not be the case as different theories may need different treatments. History of science has exhibited a pattern wherein a theory is first put forward or accepted as a calculational device and then later comes to be regarded as literally true. One starts from an instrumentalist interpretation and later on ends with a scientific realist one. This was evident in the transition of the Copernican theory from an instrumentalist interpretation to a realist one. The Copernican theory was recognized and accepted by the astronomers of his time as credible in its explanation of the movement of the heavenly bodies by taking away, among other things, use of the equant, a mathematical concept developed by Ptolemy in 2nd century AD to account for the observed motion of the planets. Melanchthon (1497–1560) of the University of Wittenberg praised and used parts of Copernicus's theory in his studies but still ultimately refused accepting the theory on realist terms because it conflicted with Scriptures and Aristotelian doctrine of motion.¹⁹ As evidence grew, acceptance of the heliocentric Copernican theory came by way of a realist viewpoint.

The practice of science has shown that scientists sometimes believe a theory is true and sometimes that it is only empirically adequate. There seems to be a need to identify the conditions in which it would be reasonable to use an instrumentalist or a realist interpretation. As the scientist grows in certainty about his postulates, he tends to become realist. As he does more experiments and manipulates the electron in a variety of ways, he commits to a particular existence of an electron. Again, there is this movement towards the truth even if what already works is sufficient.

Though a definitive survey of the operating frameworks of scientists will shed further light on whether the practice of science is largely realist or instrumentalist, it will be mostly addendum material to the argument from discovery and argument from psychological difference. Theoretical physicist and professor Edward Redish, who is also the main proponent of the *Maryland Physics Expectations Survey (MPEX)* that assesses expectations, beliefs, and attitudes of students towards learning calculus-based physics,

¹⁹ Gardner, "Realism and Instrumentalism in Pre-Newtonian Astronomy," 260.

affirms that no such survey of scientists has been undertaken by the Maryland Physics Education Research Group. In an email correspondence with Redish on 29 December 2014, he expresses that the difference between instrumentalism and scientific realism is a “difference that does not make a difference.”²⁰ One must choose one’s axioms and work with them. Though Redish seemed to shrug off the difference between scientific realism and instrumentalism, the first epistemological axiom he identifies as fundamental to what he knows as a self-confessed scientific rationalist is: There is a real world independent of human observation.²¹ As a scientist, Redish may not care or reflect about the ramifications presented by the philosophical stances of scientific realism and instrumentalism, but the primary axiom he operates with certainly speaks of scientific realism.

Devitt’s conception of scientific realism is entity realism wherein most of the essential unobservables of well-established current scientific theories exist mind-independently.²² If this is the crux of his philosophy, then establishing the reality of the controversial unobservables is key. Whatever else theorizing about scientific realism and instrumentalism, the core of the matter still lies in settling the score in the realm of the unobservables. Hacking asserts that experimental physics provides the strongest evidence of scientific realism.²³ Unobservables are manipulated to give rise to new phenomena and to study other aspects of the world. They are tools not in the sense of convenient fictions and systematizing phenomena but tools for actually doing and manipulating. Case in point: the electron was a hypothetical entity first but as its causal powers are better understood and it is used to build devices, it no longer remains hypothetical. Its status has changed in that the experimenter now becomes a realist about such an unobservable. It is no longer just about finding the demarcation between the theoretical and unobservable and finding that it is ontologically insignificant; but elevating the theoretical to the real because it can be directed, controlled, and experimented upon.

From the human person’s pursuit for a truth, to establishing the truth and logic of theories, to handling and experimenting on an unobservable to establish its reality, it cannot be denied that taking on the scientific realist viewpoint is the more rational and valid stance. Much as there are sophisticated versions and variations of instrumentalism, from the traditional conception that theories are instruments for systematizing phenomena in

²⁰ Edward Redish, email message to the author, 29 December 2014.

²¹ Edward Redish, “Axioms,” in *The Unabashed Academic* (27 June 2010), <http://theunabashedacademic.blogspot.com/2010_06_01_archive.html>.

²² Devitt, “Scientific Realism,” 767.

²³ See Ian Hacking, *Representing and Intervening: Introductory Topics in the Philosophy of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

pragmatically useful ways to the contemporary interpretation that theories are not merely conceptual devices in the service of pragmatic ends but correct or incorrect representations of unobservable entities and processes,²⁴ it still does not do justice to the whole enterprise of science as a great human endeavor that seeks to understand, explain and better the world. Instrumentalism lets us be empirical and scientific. We, however, hunger for the real that is not fully encompassed by instrumentalism. Philosopher of science Michela Massimi, 2017 recipient of the Wilkins-Bernal-Medawar Award from UK's Royal Society expresses,

I personally believe that a realist viewpoint can include our ability to carve out the space of what might be objectively possible in nature, rather than in terms of mapping onto some actual states of affairs.

Progress here is not just about discovering a new particle. It is also—indeed, most of the time—being able to carve out the space of what might be possible in nature with high confidence.²⁵

The scientific enterprise is made more meaningful because we are compelled to “carve out the space of what might be possible in nature.” Such appreciation of possibility is twofold. It shows what is possible in the human person practicing science in that she pushes limits to uncover what is hidden in nature. It shows what is possible in nature in that it allows nature to be unveiled in its confounding mysteries and complexities, not just in what saves phenomena.

Armchair theorizing and philosophizing view the rationality and validity of instrumentalism. The test, however, of the pudding is in the eating; and eating comes by way of scientific practices and experimentation and the human inclination. A theory may start from an instrumentalist framework but as it gets tested and grows in maturity, it evolves to something more real and certain and literally describes what is in the world. A theoretical entity loses its hypothetical status when the scientist directs and controls it to react, interact, and interfere with the world it is in. No longer is this unobservable a conceptual tool but something literally real. “Interference and interaction are the stuff of reality,” declares Hacking. It is one thing to “see” things under a microscope or any detecting and monitoring instrument. It is greater and

²⁴ Jarrett Leplin, *A Novel Defense of Scientific Realism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 105.

