

Filipinization of the Social Sciences: A Red Herring?

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INTRODUCTION

red herring *n* 1. a herring cured by salting and slow smoking to a dark brown color. 2. [fr. the practice of drawing a red herring across a trail to confuse hunting dogs]: a diversion intended to distract attention from the real issue (Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary 1969)

My occupational propensity as a linguist shows itself by becoming entangled in words and terms: the controlling image which will form what the poet T.S. Eliot called 'an objective correlative,' in this case, a sharp image embodying or realizing an idea, for this article is precisely this, a red herring, associated with that ancient British sport of the hunt where a smoked

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herring was used to confuse hunting dogs.

Ever since Alfredo Lagmay of the Psychological Association of the Philippines brought up a research proposal at one annual meeting of the Social Sciences Division of the National Research Council of the Philippines on funding research directed towards the indigenization or Filipinization of the social sciences, the question of indigenization has been much on my mind.

Inspired by Alfredo Lagmay's suggestion, in SY 1978-79, I gathered together some of our social scientists on my campus for a series of monthly colloquia on their ideas on indigenization of research within their own disciplines (see Gonzalez 1979). We began with the notion of 'model' or Kuhn's 'paradigm' and examined the meaning of this technical term within each discipline, by implication, attempting to draw out what the requirements would be for a Philippine 'model' in that discipline.

One fruit of these discussions was a presentation of one of our visiting professors, Alvin Scaff, who subsequently expanded his presentation to a full-length monograph, the fruit of several lectures in 1979-1980 at Silliman University; these lectures were later expanded into a book (1982) entitled *Current Social Theory for Philippine Research*.

My ideas therefore are very much colored by the experience of these colloquia and my own background as a linguist and the specific use of the term 'model' in grammatical theory.

The topic is very much to the fore in the minds of social scientists not only in the Philippines but all over Asia; the Association of Asian Social Science Research Councils (ASSREC) during its conference in Manila on September 12-17, 1979 devoted an entire session to the topic of indigenization of the social sciences (see section VII of the Asian Social Scientist Newsletter No. 3, 1979).

INDIGENIZATION AS A FELICITOUS UNSOUGHT FOR RESULT RATHER THAN A PERFORMANCE

My own admittedly subjective view on this matter, at present, as my title indicates, is that this conscious research for a 'Filipino' social science is a red herring, that is, 'a diversion [unintentionally] intended to distract attention from the real issue' which in my opinion is the development of social science research in the Philippines for national development.

This search for a social science that is 'Filipino' is to me narcissistic. In Greek mythology, Narcissus fell in love with his own image and in the pro-

cess was turned into a flower!

In general, it is my impression that certain felicitous results in human life arise as a result of the convergence of spontaneous currents. Where one tries to 'plan' too much, the results can be unhappy ones. In many areas of human life, one is 'performing' and this 'performing' can lead to a lack of performance.

To make my point clear, let me take an example from the areas of sexuality.

Robert S. Wider, who used to write the column 'Dear Dr. Oui' in *Oui* magazine remarks in an article for the periodical *San Francisco*: 'My customary (and wisest) advice about sexual problems was to not worry about them. Many, if not most, "physical" disorders are primarily emotional, and nothing breeds impotence and failure like fear of impotence and failure, which can turn a single incident into an ongoing condition. Pressure to perform is the cancer of the id' (1982:64).

If I might paraphrase, by serendipity, and move the universe of discourse to the area of social science research, 'Pressure to be Filipino is the cancer of competent social science.'

SOME EXAMPLES OF 'PERFORMANCE'

Moving into an area where I have some familiarity, theology and philosophy, and the humanities in general, this pressure to 'perform' by Filipinizing theology, philosophy and literature antedated similar pressure to 'perform' in the social sciences. Because there have been some very clear efforts to Filipinize in this area, looking at the results might prove of some benefit.

In the area of philosophy and theology, perhaps the best known and fully conscious attempt to arrive at 'elements' of Filipino Philosophy and Theology has been Leonardo Mercado's attempts. While the efforts have been

valiant and consistent, I am afraid that the results have been infelicitous. What Mercado has done in his books (1974, 1975) is to cull from the findings of cultural anthropology and folklore 'elements' that could constitute seminal ideas for what traditional Western theology and philosophy have included in their considerations: God, Man, the Universe, Man's Relation with God and with Others. What results, it seems to me (Gonzalez 1976), is a labeling process, a matter of giving Philippine names, to realities learned in a Western tongue. If this is what Filipino philosophy and theology are, it is not too interesting.

