

PREFACE

This issue of the *Philippine Sociological Review* includes some of the papers presented at the Annual Conference of the Philippine Sociological Society held at the Philippine Social Science Center on 16-17 October 2009. It begins with two of the keynote addresses that opened the conference. The first, "Sociology as the Reflexive Side of Culture," was delivered by Randy S. David; the second, "Neoliberalism as Hegemonic Ideology in the Philippines: Rise, Apogee, and Crisis," by Walden Bello.

The text presented here of **Randy David's** talk, as was the address itself, is in English and Filipino, since according to David, the latter better communicates with the culture being observed. He expounds that through Filipino, sociologists are able to address "the growing clamor to bring scientific reflection to the stream of public discourse" for he holds that sociological research and reflection should have concrete effects "sa aktwal na takbo ng pang-araw-araw na buhay ng ating lipunan" which can be achieved through a genuine dialogue between sociology and culture.

David proposes that although "culture is a way of seeing, . . . it is also is a way of being blind." Every culture has blind spots – "mga bagay na labas sa saklaw ng ating nakagisnang kultura." And for him this is the task of sociology: "ang palitawin and nakatagong reyalidad," for "sociology is a way of seeing differently."

By employing C. Wright Mills "sociological imagination," sociologists can observe personal problems "sa konteksto na umiiral sa lipunan . . . The translation of private troubles of milieu into public issues of structure is the kind of 'gestalt switch' that prompts decisive action." In this way, sociologists "bring the findings of social inquiry in to the stream of public discourse."

Walden Bello, for his part, asks three questions: "how ideology achieves hegemony, how this hegemony is maintained, and what happens when the claims of an ideology are contradicted by reality." He answers these questions by analyzing neoliberalism in the Philippines.

Bello suggests that neoliberalism began to gain ascendancy in the Philippines during the Aquino administration as it was espoused by activist

intellectuals and technocrats—influenced by free-market economics notably in the US and Britain—associated with her administration. This perspective was also “in synch with the popular mood.” Finally, “there were simply no credible alternatives . . . Keynesian developmentalism was compromised by its personification in the Marcos dictatorship . . . the left’s ‘nationalist industrialization’ or the ‘national democratic economy’ hardly went beyond rhetorical flourishes . . .”

The Asian financial crisis of 1997 as well as “the recent collapse of the global economy owing to the absence of regulation of financial markets” resulted in criticisms of neoliberalism and eroded its credibility. However, it continues to maintain its dominance. One reason for this, according to Bello, is that Philippine underdevelopment continues to be explained by the “corruption discourse . . . The state is the source of corruption, so that having a greater state role in the economy . . . is viewed with skepticism.” Another reason is that “there has been no credible alternative paradigm or discourse that has emerged . . .” Finally, neoliberal economics projects the image of a “hard science” which results from its “having been thoroughly mathematized.”

Delfo Canceran’s “Social Imaginary in Social Change,” provides a discursive analysis of the concept of imagination as it evolves in social theory by focusing on the contribution of Cornelius Castoriadis, a political activist and progressive philosopher. According to Canceran, to understand imagination, Castoriadis turns to psychoanalysis; he places great importance on agency, “the capacity . . . to imagine new social realities.” To him, imagination is “the driving force” for radical change, making imagination “essentially creative . . . it creates . . . from nothing . . . This creativity produces infinite worlds for humanity.” Thus, imagination “is a potent force in effecting social change in society. Society proceeds to an autonomous status whereby people can interrogate their own construction and create new social world. The social imaginary is a magmatic force that can explode and create a new social order. The social imaginary cannot be contained or foreclosed in society. Society yearns for a better society where their desires are recognized and satisfied. Human desire hinges on the social imaginary. Left unsatisfied, social imaginary remains a revolutionary spirit that recreates the world. Autonomy establishes a different relationship between the human psyche and the unconscious desire. Reflection enables society to ruminate explicitly on human desire.”

Gerry Lanuza begins “A Plea for Sobriety in Matters Epistemological . . .,” by acknowledging the recent ascendancy of postmodernism, which is a reaction against the positivist tradition, in sociology. Positivism, for example, espouses the production of objective knowledge “which is independent of the observer’s procedures for finding and producing knowledge.” Positivist sociology also subscribes “to the strict separation between facts and values . . . that values should not intrude in the interpretation and validation of data. “Finally, positivism uncritically adopts a “hypothetico-model . . . as the standard form of scientific explanation.”

Thus, “postmodernists challenge the commonsense realism that underpins social research. Pragmatic and poststructuralist versions of this critique advocate the total abandonment of realism in favor of social constructionism . . . the postmodern approach(es) encourage ethnography of textual representations themselves . . . The focus shifts away from the veracity of text to the analysis of styles and authorial voices that underline the unacknowledged power relations embedded within the texts.”

Lanuza, however, finds “irrational tendencies in postmodernism.” He offers a version of critical realism – “as a philosophical orientation of science” . . . as the best alternative midway between (the fallacies and errors of) positivism” and postmodernism’s excesses. Lanuza urges Filipino sociologists to adapt critical realism as “it is amenable to postcolonial critique of sociology,” rejecting “positivist oriented sociological research that uncritically imposes western categories on local cultures,” redefining “the use of quantitative methods” and “emphasizing the importance of qualitative method.” Finally, critical realism is useful for Filipino sociologists “who believe in the emancipatory goal of social research . . . (as) it embraces . . . the intersection of values, politics, and social research.”