²⁵ Michela Massimi, “Questioning Truth, Reality, and the Role of Scientific Progress,” interview by Philip Ball, in *Wired* (2 June 2018), <<https://www.wired.com/story/questioning-truth-reality-and-scientific-progress/>>.

confirmatory of reality when what is viewed can be manipulated, e.g., We stain the specimen, slice it, inject it, irradiate it, fix it.²⁶ In addition, to distinguish the salivary gland of a fruit fly and a dust particle when looking through a microscope, one must already have had experience dissecting a fruit fly under a microscope of moderate magnification and experience manipulating different microscopes.²⁷ There is always this element of doing that is integral to grasping the unobservable. As Chang puts it, “even the most abstract aspects of science are rooted in doings.”²⁸ The abstract, unobservable, and theoretical is made real in our doings, in our epistemic activities. An epistemic activity is a more or less coherent set of mental or physical operations that are intended to contribute to the production of improvement of knowledge in a particular way, in accordance with some discernible rules though the rules may be unarticulated.²⁹ Such is the science we perform, and it is constantly developing to enable us to manipulate more of what is unobservable. The human person involved in the great enterprise of science necessarily seeks for a truth that underlies his understanding of the past, present, and future.

From the discussion above, scientific realism is the proper stance when the science is mature and instrumentalism when the science is still in its early stages. It is as if instrumentalism is an ad hoc framework until science and technology become mature enough to warrant a full-on scientific realist view. Looking at the debate from this kind of reasoning would show that scientific realism is the more rational and coherent position because it rests on a well-confirmed science. Such thinking, however, could mean that being a scientific realist or instrumentalist depends upon the maturity of science which is not the case. One is still a scientific realist whether a posited theoretical entity turns out to be wrong or inexistent. One is still a scientific realist whether the science is mature or not. What is significant in this line of reasoning is that the stronger the science, the stronger is the case for scientific realism. This is history showing the strength of a scientific realist framework. This retrospection is affirming that operating within the view that there is an underlying existence to observable phenomena is ultimately backed up by mature science.

Both scientific realism and instrumentalism may give working results and explanations. Their significant difference comes in when science and

²⁶ Hacking, *Representing and Intervening*, 168.

²⁷ Ian Hacking, “Do We See Through a Microscope?” in *Images of Sciences: Essays on Realism and Empiricism*, ed. by Paul M. Churchland and Clifford A. Hooker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 136.

²⁸ Hasok Chang, “Epistemic Activities and Systems of Practice,” in *Science After the Practice Turn in the Philosophy, History, and Social Studies of Science*, ed. by Léna Soler, Sjoerd Zwart, Michael Lynch, and Vincent Israel-Jost (New York: Routledge, 2014), 76.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 72.

technology eventually prove existence of unobservables underlies the observable. The conceptual convenient fictions can no longer be when one is confronted by material reality brought about by the best science and technology.

The Point of Devitt

Devitt's stand on scientific realism depends on distinguishing it from other doctrines and on choosing the right place to start the argument. This is evident when he lays down his maxims at the beginning of *Realism and Truth* (1991). Coming from a naturalist perspective, Devitt urges that the issue of realism must be settled first before moving on to epistemology and semantics. Using a priori epistemology or a priori semantics first, realism collapses.

He says that when we approach our metaphysics empirically, realism is irresistible.³⁰ We end up with a better empirical semantics and empirical epistemology that build on the metaphysics that was properly prioritized. Other philosophers contend that metaphysical realism be approached via semantic or empirical realism. It cannot be denied that all three approaches—metaphysical, epistemological, and semantic—are intertwined, and the philosophy of language may help clarify the realist and instrumentalist issues, but it will not really settle the metaphysical issue.

Devitt disentangles the semantic issue of truth from the metaphysical issue of realism. In a sense, this makes for clear and delineated thinking. Though Devitt separates truth from realism, he defends a “robust correspondence notion explained in terms of reference.”³¹ Devitt's definition of the realist correspondence theory of truth rests on the fact of a mind-independent reality. This strict delineation of metaphysical issues from the semantic and epistemological ones is helpful for the sake of clarity in thinking. Life and the world, however, do not allow for such marked boundaries. An effective defense of scientific realism will necessitate interplay of the different domains of realist issues, but Devitt sets a stable ground from which other issues spring.

No matter the uncertainty in having a scientific realist stand, this is still what best exemplifies the human person's pursuit for a comprehensive picture of the world.

Wilfrid Sellars states, “Our aim is to manipulate the three basic components of a world picture: (a) observed objects and events, (b)

³⁰ Michael Devitt, “A Naturalistic Defense of Realism,” in *Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings*, ed. by S.D. Hales (Albany: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1999), 96.

³¹ Devitt, “Scientific Realism,” 28.

unobserved objects and events, (c) nomological connections, so as to achieve a maximum of 'explanatory coherence.'" In this reshuffle no item is sacred."³²

The components of existence come together to give a coherent and comprehensive picture of the world. The observed, unobserved, and the inherent and lawlike underpinnings of reality comprise the most primal elements of our human existence. They span the spectrum of our reality and to be cognizant of all these fulfills our imperative for wholeness and truth. Manipulating these elements characterizes our scientific endeavors. Manipulating these elements give explanatory coherence to who we are as beings existing in space and time. Bonjour states, "Intuitively, coherence is a matter of how well a body of belief 'hangs together': how well its component beliefs fit together, agree or dovetail with each other, so as to produce an organized, tightly structured system of beliefs, rather than either a helter-skelter collection or a set of conflicting subsystems."³³ The 'hanging together' of the primal elements of our existence makes for an integrated whole that makes sense in the world we live in and how we operate in this world.

