

## Culture, Social Science and the Conceptualization of the Philippine Nation-State

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The use of culture as a transcendental justification for social order is a recent phenomenon that, paradoxically, arises out of an earlier understanding of it as amenable and negotiable. This new understanding of culture, best expressed by the bourgeoisie, marks the rise of a modern social consciousness making social sciences possible and enabling new forms of imagined communities like the nation-state. The modern nation-state invents the nation as its cultural expression, and the social sciences assist the nation-state in constituting and reproducing itself. However, social sciences also arise out of the conditions of civil society that, as part of the human telos, seeks universal conditions for reaching an understanding. From this perspective, social science must, and is able to, criticize the narrow interests of the state and the cultural assumptions of the nation. In the Philippine case, the absence of a strong and sovereign national culture in the 19<sup>th</sup> century prevented the development of a social science. As one began to take root following the economic changes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, its development was interrupted by the onset of American colonization. It would take nearly another century before Filipinos confidently proclaimed their own social science perspective. But even as Philippine social science attempts to imagine the nation through indigenous concepts, it risks essentializing Filipinohood by reducing its differences. Instead, it should explore the rich sources of difference within civil and global society, and point out the contingent and narrow interests of states, thereby helping to establish a universal basis for understanding.

### Introduction

Anderson (1983) has given us valuable suggestions about some of the characteristics of a national imagination. There are, however, other important aspects of this imagination that Anderson fails to mention. I deal briefly with the role of schooling in displacing local knowledge and replacing it with forms more consistent with a national culture. More importantly, I will discuss the specific function of social science in legitimating and constituting a universal basis of knowledge centered around the nation-state. As Spencer (1990) has argued, anthropologists have on the whole, not challenged nationalists, those other main purveyors of culture as an organizing concept for society. While anthropologists have used culture to delineate their discipline, nationalists have politicized its use to achieve wide-ranging social transformations. Nationalists initially use culture as an organizing principle for the political order but then by sacralizing the nation, place culture above the political

process. In such a case, the task of anthropology is to show that while culture can represent "the principles of being that locate and orient human beings within their existential realities" (Kapferer 1988), these principles are always forged within a given set of possibilities set by historical and contingent-practical circumstances. This view locates culture within a field of practices and as part of a process of a negotiated becoming rather than a set of fixed, pure or transcendental principles handed down from one generation to the next. Among other things, culture is a political artifact, strategically used by nationalists for their own ends. One such end is a particular constitution of the modern nation-state.

The use of culture as a transcendental justification for social order is a recent phenomenon that, paradoxically, arises out of an earlier understanding of it as amenable and negotiable. This new understanding of culture, best expressed by the bourgeoisie, marks the rise of a modern social consciousness making both sociology and anthropology possible, and enabling new forms of imagined communities such as the nation-state. The latter represents a developed and specialized spatio-temporal unit organized around deep cultural ties linking its members to a commonly imagined past and anticipated future. While a diasporal Jewry shared features of this imagination, Zionism linked it to a specific spatio-temporal order. What had earlier been conceived as a spatial metaphor for the nation (homeland-*heimat*-*patria*) was transformed into the modern concept of territory, a clearly delineated space within which a national culture exists. An earlier culturalization of place is transformed into its territorialization. Durkheim (1915) has argued that space-time is conceived in cultural categories (e.g., the preeminence of the right, the valorization of the past), reflecting the social relationships of its members. However, the modern nation-state is a cultural category defined spatio-temporally. What for Durkheim were ideological expressions of social relationships have become organizational principles for their constitution.

The conscious use of space and time as "principles of being that locate and orient human beings within their existential realities" only became possible during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The cadastralization of space and the chronometrization of time detached these *a priori* notions from their natural moorings and transformed them into artifactual constructs. Their subsequent standardization in territories and time-zones allowed them to become normative and definitional categories. Henceforth,



space-time are doubly constitutive. While remaining cultural products, as Durkheim argued, they not only reflect but also shape social relations. For this reason, like the individuals that constitute them, nation-states note and celebrate their birth and jealously protect their jurisdictions.

In another paper, I explored how Philippine society has been imagined, constructed and theorized in the social sciences (Perterra 1992). The production of the Philippines as part of a conceptual-theoretical discourse and its relationship to corresponding structures such as the nation-state and local communities have not been sufficiently examined. The conceptual background for such an investigation is poorly understood and often only available through Western perspectives. I examined this conceptual background in order to reveal its limitations as well as to show how the production of a national imagination is embedded in often unacknowledged processes of cultural negotiation. In the modern period, culture is used both as a category for understanding society as well as a principle for organizing it. It is this latter use (i.e., culture as a principle for organizing society), in the context of the modern Philippine state, that I will discuss in this paper.