A later attempt (1979) to Filipinize has been attempted by Jose de Mesa, a Louvain-trained theologian, especially in his notion of a 'Bahala Na God,' and while de Mesa competently adds empirical data from sociology and psychology in addition to data from cultural anthropology and folklore and literature, what results once more in his work is Western personalism and phenomenology given Tagalog labels (see my review, Gonzalez 1980).

I am not downgrading these efforts. I am pointing out that this conscious search has not yet resulted in an interesting body of knowledge; perhaps the very logic and structure of the enterprise, when 'performed' this way, inevitably gives rise to glorified labeling, a less obvious form of translation.

Presently I am grappling with a search for an approach, a methodology. Whatever this approach or methodology, it seems to me that theologizing and philosophizing are spontaneous reflections based on lived experience, in the case of theology, lived experience around a community of believers continually meditating on a tradition, preferably in their native tongues. What results from such a lived experience is probably unpredictable, but it will probably be more authentically Filipino than the self-conscious search we are talking about. The enterprise takes

years of maturation and experience of living together, dialoguing, thinking together, exchanging views and criticizing each other.

The same principle of spontaneity rather than narcissistic performing would apply to a search for an authentic Philippine literature going beyond our folklore. Here language is on the side of indigenization. A friend of mine and a colleague, a prizewinning poet and dramatist fluent and 'literary' in both Pilipino and English, told me just recently that he can no longer write drama in English anymore since the speech patterns of his Filipino characters sound so unnatural in a foreign tongue whereas he could still write fiction in English since he was not subject to the same constraint. American authors have been trying to write the Great American Novel for two centuries and have not yet succeeded. I doubt if there ever will be a GREAT FILIPINO NOVEL until we stop worrying about whether our fiction is authentic Filipino, ersatz American, or derivative European. The literary writer's vision will emerge from the Philippine experience, and while language is certainly a plus factor, I would essay the guess that something authentically Filipino can also be written in English if it is born of an author's life and vision, without the hassle of trying to be authentically Filipino.

Moving now into the area of the social sciences, one thinks of Remigio Agpalo's (1973) corporeal metaphor for local government, a conscious attempt to come up with a governmental model strictly Filipino. My impression is that it has not taken on.

Neither for that matter has the barangay model of local governance taken on except in the imaginations of certain New Society strategists and collaborators in the writing of *Tadhana!*

My suspicion is that these models have not taken on for the same reason

I mentioned — they did not arise from the lived experience of Filipinos at present and hence are not spontaneous creations but efforts at performance, in the latter case, to serve political ends of social engineering.

In social science research in the Philippines, a promising locus of activity in this enterprise of indigenization has been the group around Virgilio Enriquez in his search of *sikolohiyang Pilipino*. The earlier attempts by Lynch and Hollnsteiner (see de Guzman and Lynch 1973 and Hollnsteiner 1979) seemed to be labeling activities of common Asian and feudal-agricultural values (authentic but not necessarily Filipino *per se*). Enriquez first of all does his theorizing in Filipino and does his writing in Pilipino; merely as a heuristic device, a discovery procedure, this has merit, since it forces the writer to re-think concepts and principles and even the model in its most simple and elementary forms by returning to the 'deep structure' of the language (linguists have lately attempted to explain the process of translation by means of a two-tiered grammatical model consisting of deep and surface structures). Moreover, Enriquez (1977) worked in an area where Filipinos are most adept, where the language has a rich vocabulary of feeling and sentiment. The method called for ethnographic methods, language analysis, semantics, and introspection, which are probably taboo to a Skinnerian Behaviorist but nevertheless have yielded a treasure trove of rich nuances of sentiment. Here I would aver that language was a discovery (heuristic) tool for the sensitivity of a people; it provided the instrument to refine the tools of research so as to discover categories and subcategories which would be lost to a Western English-speaking researcher. Language provides the clues, but ultimately, standard empirical procedures had to be employed to verify these intuitions and ultimately to give them empirical undergirding. In Enri-

quez's circle, what began as 'performance' ended up in additional insight, bolstered by a variety of Western procedures and techniques, in the process, undoubtedly, especially in the area of discovery procedures, better tools of investigation were shaped, which have contributed to methodological enrichment.