Science, as a human and analytical endeavor, is not contented with what works when there is still a horizon that points to a more, to that which is integrative. It can be contented because it recognizes its limits but not because convenient fictions have become inconvenient. No item is indeed sacred in our consideration of the world because we recognize the richness that is found in the unobservable, even if we cannot be fully empirical about the whole of reality.

There is a certain poetry in science when there is something else going on that meets the eye, when we are sensitive to imperceptibles. When machines that are supposed to detect unobservables register zero detection, it is concluded that such unobservables are 'below detection' not that they are inexistent. Such imperceptibility provides a nuance that something not perceived is there, even if barely there. We are then driven to unconceal the imperceptible. That is how we are. It is integral that the different facets of our reality cohere with who we are and our endeavors to make sense of things. Bonjour starts his passage above with 'Intuitively' in recognition of our subtle and reflex knowing of things that make us whole, even if we are lacking empirical basis. It is intuitive for us to acknowledge unobservable reality as part of our reality. It is intuitive for us seek how the different facets of existence hang together and not remain with the delineated empiricism that instrumentalism mandates. Instrumentalism impoverishes us as it "regards

³² Wilfrid Sellars, *Science, Perception, and Reality* (New York: Humanities Press, 1962), 356.

³³ Lawrence Bonjour, *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 93.

science as a strictly practical endeavor that does no more than guide our expectations and canalize our interventions in the world.”³⁴

In a talk of Devitt held on 19 September 2014 at the City University of New York, he stressed his basic argument that realism explains observed phenomena as opposed to the success argument that realism explains the observational success of scientific theories.³⁵ Though he has always put forth the success and basic arguments as strong arguments for scientific realism, he recently declared that the basic argument is stronger and not open to criticisms unlike the success argument. This recognition of the basic argument points to having a perspective that is grounded in the more fundamental what is. This basic argument further highlights how science is implemented with a realist framework in that convenient fictions are not just posited to explain observed phenomena but that there is something existing out there that explains observed phenomena.

More than being entity realism, Devitt’s scientific realism teaches us to give priority to what is. It arises from the age-old question, “What ultimately is there, what is it like?” The answer then gives us a grasp of the richness of reality that encompasses both the observable and unobservable. The linguistic turn in philosophy in the 20th century does not take away relevance of SR especially when there is such a cacophony of positions that vie for attention. This cacophony is made louder and confusing when positions come from theories of language and truth that do not constitute realism at all. Semantics is a weak place to start because the theory of language focuses on a very small part of the world, its people. Semantics cannot answer what there is and what it is like. A scientific realism that can withstand the onslaught of antirealism is first metaphysical.

Though there may be contentions that scientific realism and instrumentalism eventually collapse into each other and give the same results, this paper shows otherwise with its explication of the argument from psychological difference.

Scientific realism provides a more robust accounting of unobservable reality than instrumentalism. It is respectful of the complexity of reality that is beyond the maneuverings and machinations of the human person. The strength of scientific realism over instrumentalism is exhibited in recognizing transcendence as manifested through history; in affirming the human quest for truth and certainty; in the stand that is taken in history when the science is more mature and certain. Scientific realism is especially made more comprehensive and coherent when it considers the interplay of the observable and unobservable aspects of reality and of how the human person

³⁴ Nicholas Rescher, *Scientific Realism: A Critical Reappraisal* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1987), 34.

³⁵ Michael Devitt, email message to author, 10 November 2014.

is in the scheme of things. Scientific realism is the more superior stance compared to instrumentalism because, ultimately, it makes more meaningful sense by being grounded in existing material reality that has the power to move us rather than in convenient fictions that operate on utility.

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Looking Through the Sweetheart, Flamboyant and Insane: Rereading Rizal’s Critique of the 19th Century Filipina in *Noli Me Tangere*

Fleurdeliz R. Altez-Albela

Abstract: This paper aims to show how Jose Rizal, in the *Noli Me Tangere*, portrayed the Filipina’s struggle for an identity and role in nation building at the height of the resistance against the Spanish colonizers and the global clamor for enlightenment. Through character analysis, three iconic women characters in *Noli Me Tangere*—Maria Clara, Doña Victorina de Espadaña, and Sisa—I critically expose images of female subjugation and/or voluntary passivity, which must explain Rizal’s persuasions as he described how a Filipina should see herself as stated in his “Letter to the Women of Malolos.” In this historical and critical hermeneutic, we shall see Rizal’s discourse as product of his dialogue with the Western Enlightenment thinkers but is still deeply embedded in the Filipino value-system.

Keywords: Rizal, Filipina, female, Noli me Tangere

Jose Rizal (1861–1896) might not be a philosopher but he can be placed within the ranks of Gandhi, Tagore, and perhaps even Confucius for possessing a moral intellect that had become a catalyst for his countrymen to think better of themselves. His works provoked both intellectual engagement among his contemporaries like Wenceslao Retana,¹ Ferdinand Blumentritt, and Miguel de Unamuno;² and political action that brewed the Philippine Revolution of 1896. As such, Rizal reinforced his people’s desire to discover and act according to a dignified identity which can only be addressed in the atmosphere of political and intellectual sovereignty.

¹ Wenceslao Retana, *Vida y escritos del Dr. José Rizal* (Madrid: Victoriano Suárez, 1907).

² Miguel de Unamuno, “The Tagalog Hamlet,” trans. by Antolina Antonio, in *Rizal: Contrary Essays*, ed. by Petronilo BN. Daroy and Dolores Feria (Quezon City: Guro Books, 1968), 3–16.