### **Cultural Conditions of Late Modernity**

The self-understanding of a national community as a culturally homogeneous and spatio-temporally delimited entity provided the model, under the conditions of modernity, for a distinct sphere of the social. It was this new understanding of the social as a theoretical category that made sociology possible. Hence, the modern nation-state and sociology, as Giddens (1990) has observed, are intimately linked. While I accept the close links between the nation-state and the social sciences, it is a mistake to conflate their interests. Even as social science requires the resources of the modern nation-state for its teaching and research needs, it is equally dependent on a vigorous civil culture distinct from the state, lest the state conflate its interests with society at large. Society is the ultimate source for the state's legitimacy even as the state suborns the ideology of nationhood to replace civil society. Society arises out of an association of which the nation, however important, is but one instance.

While the modern state is increasingly able to shape structures of consciousness and to control many aspects of everyday life, it does not



exhaust all the sources of collective experience. Other forms of association and social effervescence remain outside the formal structures of the state, providing it with the values and symbols necessary for its reproduction and legitimation. As Nandy (1990) has argued, science is now often used as a rationale for state action. In the present global context, the nation-state is no longer the primary site for the source of representations. As a consequence, the boundaries between cultures have become porous as center and periphery are increasingly intertwined. Under these conditions, identity no longer represents cores but rather intersections of experience involving a network of acentric nodes communicating simultaneously.

In a post-modern world, the global condition is experienced in plural localities such as Paris, New York and Tokyo as well as Managua, Chiang Mai and Manila. These acentric nodes nurture their own local identities while interposing the cultural boundaries of a global order. Sites of cultural production and consumption are no longer spatially nor temporally distinguished, creating difficulties for the maintenance of earlier canonical standards. The condition which Rosaldo (1989) calls "borderland hysteria," involves the co-location of heterogeneous temporal or spatial modes — the past co-exists with the present and the global with the local. The global condition interposes localities and identities, leading to the decontextualization of culture from its sources in lived experience, and encouraging a view of it as autopoiesic and self-referential (Appadurai 1990). No longer grounded in a local routine of everyday life with its corresponding set of collective images, culture increasingly becomes merely the representation or domain of signifying practices rather than the arena of practical significations.

Under these conditions, where culture is not necessarily collectively shared but only synchronically networked, it becomes almost a personal quest rather than a communal affair. The expression of such a diasporal and subjective identity is manifested in the rise of new forms of ethnicities. In these contexts, culture can be visualized as landscapes and experienced as representations. Thus, the picture of the lonely Greek *gastarbeiter* nostalgically gazing at a poster (courtesy of Lufthansa) featuring the Parthenon, which he has probably never visited, while recalling his natal village (Anderson 1992). Similarly, Filipinos plaster their walls with old calendars and magazines evoking lives and places to which they aspire as they await the monthly remittances of overseas kin.



Since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the postcard and printed illustrations allow for the global circulation of localities. Electronic communication and aviation have compounded this capacity, making possible the colocation of heterogeneous simultaneities leading to borderland hysteria and other aporias and agonisms characteristic of post-modernity.

### **Functionalization of the Social Sphere**

The cadastralization of space and the chronometrization of time eliminated the autonomy of the local, transforming locality into a set of spatio-temporal coordinates. Cartesian space-time assumes the homogeneous nature of extension/duration such that any point in the system of coordinates can be expressed as a value of a given function. For modernity, the social can be plotted or imagined as one such function, all of whose members are linked to one another spatio-temporally. A nation-state is a collectivity whose functional representation assumes that all its members share a simultaneous present and hence a commonly anticipated future. Any point on this set of spatio-temporal coordinates is functionally linked to other points through membership in a common order called the nation-state.

Earlier states or dynastic realms as Anderson (1983) refers to them, could not be plotted on the same set of coordinates since their members were not linked to a given set of spatio-temporal projects but were instead contingently associated through diverse and idiosyncratic orders. While such a diversity could co-exist side by side, this was achieved through an hierarchic accommodation of their differences as in caste-based systems or by maintaining predatory relationships (e.g., New Guinea highlands), rather than, as in the modern case, their rational negotiation. This rational negotiation of difference is possible because modernity is based on a sense of simultaneous presentness generating a commonly anticipated future (Heller 1990). Modern society is all association of individuals functionally coordinating their actions to this simultaneous present (Pertierra 1997).