Moving to an area where I am more familiar, the area of language, specifically the sociology of language, Joshua Fishman (1981) reviewed a cooperative work of our linguists on bilingual education and mentioned (perhaps 'complained' is a better term) that while the work of our sociolinguists was competent, its research designs were too much based on 'precedents' done in North America and other parts of the world by North Americans and did not sufficiently explore the possibilities of innovating in research procedures and methodology suggested by Philippine conditions.

MODELS AND PARADIGMS IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

While there have been reservations with regard to Kuhn's use of the term 'paradigm' (it would seem that 'paradigm' is an analogical term, with not quite exactly the same meaning across disciplines, especially the physical sciences vis-a-vis the social sciences; the term as used would then have what Wittgenstein called 'a family resemblance' across disciplines) and his claim regarding the dominance of one paradigm (the normal state of science seems to be that paradigms coexist), his analysis is nevertheless still relevant to the discussion.

Perhaps, more than the infelicitous results of the efforts thus far in Filipinizing the social sciences (which could very well be attributable not to any inherent difficulty with the concept of indigenization or acculturation when applied to the social sciences but which may be ascribed to the lack of maturity

of research in the discipline within our social context) is my keen awareness, based on my experience as a linguist in dealing with grammatical paradigms; that there are many alternative paradigms or models available to the social scientist in almost every discipline (Gonzalez and Rafael 1980). This possibility of choice protects the serious social scientist from 'intellectual imperialism' if he is creative enough to familiarize himself with different models and flexible enough not merely to replicate foreign studies and designs but, like Claude Lévi-Strauss' (1966) unschooled 'scientist' in a pre-rationalist non-Western culture, if he can be a *bricoleur*, to improvise from existing materials, in this case various models, and to come up with a product that utilizes the best of existing paradigms.

I am not for a moment advocating the indiscriminate potpourri of various paradigms or models of which unfortunately certain students not aware of the metascience of their respective sciences have been guilty. Some researchers seem unable to realize that the conceptual tools they are working with are manmade, culture-bound, historically limited and themselves products of the social construction of reality with all the attendant factors that went to make up this paradigm. What they end up with is a form of indigestible intellectual goulash. To extend the analogy, what I am advocating is a modern version of Lévi-Strauss' *bricolage*, a creative intellectual artistic activity which combines the best of ingredients into a pleasing consistent whole.

The existing state of the social sciences permits such an option, in the sense in that in most disciplines (I am thinking of linguistics, psychology, sociology, economics, and political science in particular), there is an array of paradigms to choose from. In fact, the training of a social scientist in these disciplines should include a meta-scientific dimension, a critical view of

the existing dominant paradigms in the discipline across cultures so that the creative young social scientist working in his own milieu and grappling with his own problems, in his research designs and in his search for a theory within which to fit his investigations, will be able to select that theory or model or paradigm which best suits the purposes of the study to make his data gathering meaningful and productive.

As far as I can see, with the fervid activity in most of the social science disciplines, what we have now is a healthy buyer's market of paradigms with which we can do our scientific work for our own disciplines and our own needs, this time, contextualizing our needs within the over-all purpose of national development.

It seems to me that what is primarily needed for the progress of the social sciences in the Philippines is not a conscious search for a Philippine paradigm in sociology, psychology, economics, linguistics, political science, etc. but an empirical orientation that looks at the reality of the situation, the facts, in their context and as much as is humanly feasible, in their totality; creative guessing in the beginning to help us in formulating our working hypotheses; and then a search for the theory (among available theories) which might help us attempt an explanation and to find verification for our hypotheses; usually such theory is allied with a particular procedure, methodology, and tools (in the case of the social sciences, quantitative tools). For this activity, good libraries are needed to help us familiarize ourselves with what has been done to meet similar problems all over the world, to suggest possibilities, to enrich our guesses.

One of the problems of Philippine social science research is this lack of access to world scientific literature especially outside of the North American world (compounded by a lack of reading knowledge of foreign languages)

and the lack of a critical sharpening in the training of our social scientists to master their imported models rather than be mastered by them. Being mastered by them is manifested by among other things enslavement to one's M.A. or Ph.D. training (never going beyond this); enslavement to (even hero-worship of) one's teachers; and above all, like the groundhog, setting limits to one's intellectual territory. Few Ph.D.'s in the Philippines, as a result of many pressures, especially administration and consultancies, do any serious research after their doctorates (thus they are limited in their intellectual horizons to the paradigm used in their doctoral dissertations) and if they do research, few read outside of their particular specialization to be able to serendipitously discover that there are different ways of intellectually skinning a cat and that there are different modes of inquiry which might be more suitable to the project at hand.