Rizal's works, which range from the creative to critical in forms of poems, essays, novels, letters, and an historical annotation, convey views that are influential and, "remain(s) the key to an understanding of the reconstruction of the Philippine past as a means to forge a national identity."³ These works paved the way to forthcoming historiographies and social criticisms that are grounded on theory and well-poised to rouse philosophical discussions.⁴ In Ricardo Pascual's institutional interpretation of Rizal's novels, he notes with hope an interpretative point of reaching what may be called Rizal's philosophy of history: "that aspect of his intellectual pursuit which would bring to focus all his endeavors in historical studies, in social analysis, in persuading his people to work towards the realization of the national community, in defending his people against the insults and calumnies of virulent writers."⁵ In whatever form they may assume, the works of Rizal are definite sources of social reflection and critical hermeneutics. Schumacher supports this point: "as long as the writings of Rizal continue to be read, and Filipinos continue to reflect on the kind of society their forefathers wanted to create, Rizal's thoughts will continue to be subversive of all societies which fail to bring justice and freedom to the Filipino people."⁶

The *India* as Filipina

It is clear that this renowned apostle of nationalism pondered on the meaning of freedom and enlightenment in the midst of oppressive Spanish colonization, which helped to shape a collective consciousness. One of his influential biographers Leon Maria Guerrero, who called Rizal "The First Filipino," writes:

It was Rizal, as we have seen, who taught his countrymen that they could be something else, Filipinos who were members of the Filipino Nation The

³ Ambeth Ocampo, "Rizal's Morga and Views of Philippine History," in *Philippine Studies*, 46:2 (1998), 211.

⁴ Noteworthy are the works of John Schumacher, Teodoro Agoncillo, Petronillo Daroy, Ricardo Pascual, and Florentino Hornedo. See particularly: John Schumacher, S.J., "Rizal the Revolutionary and the Ateneo," in *Philippine Studies*, 26 (3rd Quarter, 1978), 231-240; Petronillo BN. Daroy, "The Ideas of European Idealism in the Fiction of Rizal," in *Philippine Social Sciences and Humanities Review*, 30:2 (June 1965), 109-183; Ricardo Pascual, "Institutional Interpretation of Rizal's Novels," in *University College Journal*, 5-6 (1964), 78-85; Florentino Hornedo, "Noli Me Tangere: Creating an Idiom to Legitimize a New Paradigm of Power," in *The Noli Me Tangere A Century After: An Interdisciplinary Perspective (Budhi Papers)*, ed. by Soledad S. Reyes (Quezon City: Phoenix Publishing House, Inc., 1987), 81-87.

⁵ Pascual, "Institutional Interpretation of Rizal's Novels," 85.

⁶ Schumacher, "Rizal the Revolutionary and the Ateneo," 236.

Filipino Nation was a narrower concept, more exclusive than the Universal Church and the Empire on which the sun had, once upon a time, never set; but, for those who would call themselves by the new name of Filipinos, it was also a larger and more comprehensive community ... with duties and responsibilities were more urgent and immediate But Rizal's concept of a Nation ... was moral, general recognition of mutual rights and duties. 'What is the use of independence if the slaves of today will be the tyrants of tomorrow?' He never confused national independence with individual and social freedom."⁷

For his own well-stated and valid reasons, Rizal is the first native (*Indio*) who proclaimed himself a Filipino.⁸ As he mentioned "Filipino" in his writings, from poetry to the more straightforward works, such as the *Sucesos* and the constitution of the *La Liga Filipina*, Rizal excluded no native (*indio*), and did not discriminate any gender. As a matter of fact, his regard for the female native, the Filipina, is to be noted with complete fervor and utmost respect. While mainstream and sensationalized history extols a kind of chauvinism over this simpatico-macho-guapito cosmopolite who got himself romantically involved with women near and far, Rizal have always meant well to the Filipina. In his times which was crossing the threshold of the twentieth century, Rizal was convinced that Filipino womanhood should rise from conservatism and even if bewildered work for empowerment. Salvador Lopez suggests that such bewilderment may be gleaned on whether Rizal presented Maria Clara as a paragon or caricature: "Lured on the one hand by the attractions of the new emancipation, she is on the other hand as yet too strongly attached to a lingering ideal of Filipino womanhood to brush aside the traditional conception of her sex which she imbibed with her mother's milk."⁹

⁷ Leon Maria Guerrero, *The First Filipino*, 9th ed. (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1991), 496–497.

⁸ A clear qualification is in order: while Rizal was the first to proclaim the *indio* as Filipino, it was Padre Jose Burgos, the mentor and friend of Rizal's brother Paciano, who first used the name "Filipino" in their campaign to secularize and Filipinize the Catholic parishes. Rizal was said to revive the idea in his poem *A la Juventud Filipina* (To the Filipino Youth) in 1879. See Quennie Ann J. Palafox, "Filipinos to be called 'Rizalines': Gen. Artemio Ricarte's Rizaline Constitution," in *National Historical Commission of the Philippines* (4 September 2012), <<http://nhcp.gov.ph/filipinos-to-be-called-rizalines>>.

⁹ Salvador P. Lopez, "Maria Clara – Paragon or Caricature?" in *Rizal: Contrary Essays*, 81.

A serious look at his literary works and letters allows us to speculate about his critical depiction of some stereotypes of the female native, of which this paper is exactly all about. Through character analysis of three iconic female characters in Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere*—Maria Clara (the sweetheart), Doña Victorina de Espadana (the flamboyant), and Sisa (the insane)—I wish to show how Rizal critically portrayed the struggles of the Filipina as an individual and as a member of the state. From his social critique, I shall move on to his other works which state what should be done for the *India* to be identified as a dignified and empowered Filipina.