A feature of modernity is the crucial role of knowledge for the expression, maintenance and reproduction of power. While knowledge represents a form of power in all societies, certain modes of power (e.g., policing) in the conditions of modernity, can only be expressed through



its relationship with knowledge (e.g., surveillance). Hence, the functionalization of society is a pre-condition for power to be primarily exercised through its control of knowledge. While I am drawing attention to the close links between knowledge and power under the conditions of modernity, and as expressed in the social sciences, I am not claiming that knowledge is only or primarily a relationship of power. Rather, that power requires new forms of knowledge, such as social science, for its effectiveness in modern society. Hence, a critical social science is necessary to counterbalance modern society's functional goals. Social science has emancipatory as well as instrumental goals.

By contrast, non-modern societies do not have to have social science as a form of collective-knowledge. For them, religion, art and philosophy constitute adequate and sufficient forms of knowledge. Levels of self-understanding achieved through these alternative modes are no less revelatory than social science, even in societies that have been functionalized. Dumont (1970), Luhmann (1982) and Heller (1990) have argued that modes of self-understanding are associated with particular social structures. Hence, hierarchically stratified societies have a mode of self-understanding different from functionally organized ones.

In this sense, the functionalization of primitive societies in anthropology is both necessary and doubly constitutive. Starting with the universal assumption that culture is a product of human-social agency, anthropology constitutes other societies functionally in order to comprehend and compare how alternative subjectivities reconstitute their life-worlds. This gain in knowledge may then be used to reconstitute our own understanding of modernity, including the limits of functionalization.

Science and technology are the preferred modes of knowledge used by the modern state to organize society. Other knowledge modes such as art, literature or philosophy are seen as being subjective, non-cumulative, inconclusive and therefore insufficiently reliable for instrumental needs, even if they are necessary for society's ideological constitution. Their systematization under the rubric of culture (high and popular) is presented as forms of representation or as the domain of signifying but subjective practices. Such representations are seldom linked to their corresponding generative structures.



Weber's fears about the iron cage of reason are well founded, given a view of knowledge that is limited to its instrumental-strategic modes. Objective reason discourages modes of understanding which arise in interactions where common values determine interest positions. Instead, objective-instrumental reason only recognizes interest positions in terms of functional goals. While Habermas (1989) attempts to overcome this restriction by including dialogic communication as a basis for understanding, he is less clear about the conditions that make such a communication not only formally possible, but also practically feasible.

Following the fragmentation of social life and the decontextualization of culture (e.g., *gastarbeiter*-Parthenon-natal village) under modernity, the basis for dialogic communication that Habermas assumes, is seldom guaranteed. In these conditions, ego and alter do not assume a basis for agreement through common values but only through interest positions. Because of the decontextualization of culture, such common values cannot arise in functionally organized societies directly out of interest positions.

### **Conceptions for the Universal Basis of Understanding**

While the needs of the modern nation-state required new forms of knowledge provided by the social sciences, the latter are also a product of a critical tradition dating back to their classical philosophical roots, maintained during the Renaissance and encouraged by the Enlightenment. This tradition distances itself from the narrow and strategic needs of the state in order to build links across political communities as well as within them. It seeks a ground for consensus outside the formal structures of the political order and instead bases the possibilities of agreement on universal conditions of understanding. Thus, medieval universities were always extra-local institutions seeking to build a community of scholars not totally beholden to parochial interests but to the universal pursuit of truth (Swanson 1979). In other words, by an interest for consensual agreement beyond narrow political boundaries.

This wider understanding was initially provided by the common and wide acceptance of a Christian dominion. From the times of their establishment universities, such as Paris, Oxford, Salamanca, Bologna and Leipzig issued judgments accepted as valid beyond their local boundaries (*sub specie aeternitatis*). As part of their functions, these



universities deliberately cultivated a universal perspective detached from the immediate and narrow demands of local and even national administrators.

Whereas the state expresses a structure of practical action, the nation represents a moral and ideal community to which the state is legitimately associated. The modern concept of culture is increasingly used to define the nation in a way that essentializes or primordializes it. Such a conception of nationhood facilitates its colonization by the state. In this view, culture is no longer a negotiated and contingent reality constituted by acting subjects but a transcendent or historic one, which the state dutifully imposes. Thus, while the social sciences are closely linked to modern state structures, they are not totally subservient to the needs of the state. In fact, they act as a counterpoint between the state and the society that encompasses it. For this reason, however important questions of policy may be, the social sciences cannot be limited to offering policy advice. To do so would pervert their other equally important function, which is to express the general needs of society, including extramural understanding. The social sciences must balance their administrative and policy functions with their emancipatory and universal roles. They must point out the constraints within which all discourse on policy operates so as to offer alternative views of social needs and the social good. Social problems as defined by the state have to be deconstructed before their transformation into sociological questions.