I have often been dismayed during M.A. and Ph.D. dissertation presentations and similar oral examinations by the aping of research designs (replications of someone's study abroad) and by mindless churning out of statistical tables (aided by the legitimacy of a canned computer program — with the thesis writer often not knowing what his statistical 'consultant' has done for a fee) and irrelevant numbers which add nothing to our knowledge but merely add more numerical support to facts we already know or which are self-evident from simple description.

One particular M.A. thesis that I read stands out as a classic example of this type of mindlessness. A particular graduate student had fallen in love with analysis of variance (ANOVA) and set out to 'prove' from language test results that the different sections of a particular year in one school were statistically different in their language proficiency. In those days, we did not have computerized ANOVA programs to help us with the burden of calcula-

tion and this person had to do two-way analyses of variance among eight sections (8 factorial) by a calculator and spent months computing these, with the help of research assistants, only to arrive at the 'startling' conclusion that the language proficiency of the students in each section were 'significantly' different. I could have told her the same thing by quickly looking at the English grades or by asking every section to write a short paragraph and then doing an impressionistic survey of the written samples.

If this type of mindless repetition and imitation is what our dependency-theorists term 'intellectual colonization,' then by all means, it should go and be eradicated as soon as possible.

However, this kind of 'colonization' is of our own making. Intellectual liberation or freedom should come from being aware of other paradigms, not being dominated by one, but using these paradigms as our needs indicate, based on the perceived and intuited realities of the situation, so that in turn, these intuitions may be verified by more formal rational and logical procedures.

TOWARDS PHILIPPINE PARADIGMS

Models, usually revisions of dominant ones, or radical alterations of existing ones as critical reactions to their limitations, do not arise in an intellectual vacuum.

They spontaneously arise from scientific minds grappling with reality, attempting to explain it, and unsatisfied with the conceptual tools being used to explain these realities.

Local models and paradigms will emerge 'on native soil' not by consciously searching for them but by doing competent — 'good' — social science. The establishment of a research tradition in social inquiry, a tradition that is made alive when social scientists talk to each other, are not afraid to criticize each other, read each other's

works and help each other by suggesting revisions and improvements, exchanging publications with one another, meeting in forums, forming professional societies into strong bodies instead of splintering into different groups built around personalities, is the work of a generation. There can be no 'instant' Filipino social science. From a tradition which will constitute the seed bed will sprout innovations in paradigms, based on perception of what Kuhn calls 'anomalies,' and eventually, as a natural, spontaneous, not self-conscious, by-product, model revision and model substitution.

That is why I tend to think of our search for a Philippine paradigm as a red herring, a distraction veering us away from what we should be pursuing instead with passion and fortitude — as one advocate of a national language remarked in the second decade of our history in this century — *con fortaleza*: what we need is not a conscious Philippine model but good competent internationally credible social science research. Innovating, improving, bold in our inquiries and willing to differ from received traditions, critical of the limitations of our colleagues from outside the country who are limited by their own cultural backgrounds, but above all, critical of ourselves in our methodology, we shall hone our investigative skills to a fine point.

From the ecstasy that arises from play, rather than effort, will come illumination — *bodhi* — and in the process, without our searching for it, will arise a Philippine social science arising out of a tradition of research.

The process, not the product, is important for our efforts, for the product will arise from the process — quite naturally and spontaneously.

Our aim should be the big push towards research in the countryside, among our people, not from the air-conditioned confines of our offices in Makati and seminars at well-appointed tourist spots, but among the people, living with them as unobtrusive parti-

cipant observers, searching for all relevant factors in context, and above all, wondering and asking questions.

These remarks by Alvin Scaff (1982: 8) are worth repeating:

As the development of Philippine nationalism gathers momentum, selecting and formulating theory for research in the Philippines becomes high priority for Philippine social scientists. The review of current theory reveals that there are several options to choose from. Theory which has been developed in other nations may be borrowed, adapted, changed, or improved for Philippine use. The sources for theory, as is true in all sciences, are international. It is not necessary to re-invent the wheel just to prove national identity. The borrowing of theory does not rule out the development of new theory . . . Filipino social scientists are already making a place for themselves among their counterparts in international professional circles. Theory is not an end in itself; on the contrary, theory is a needed step in reaching greater understanding. The primary objective must be the understanding of Philippine society.

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