Rereading Beyond Rizal: On Three Images of the Female in *Noli*

In the preface of his annotations of Morga's *Los Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* (1889), Rizal claims that the *Noli* was written to depict the present state of his motherland during his time.¹⁰ Nonetheless, this literary exposition is done to admonish the natives to look back at their profound past. *Noli Me Tangere* (Latin for "Do not touch me"), according to the author, is a novel that generally exposes the "social cancer" in the Philippines as ruled by the arrogant friars and corrupt government officials and inhabited by complacent natives.¹¹ It is done to describe the life, beliefs, hopes, desires, laments, and grievances of the Filipinos; as well as to unmask the hypocrisy of religion which impoverished them. A critical hermeneutic¹² is in order when reading the *Noli* as it contains symbolisms and allusions that reflect a cultural institution or social movement at lay in the Philippine society. Numerous symbols pertain to the women characters and the movements of women, which shall be discussed in the course of this essay.

The plot of *Noli* follows the life of Juan Crisostomo Ibarra, an *ilustrado* and cosmopolite who returned to the Philippines after his studies with the best intentions of putting up a school but have immediately come into conflict with a society dominated by corrupt friars and apathetic civil officials. For this paper though, Ibarra will have to take a sidestep so that focus may be given on three select female characters, the allusion that Rizal gave them, the specific stereotype of the Filipina of Rizal's time they represented, and what

¹⁰ Ambeth Ocampo, "Rotten beef and stinking fish: Rizal and the writing of Philippine History," in *Meaning and History* (Manila: Anvil, 2001), 114.

¹¹ Augusto de Viana, *Jose Rizal in our Times: A Guide for the Better Understanding of the Philippines' Foremost National Hero* (Manila: Books Atbp. Publishing, 2012), 187.

¹² It is interesting to note that Manuel Dy asserts that Rizal was actually doing critical hermeneutics without being aware of it. This is because the whole novel can be viewed as a critique of Filipino cultural values, coupled with an implied analysis of social systems and a prophetic vision. See Manuel Dy, "Values in the *Noli Me Tangere*: A Critical Hermeneutics," in *The Noli Me Tangere A Century After: An Interdisciplinary Perspective (Budhi Papers)*, 91. He interestingly grounded this study by using Gadamer and Habermas.

more they could mean out of this rereading. This will be done in agreement to Linda Acupanda McGloin: "the significance of these women characters lie in their symbolic portrayals of a people of many images and of a country torn apart."¹³ More than this, the need to define a nation's identity in the spirit of Rizal's Filipino also calls for the need to liberate the bewildered impressions of the 19th century Filipino either as a colonial paragon or a caricature of oppression.

The Sweetheart

We begin with Ibarra's sweetheart, Maria Clara, who is Rizal's allusion of Leonor Rivera of Kamiling, Tarlac, his sweetheart during his days in Santo Tomas. While he was in Europe, Leonor was forced to marry an English engineer. But beyond Rizal's signification, Maria Clara embodies the desired image of a Filipina of the Spanish colonial period—beautiful, prim and proper, religious, virginal, cultured, submissive, and, most of all, with a blood that is more European than native. She is known to be the daughter of Don Santiago delos Santos and Pia Alba who are both natives, but at the latter part is discovered to be an illegitimate child of Pia to the Spanish Franciscan Padre Damaso, former *cura paroco* of San Diego. McGloin opines that Maria Clara's ancestry must be noted since it bears the idealized model of a Filipina through time: the Roman Catholic's Virgin Mary, who is European and foreign. This may also represent a kind of confusion in identity formation among Filipinos who at that time were not called such, but as *indios* (natives).¹⁴ Reading beyond Rizal, we may say that just as how Maria's discovery of her real roots caused a big change in her life, a conscious return to her roots may also give a Filipina good sense of self-affirmation.

In his interpretation of the character, Pascual notes that Maria Clara and her double-faced ancestry represent how the Philippine culture was regarded at that time to only have emerged upon the coming of the colonizer. Accordingly, the marriage of Capitan Tiago and Pia Alba (as that among natives) symbolizes the pre-Spanish Philippines which was anthropologically judged to not have any promising future as represented by an heir. But Doña Pia conceived Maria out of Padre Damaso's abuse and for that brought an offspring that would be a hybrid of a Spaniard father and a native mother.¹⁵ Out of this symbolism, Pascual speaks of the so-called Maria Clara culture:

¹³ Linda Acupanda McGloin, "Colonization : Its Impact on Self-Image of Philippine Women in Rizal's Novels and Today," in *Friends of the Filipino People Bulletin* (Spring/Summer 1992), reproduced in Bert M. Drona, *The Filipino Mind*, <<https://www.thefilipinomind.com/2007/01/women-in-jose-rizals-novels.html>>.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Pascual, "Institutional Interpretation of Rizal's Novels," 79.

“Institutionally interpreted Maria Clara would represent the prevailing culture in the Philippines at the time of Rizal’s writing, a hybrid culture which was priest-dominated but displaying the strong characteristics inherited from the mother. This Maria Clara culture exhibited, as the novel portrayed, a strong religious leaning, being fathered by a dominant religious institution—the Catholic—and the noticeable underpinnings of perseverance and modesty, buttressed by faithfulness to a decision made—characteristics contributed by the native parentage.”¹⁶

The Maria Clara therefore is the native culture which embraced Christianity in all its dimensions. This culture is best paired with the Ibarra culture, which is described by Pascual as the Filipino culture developed in Europe. The engagement of Maria and Ibarra speaks of how an amalgamation of these two cultures may direct a very promising development of the Philippine society.¹⁷ Hornedo supports this claim as he mentions that Rizal finds the archetypal portrayal of persecuted lovers as pathetic (proven by the removal of the chapter “Elias and Salome” in the published edition), and would rather highlight the drama between two rich lovers as vehicle to challenge the powerful in the Philippines at that time.¹⁸

Maria Clara is a hybrid, she belongs to the elite but is kind and amicable to the lower members of the social strata, friendly to the young and courteous to the elderly. Such good heartedness, though, may not be equated to active social involvement because deep within is a woman who could not do what her heart desires. Reading beyond Rizal once more, we see in Maria Clara a repressed woman who is overwhelmed by her own despair over a lost love, Ibarra.¹⁹ After which, we find in her a kind of resilience for having known the important truths that made her finally decide on her own. But her interior strength did not bring out a powerful assertion of what she exactly wants. This is actually not a surprise for a woman who is known to receive bad news by developing fainting and then running to the bedroom. After losing Ibarra, she refused the prodding of her family to marry a peninsular named Linares, and made them understand that she had finally decided to

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 79–80.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Hornedo departs from Pascual by seeing the romantic tandem as a conflict of the main lines of force between liberalism and frailocratic authoritarianism. See Hornedo, “Noli Me Tangere: Creating an Idiom to Legitimize a New Paradigm of Power,” 82–83.