### **Sovereignty and the Nation-State**

I have argued that the social sciences have close but also critical links with the modern nation-state. This closeness arises out of the knowledge requirements of modern governance. While it was at the level of the nation-state that society first became fully aware of social agency as artifactual and rationally amenable, the conditions for this consciousness has wider ontological grounds. For this reason, social science also expresses interests outside the nation-state, and its practice must include them.

A cadastral space and chronometric time, achieved by the modern state during the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, combined with the increasing division of labor, produced a consciousness of difference requiring rational forms of resolution. The exercise of sovereignty by the



nation-state and its acknowledgement of similarly constituted entities, provided the basis for the social sciences. Other forms of association based either on locality or ethnicity and drawing on notions of primordiality, constitute less suitable grounds for the rational amenability of social life, an ultimate goal of social science.

For these reasons, while there are attempts to create a Singaporean social science, there are no attempts to create a Balinese one, since the latter sees itself as embedded in a primordial consciousness unable to raise the question of conscious self-constitution. To do so would challenge Indonesia's undisputed sovereignty over the island. By contrast, a Singaporean identity sees itself as sovereignly and artifactually constitutive. Correspondingly, while Filipinos seek to develop an indigenous social science, they do so only at the level of the nation. The quest for a Filipino psychology is not echoed in demands for an Ifugao one. What both the Balinese and the Ifugao can seek is a muted version of sovereignty under the guise of traditional or native rights. Thus, while they may not determine their political futures, they can at least preserve their original identities. They may preserve their past but they cannot determine their future. The determination of the future lies at the level of the nation-state, which, as stated earlier, consists of a collectivity whose members share an artifactually simultaneous present.

The close links which social science has with the nation-state were forged at a time when nation-states were engaged in establishing a new global order. Colonialism, and later imperialism, required that the main Western powers reach an understanding for an efficient exploitation of their resources. The global economy required the increasing coordination of transnational regions of production, exchange and consumption. This required a basis of consensus beyond the nation, which was provided by the transnational community of scholars who had earlier formed the *respublica litteratorum*. The new basis for consensus was now provided by the ideals of a universal and empirical science. The establishment of gold as the official medium of international exchange in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was supplemented by the imposition of standard time zones and universal units of measurements. These not only ensured the expansion of the possibilities for sharing both a simultaneous present and predictable futures, but also encouraged a rational negotiation of difference motivated by the expansion of market exchange, initially among the colonizers but eventually encompassing the colonized (Asad 1973; Clifford and Marcus



1986). Under the conditions of post-coloniality, the ethnographic Other (Fabian 1983) is forced, often unwillingly, into our present. As a consequence, the only way anthropology is able to discuss incommensurable differences between the Western self and the non-Western other is through their functionalization.

### Conditions for a Philippine Social Science

So far I have discussed the most general conditions for the possibility of a social science. The creation and maintenance of a modern political order requires new forms of knowledge, *staatswissenschaft* (e.g., social statistics, demography, penology, public health, economics, psychology, sociology and anthropology). Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, studies began to appear in the Philippines written by Spaniards and Filipinos dealing with social problems that required a modern and scientific understanding. The interest in criminality, social policy and public health represented new modes of governmentality, effectively transforming traditional modes of domination into their modern counterparts. The supervisory and socializing role of the church was slowly replaced by the school. These studies increased during the American period (1896-1946) and included anthropological investigations of non-Christian tribes. The growing functionalization of knowledge, advocated by the school system, competed with, but did not entirely replace, earlier epistemic modes. The latter's persistence in contemporary Philippine society has prevented its total functionalization.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, several decades after the opening of Philippine ports to international trade, the country was slowly emerging out of its pre-modern past. The rising generation of *ilustrados* (European educated Filipinos), greatly influenced by political and cultural developments in Europe, were keen to translate these orientations into the Philippines but were opposed both by the church and the colonial state. Nevertheless, the *ilustrados* laid the basis for a Filipino national culture, drawing from but also consciously re-shaping elements of its colonial past.