In his article, **Niel Niño Lim** does precisely as he has titled it – “Exploring the Contextual Realities of Political Participation in the Age of Social Media.” He argues that the different social media platforms—in particular blogging, social networking, and content sharing—are evolving as a new political space especially among the youth. Owing to their participatory nature, these social media platforms are encouraging larger numbers of people to get involved in political issues and seems to be moving the venue of protest from the “streets to cyberspace.” He cites the revocation by President Gloria Arroyo of tax and duty impositions on imported books after 2,000 sign ups on Facebook, a social media platform. A characteristic unique to social media platforms such

as Facebook is that they allow “faster and more direct participation. . .and for grassroots initiatives.” They also allow people to become ‘actively passive,’ giving opportunity “for the expression of opinions of the inarticulate who would otherwise be disengaged if not for their Internet access.” Lim, however, cautions that because social media platforms are primarily “storages of content . . . (of a) wide array of information (and) . . . opinions . . . a public less ‘educated’ can be easily confused or be driven to propaganda.” Lim also argues that “. . . plurality on the Internet does not necessarily translate to diversity . . . That the opinion of a value-based middle-class dominates and invites other people of different economic and education profiles to converge on an inclusive, participatory platform and level off with a compromised view also suggests that a new space will most likely be an online version of the existing social framework, a case indicative of . . . ‘conditioned helplessness’.”

Eduardo Domingo, in “Re-reading Sociological Contexts as Texts: Intertextuality and the Sociology of Religion,” emphasizes the importance of taking into account the contexts in which sociological theories and paradigms arose when these theories and paradigms are appropriated as texts in current research. For, “taken out of (their) contexts, theoretical assumptions . . . lead to misapplication of theories.” Domingo refers to this task as intertextuality – “the history of a prior text and how it is transformed . . . the complex relationship between a text and other texts taken as basic to the understanding of the text.” Two processes are involved. Vertical intertextuality – “the relation of the texts of the sociology of religion to their contexts” and horizontal intertextuality – “the new contexts . . . that demand new frameworks or paradigms and how these have become new texts for the sociology of religion.” He then illustrates these processes through a case study – animism in the Philippines.

According to **Valerie Francisco** (“Moral Mismatch: Narratives of Migration from Immigrant Filipino Women in New York City and the Philippine State”) “. . . migration . . . is crafted by different justifications, motivations and goals” which she refers to as “moral economy,” a concept she borrows from studies of peasant economies and developing societies. She suggests, on the one hand, that the Philippine State has evolved a moral economy “justifying policies of labor export as ideologies of independence through migration.” On the other hand, Filipino migrant women have developed one “that bridges community with the market, embody an expanded (and unfair) sense of responsibility to family and state.” In arguing the existence of a “mismatch”

between these moral economies . . . and “the mistreatment that arises from the conflict,” Francisco cites the treatment of the deaths of three migrant workers in New York City. For migrant women, the refusal of the Philippine state “to repatriate the bodies of domestic workers in New York City is a breach of dignity and respect they have earned by leaving the country in the name of their families and their nation.” Thus for Francisco, “the dignity bestowed upon migrant workers was . . . expunged by the consulate’s lethargic response to the deaths of domestic workers The bankruptcy of the Philippine government’s moral economy . . . is visible when the state ignores domestic workers’ dire need for assistance at . . . death.”

Marie Noel Ngoddo’s “Empower/Disempowerment vis-à-vis Material Resources contributes to the study of empowerment by focusing on material resources on which it is claimed not much research has been conducted. Specifically, Ngoddo looks at the changes in the land property of Sabangan *Ili* in the Mountain Province. In this village, Ngoddo finds a condition of legal pluralism where “more than one source of law, more than one ‘legal order’ is observable.” This allows the people of Sabangan Ili “room for maneuver and space for one’s interest.” Thus, for example, they “can choose to make use of a land declaration or a free patent if they feel that the customary law is insufficient as security of land ownership.” Ngoddo, however, also found disempowering “the loss of institutional arrangements that are responsive to the poor. . . of the community” which can be seen “in the conversion of land from corporate to individually-owned properties.” With corporate lands gone, poor members of the community have fewer opportunities and options. Ngoddo also finds “some interventions of outside agencies disempowering “because they open opportunities for a few members . . . to be in sole control of . . . common resources thereby preventing the others equal access and use” Such interventions as well as other regulations are said to be disempowering because “a person’s or a group’s access to or use of material resources are constrained giving them less or zero probability of achieving their goals.”

In the last article in this issue, “A Feminist Reading of Filipina Sexuality in LitErotika Novels,” **Elinor May Cruz** presents the initial findings of her on-going investigation of Filipino sexuality as this is expressed in LitErotika novels, “a relatively new publication in the erotica genre” In her “feminist reading” of three such novels, she finds that they “represent Filipina sexuality in an appreciative and honest sense” where “the female experience is not incidental

relative to men's" but which "is in fact the center in which the LitErotika novels revolve in." In these novels, the target audience – "young single women . . . are able to see themselves in the stories that cater to their own desire;" they can express their desires of sex and love freely. They listen to their inner selves and not to the dictates of society." Women's sexuality is not denied" but "an innate quality that empowers them."

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