¹⁹ McGloin, “Colonization: Its Impact on Self-Image of Philippine Women.”

choose between death and the nunnery. The presence of options indicates Rizal's confidence that a woman is capable of making her decisions, but is oftentimes confronted by conflicting values and, in this case, between love and filial piety. Overwhelmed by her two options, it is mentioned at the epilogue of the *Noli* that Maria is able to have both—by sinister forces, she died (committed suicide) in the nunnery.²⁰ This tragedy reflects Maria's earlier and most failed choice, she did not side with the filibuster, reform, and patriot but with the two most unworthy men in the novel: Padre Damaso as the seducer and Capitan Tiago as the cringing and submissive colonial.²¹ For Guerrero-Nakpil, Maria Clara's failure to respond to the patriotic needs of the hour was her biggest failure.²²

With the above, it is now difficult to size up how Rizal would want this heroine to become a symbol of a typical woman in what he would like to be a strong nation. Contrary to the popular Filipino regard of Maria Clara as the model of an ideal Filipina, her character is intended to portray a melancholic transition of an idealized womanhood from paragon to parody.²³ She is meant to portray virtues gone astray, either by abuse or petty shortcomings. "Her loyalty is the loyalty of the vanquished in spirit, her modesty the modesty of the timid ... a character that is fundamentally unsound without being contemptible, that is weak and yet appealing."²⁴

The Flamboyant

The next female character is Doña Victorina de los Reyes de De Espadaña, Rizal's allusion to Doña Agustina Medel de la Asca, a rich landlady in Manila who owned Teatro Zorilla and other urban estates. She was married to Coca, a bald and poor peninsular from Spain who was a stutterer, and she overdominates.²⁵ Doña Victorina is the wife of Tiburcio De Espadaña, a peninsular who had come to the Philippines as a petty official in the Customs but by bad luck had become a fake doctor in the provinces. Victorina is described in the *Noli* as a woman in ill-fitting gowns adorned with false frizzies, laces, and jewelries and often with rice-powder on her face.

²⁰ The sinister description of Maria's death at the closing of the novel is based on an actual occurrence that happened to Rafael Comenge who reported it to the authorities with the frustrating results described in *Noli*. Meanwhile, Padre Salvi who is presumed as the perpetrator of the rape of Maria Clara alludes to a certain individual whom gossip has linked to several scandals in the Santa Clara monastery. Carlos Quirino, "Noli and Fili: Their Historical Authenticity," in *Historical Bulletin*, 7:2 (June 1963), 136.

²¹ Carmen Guerrero-Nakpil, "Maria Clara," in *Rizal: Contrary Essays*, 87.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, 85.

²⁴ Lopez, "Maria Clara – Paragon or Caricature?" 83–84.

²⁵ Quirino, "Noli and Fili," 134.

When somebody mentioned that she was the only strong-spirited person (colloquially, “*malakas ang fighting spirit*”)—in this tiresome country, she quipped in defense that she is the only ammonia in this tiresome country. She was more Spanish than Augustina of Saragossa but speaks the language badly.

Victorina’s superfluous and boisterous character is ridiculous, but is said to enrich the plot. Bernad notes, “She is a ridiculous figure whose only reason for existence in the novels is that she provides some of the humor. And yet she is a believable character. There were doubtless many Doña Victorinas in Rizal’s day, just as there are still a few in ours.”²⁶ She is known for her uninformed social-climbing, who thinks she is clever but is actually an ignorant person unaware of her ignorance.²⁷ Her pretensions went as far as using her husband’s fake title that she prefers to be called Doctora Doña Victorina de Espadaña. In his interpretation of the novel, Hornedo thinks that Victorina’s total vanity reflects how the discourse of the time pretends to the truths of the time.²⁸ In Rizal’s time, speaking the truth requires a title credential that goes with prerogatives and privileges. In order to keep up with authority and social ranks, some sense of superiority must be posed so that that inferior ones will always obey.

It is said that Doña Victorina has been taken by Tiburcio as his wife for the thought that her flamboyance may save him from savageness. “She was a pretentious old woman, domineering and mannish, but hunger was more terrible, more domineering and pretentious still ... Don Tiburcio preferred to take charge of her rather than to become a public charge from hunger.”²⁹ Accordingly, the character Doña Victorina is a reflection of how colonialism subdues the natives through assimilation and making them believe that the colonizers are of superior race. This is seen with her efforts to look Western and to consume Western goods. Reading beyond Rizal, this could mean another identity loss through conscious deformation. And Tiburcio marrying her may also signify how the foreign lands take advantage of our strengths and how we succumb to them for the thought that they are of greater descent.

To amplify that rereading, due credit should nevertheless be given to the strength of this woman because of her capacity to overpower her peninsular husband:

²⁶ Miguel A. Bernad, S.J., “Humor and Craftmanship in the Opening Chapters of the Noli,” in *The Noli Me Tangere A Century After: An Interdisciplinary Perspective (Budhi Papers)*, 47.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Hornedo, “Noli Me Tangere: Creating an Idiom to Legitimize a New Paradigm of Power,” 83.