As early as 1889, Jose Rizal, the leading *ilustrado* of his generation, proposed Philippine studies as an object of investigation to his German friend Ferdinand Blumentritt (Salazar 1990). Rizal envisioned this activity not only as the study of the Philippines, whether by Filipinos or foreigners,



but also as a constitutive activity resulting in a distinct Philippine perspective. This new perspective could be used, in turn, to view the ways in which scholars had earlier constituted the Philippines as their object of study. Rizal soon realized that under the prevailing conditions, while a study of the Philippines was possible, this could only be pursued from a non-Philippine perspective. For Philippine studies to be fully developed, there had to be a view of Philippine society that acknowledged the constitutive role of Filipinos in shaping their lives. Otherwise, Philippine society is seen as the product of actions outside the purview of its members. Thus, for Rizal, Philippine studies expresses as well as constitutes a perspective of Filipino experience. This experience cannot be fully understood until Filipinos themselves become active agents in its definition, an impossibility under the conditions of coloniality. This epistemic constraint was clearer to Rizal than to his European colleagues. While the *Ilustrados* were laying the foundations for such a Philippine perspective, international factors (Spanish-American war) intervened. Spanish colonizers were replaced by Americans, resulting in a cultural and social disruption that prevented its completion. Lacking such a perspective, Philippine studies as advocated by Rizal were aborted. Instead, such studies became part of the new colonizers' mode of governance.

Despite a continuing indigenous perspective, the impetus for social science in the Philippines developed out of the administrative needs of the American colonial regime. The University of the Philippines became the model for the modern nexus between knowledge and the requirements of democratic governance. Where earlier tertiary institutions such as the *Universidad de Santo Tomas* were dominated by the needs of clerical exegesis, the University of the Philippines represented the empirical search for rational principles of social life. Anthropology, sociology and political science (1911-14) were early components of the new university's structure, and while initially headed by Americans, Filipinos were soon training in these disciplines. Although most of these Filipino pioneers in social science seldom questioned the appropriateness of their Western training, the local needs of a colonial nation-state shaped their interests. Despite the reigning positivism characterizing American social science; both Americans and Filipinos soon realized the limitations of metropolitan theory in the Philippine context (Weightman 1985). Political independence in 1946 sharpened these perceptions, and conscious attempts were made to satisfy the requirements of an emerging national consciousness.



In 1957, Catapusan was complaining that while sociology existed in the Philippines, there was as yet no Philippine sociology. In other words, while empirical studies of Philippine society existed, such studies did not proceed from a national perspective. Nearly three decades later and a century after Rizal, David (1984: 72) finally proclaimed the existence of a Philippine sociology:

[W]e have at last begun to appropriate the discipline, to use it rather than to be used by it, and to extend its boundaries far beyond the parameters set by Hunt and Coller's sociology.

This pronouncement had been preceded a few years earlier by a similar one for psychology (*Sikolohiyang Pilipino*; Enriquez 1990), and Agpalo (1981) was advocating an indigenous model for political science. It seemed that Rizal's vision of a distinctive Filipino perspective had finally arrived.

However, the period of late modernity that had framed Rizal's ideas had in the intervening time been replaced by the conditions of post-modernity. The basis for a Philippine perspective that Rizal's generation might have negotiated no longer existed. Modern communication, global migration and transnational production have created a condition of cultural dislocation and hybridity, such that national boundaries are no longer the primary constituents of a collective consciousness, and even less of a personal identity. In the modern diaspora, culture tends to be substantivized, and rather than seen as a collective identity, it becomes an individual accomplishment.

### **Schools and the Displacement of Local Knowledge**

One of the main aims of American colonialism was to modernize Philippine society through the introduction of mass schooling. Education was seen as the main institution for transforming the country from its medieval past to a democratic future. The school was seen as the locus of modern knowledge, as well as the site for the transmission of civic values such as democracy, personal achievement and a new work ethic. The school became the main channel for the constitution of a secular, national experience serving the needs of modernity. Having themselves experienced the novelty and transformative capacity of modern schooling, the Americans embarked on a similar transformation for the Philippines.



But just as the Filipinos had earlier appropriated and transformed Spanish colonial aims in accepting Christianity (Rafael 1988), the new Philippine elite adopted mass schooling for its own ends. Having earlier fused Catholic eschatological notions with indigenous beliefs, the modern values of American education were also transformed to suit the needs of local elites.