²⁹ Jose Rizal, *The Social Cancer (Noli Me Tangere)*, trans. by Charles Derbyshire (New York: World Book Company, 1912), Ch. XLII.

Whatever she said had to be done, for he had succeeded in dominating her husband completely. He (Tiburcio) on his part did not put up any great resistance and was so converted into a kind of lap-dog of hers. If she was displeased with him she would not let him go out, and when she was really angry she tore out his false teeth.³⁰

It is ironic that a woman who tries to be “somebody else” can subdue her equally problematic object of insecurity. For a thought, it may be considered that Victorina’s flamboyance could just be a hyperbolic expression of what she exactly does not want (a sarcasm typical to women), but still—being able to assimilate what you just try to imitate does not address the identity crisis.

The Insane

The third female character, Sisa, was named after Narcisa, one of Rizal’s sisters.³¹ Nonetheless, mainstream interpretation acknowledges this character as the icon of the *loca-loca*, the insane. In *Noli*, Rizal describes her as a native woman living in a hut outside the town, married to a drunkard and gambler, and the mother of Crispin and Basilio, the two sacristans who are accused of stealing the cura’s money. The loss of these two boys drove their mother to insanity. Sisa is the typical mother who offers paid services like dressmaking and all other honorable tasks she can think of doing. She grows a small garden of vegetables, which is the source of their food on the table and gifts to the authorities when begging for favors. Fundamentally, Sisa is a wife who patiently tolerates the afflictions of life and a loving mother to her sons. This love for her sons, however, does not necessarily imply that she is also a good mother because her sufferings drove her to madness and death. For Hornedo, Sisa belongs to the periphery of the society and her inability to comprehend the entire discourse of the society to which she was supposed to belong brought her madness.³² Sisa is the face of the silent victims of oppression, and of women who are too ignorant and/or weak to survive. Just like Maria Clara who by the way had also gotten half-crazed at the end of the novel, Sisa has more heart than brains. But unlike Maria Clara who belongs to the upper class, Sisa and her sons have been oppressed not just by the

³⁰ Ibid., Ch XLII.

³¹ Maricris Irene V. Tamolang, “How ‘Sisa’ got her name and other Rizal stories,” in *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (21 June 2011), <<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/16700/how-%E2%80%99Sisa%E2%80%99-got-her-name-and-other-rizal-stories>>.

³² Hornedo, “Noli Me Tangere: Creating an Idiom to Legitimize a New Paradigm of Power,” 84.

Spaniards but also by their fellow natives like the Sacristan Mayor and Doña Consolacion. Such details contribute to Daroy's contention that the story of Sisa have somehow contributed to the kind of tension rising between Ibarra's ideals and the social will (i.e., the real condition).³³

Among all the female characters in the *Noli*, it is Sisa who is most (if not the only one) depicted as a mother. And with Rizal's eloquent description of this woman who is beautiful but made uncomely by later sorrow and suffering, this iconic figure of oppression and insanity also symbolizes the motherland—the Philippines and the typical Filipino, submissive to all miseries yet very protective of one's honor. Romero furthers this point and helps us to read beyond Rizal:

She was all forgiveness, all heart, and this reaction invited further exploration. To Sisa, this was resignation to her fate. But when applied to a people, such an attitude may be an acceptance of laziness and a selfish disregard for rights and duties. Sisa in fact is both self-effacing and courageous. She could not assert her essential ideals but she held on to her martyrdom. Perhaps this is because of acceptance of the fate of her sons. She wanted to save them from oppression and suffer any humiliation for their sake.³⁴

Rizal and the Filipina

From the above, we infer with an anticlimax: none of the three characters are positively portrayed in the *Noli*. As a matter of fact, Rizal did not enshrine any female character in the novel. It was Hornedo who boldly declared, "he (Rizal) certainly underestimated women. But no matter ... That this land will be better is our hope."³⁵

Our critical examination of Maria Clara, Doña Victorina, and Sisa showed Rizal's conviction that Filipino women are potential contributors to the nation if their minds are removed from the false consciousness implanted and nourished by the friars. They should have had a clear perception of their identity and roles as woman,³⁶ more than exuding external beauty, obedience,

³³ Daroy, "The Ideas of European Idealism in the Fiction of Rizal," 147.

³⁴ Ma. Corona S. Romero, Julita R. Sta. Romana, Lourdes Y. Santos, *Rizal and the Development of National Consciousness*, 2nd ed. (Quezon City: Katha Publishing, 2006), 97–98.

³⁵ Hornedo, "Noli Me Tangere: Creating an Idiom to Legitimize a New Paradigm of Power," 87.

³⁶ Albina Pecson Fernandez, "Rizal on Women and Children in the Struggle for Nationhood," in *Review of Women's Studies*, 1:2 (1990–1991), 28.

and modesty. Keen observation may convince us that Doña Victorina's strong character could put the Spaniards in their right places, and Maria Clara should also be given due credit for at least defying Padre Damaso who symbolizes the patriarchal, ecclesiastical, and state authority.³⁷ However, their efforts might not even count for a single self-governed and determined act.

There are numerous historical documents that show Rizal's take on Filipina identity and roles, which may also be treasure chests of his limited notes on feminism: among these are his letters to his sisters, the poems "Mi Primera Inspiracion" ("My First Inspiration") and "Hymno al Trabajo" ("Hymn to Labor"), the essay "La Indolencia de los Filipinos" ("The Indolence of the Filipinos"), and his letter to the young women of Malolos, a group of 20 young women who requested Governor General Weyler for permission to open a "night school" so that they may study Spanish under Teodoro Sandiko. It is also important to note that it was in Rizal's time (and so he might have witnessed) the emergence of these schools of feminism: the liberal feminism of Harriet Taylor and John Stuart Mill who wrote *On the Subjection of Women*, Marxist feminism as per Frederick Engels's *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884), anarcho-feminism which must have proliferated in Spain due to its emerging liberalism from the late 1800s up to the 1930s, and nihilist feminism which was the seedbed of Russian feminism. The last was inspired by Chernyshevskii's novel, *What is to be Done?* written in 1862.³⁸

Albina Pecson Fernandez notes that among these schools of feminism, Rizal's thoughts on the Filipino woman makes him a liberal feminist: for Rizal, women can make or break a nation. If they are irrational because of indoctrination that promotes false consciousness, then they can only create an irrational society. But when left alone by the Church to develop their own subjectivity, they are capable of creating a rational society.³⁹ For Rizal, a woman builds a society by (though not limited to) being the seedbed of humanity — she bears and gives birth, nourishes and educates; she does not only build a family and home but a nation. For Rizal, such role is not just fundamental but decisive to the future citizens of the nation; that even if wives are meant to stay at home, they deserve to be educated to develop freedom of thought and awareness of their rights. Whatever a mother shows to her children is what they would become, and so in his letter to the women of Malolos, Rizal writes:

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 27–28.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

What offspring will be that of a woman whose kindness of character is expressed of mumbled prayers; who knows nothing by heart but *awits* (hymns), novenas, and the alleged miracles; whose amusement consists in playing *panguingue* (card game) or in the frequent confession of the same sins? What sons will she have but acolytes, priest's servants or cockfighters? It is the mothers who are responsible for the present servitude of our compatriots, owing to the unlimited trustfulness of their loving hearts, to their ardent desire to elevate their sons. Maturity is the fruit of infancy and the infant is formed on the lap of its mother. The mother who can only teach her child how to kneel and kiss hands must not expect sons with blood other than that of vile slaves Let us be reasonable and open our eyes, especially you women, because you are the first to influence the consciousness of man.⁴⁰

In a nutshell, we enumerate the qualities that, according to Rizal, mothers have to possess: 1) be a noble wife, 2) be like Spartan mothers who rear their children in service of the state and 3) create an atmosphere of dignity and respect for men around her. She must "awaken and prepare the will of her children towards all that is honourable, judged by proper standards, to all that is sincere and firm of purpose, clear judgment, clear procedure, honesty in act and deed, love for the fellowman and respect of God."⁴¹ To the unmarried, Rizal advised that they should not be deceived by good looks and should choose a man with 1) a noble and honored name, 2) a manly heart and 3) a high spirit incapable of being satisfied with engendering slaves.

In this letter, Rizal laments about the backwardness of Asia which is due to the ignorance of women and their treatment as slaves. He compared such marginalized condition with those in Europe and America where there are women who are free and well-educated and endowed with lucid intellect and a strong will.⁴² Now what gives him the right to compare? We must then note that aside from his possible familiarity with the feminist schools of his

⁴⁰ Jose Rizal, "To My Countrywomen, the Girls of Malolos," trans. by Epifanio de los Santos (from the Tagalog original published in *El Renacimiento* in 1903), in Epifanio de los Santos, "More About Rizal (Translation)," in *Revista Filipina (The Philippine Review)*, 2:1 (1917), 26–27, <<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/philamer/acp0898.0002.001/38?view=image&size=100>>.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

time, Rizal had direct contact with intelligent women and even feminists while in Europe:⁴³

1. While touring the United States he met a certain Miss Smith, from Boston who gave him a comprehensive history of Chicago and annotated for him various places of interest. In the manuscript, Rizal called her Madam de Block who is said to be travelling for a "scientific mission," that is, to India to study Indian women.
2. The office that printed *Noli* in Berlin was run by feminists from the *Typographische Institut*, a school that trained women in printing.
3. Through friends and "special women" he met along the way, most notable of which is Nelly Boustead, whom he admired for her exceptional intelligence and have nearly married.

In his letter to Trinidad on 11 March 1886, he admonished her sister to read and read, and adorn herself with knowledge which is very important for women. He described German women as serious, studious, diligent, and highly cultured; they are not afraid of men, are more concerned with substance than with appearances, and do not quarrel.⁴⁴ This little comparison was actually meant to admonish Trining to seriously reconsider studying, as response to her letter dated 14 March 1883 where she told her brother Jose that she already stopped going to school.⁴⁵

That we may be prevented from any assumption that Rizal's dialogical excursus on women (Filipina) empowerment ends with a recommendation to merely emulate the occidental ways, we end this essay by noting that despite the above, there is something about the Filipina that the women of other nations do not have. In the same letter to Trining, Rizal writes:

In our provinces, women still preserve a virtue that compensates for their little instruction—the virtue of industry and tenderness. In no woman in Europe have I found the latter virtue in such a high degree as among the woman there. If these qualities that nature gives to the women there were exalted by intellectual qualities, as it happens in Europe, the Filipino family has nothing to envy the European.⁴⁶

⁴³ Fernandez, "Rizal on Women and Children," 24.

⁴⁴ Jose Rizal, "Letter to Trinidad," in *Jose Rizal: Letters with Family Members* (Manila: National Historical Commission of the Philippines, 2011), 223–224.

⁴⁵ Rizal, "Letter to Trinidad," 93.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

In truth and in deed, there is really nothing to envy about the colonial West if the Filipina has a full and enlightened knowledge of herself, and Jose Rizal will always be there to give a haunting reminder:

The power and good judgment of the women of the Philippines are well known, and it is because of this that she has been hoodwinked, and tied, and rendered pusillanimous, and now her enslavers rest at ease, so long as they can keep the Filipina mother a slave, so long will they be able to make slaves of her children.⁴⁷

With that in mind, and through courageous efforts to build herself, the Filipina will be able to restore her fame and honor in their pristine conditions. She will not just be known for her beauty and amiable character, but also for her fortitude of mind and loftiness of purpose.

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⁴⁷ Rizal, "To My Countrywomen, the Girls of Malolos," 27.

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