Young (1981) studied the effects of schooling on the perception of opportunities and the horizons of meaning in a small rural Philippine community. The introduction of schools in this area coincided with the recruitment of laborers for the plantations of Hawaii early this century. Young shows how schools raised people's expectations in a way that favored the seeking of opportunities outside the community. Not only do schools raise people's awareness of the outside world but they also devalorize local in favor of curricular knowledge. The result is an increasing dissatisfaction with locally available options and a preference for out-migration. Young is able to connect wide changes in Philippine society to local factors following the introduction of schools. The requirements of advanced schooling encouraged students to leave their communities but did not provide them with skills that could be used on their return. This period of absence from their local communities raised their expectations and encouraged them to seek opportunities outside their natal areas. Parents began considering, as their foremost duty, to educate their children irrespective of the possibilities of employment. The importance of schooling in Young's municipality and in many other Philippine communities is hegemonic, since its practical benefits seldom justify its expense. Most of the resources of the household are mobilized to give its younger members the opportunity for a formal education. While much advanced schooling in the Philippines has largely symbolic value, a consequence of their inadequate facilities and underpaid staff, courses such as nursing and computer studies are presently favored because they are seen as providing overseas opportunities.

One of the most important questions raised by Young's study is his insistence that the Ilocano propensity to migrate must be seen in terms of the expectations raised by schooling, in the context of the demands for overseas labor. In his study of the content of local curricula, he is able to show how students cultivate a preference for life outside the community by being taught about the affluence of Western society. Despite the difficulties of life abroad experienced by Ilocano migrants, a conspiracy,



albeit unstated, is established between what is taught in schools and how migrants extol their own experiences. The result is the romanticization of out-migration. The local community is seen as the vestige of what is backward and undesirable, while life abroad is painted in glowing terms. This view advantages certain classes or sectors of Philippine society. It encourages people to seek solutions outside rather than explore changes inside local society. It also provides a reserve army of labor that ensures the reproduction of class relations in terms most advantageous to its dominant members.

Young argues that schooling is a major element of change but it is also responsible for ensuring that such change is achieved in ways that do not question basic inequalities. By raising expectations and pointing to opportunities outside the local community, schools reproduce local inequalities while appearing to favor democratic solutions. The disciplinary effects of schools, although not stressed by Young, result in the production of a pedagogical subject. This subject is designated either as a failure, in which case only certain opportunities are legitimately open, or as a success, in which case rewards are possible if the subject is willing to undergo further periods of schooling. The latter ensures that these candidates are no longer functionally related to their local community and instead affiliate themselves with the bureaucratic and national elite. Such a period of training ensures that the local community is no longer the proper site for the utilization of curricular knowledge. Schools thus provide the framework of experience that makes possible the imagining of a national community (Anderson 1983) but they do so by devaloring local knowledge. Several investigators (Mulder 1990; Young 1982) have shown how much of formal schooling depicts local society in an unfavorable light, seeing it as backward and unchallenging. The only way in which local society becomes acceptable is to ensure that one occupies its apex of privilege, implying that locality is itself irredeemable. This devalorization of the local explains the preeminence of the nation-state as the appropriate site for a social science practice.

### **An Indigenous Perspective and Social Science**

The process of indigenization of social science in the Philippines has taken place in the political context of decolonization. Political independence and a growing cultural awareness demand that the social sciences be harnessed to the new enterprise of nation-building. The notion of political



sovereignty assumed by the nation-state presupposes control over the production of knowledge and self-identity. The social sciences become a resource to be developed for the national interest. This view of social science as a weapon in the neo-colonial struggle or as a vehicle for discovering a national spirit is advocated by Filipinos who favor its indigenization.

There is nothing sinister nor improper about using the social sciences as part of the process of nation-building. This simply acknowledges that social science is part of a broad political structure. But it is another matter to politicize social science or to suborn it in the interest of political goals. Political goals should also be constituted in terms of social science knowledge, just as social science must recognize that it is embedded in wider political strategies. The indigenization of social science may be part of the experience of decolonization and, for this reason, contributes towards emancipation. However, if the nation is conceived in nationalist terms and in the process sacralized, differences and discontinuities of culture become problematic and subject to political processes of normalization. Society is then organized on the basis of a homogeneous national culture, and social science simply becomes an instrument of the state's colonization of civil life.

In a recent paper, Lallana (1990) explores the extent to which the structures of domination increasingly used by the Philippine state depend on a self-policing, psychological subject. The state's administrative success becomes dependent on its ability to reproduce self-policing subjects constituted through a psychological discourse. Hence, the indigenization of psychology may be used as an aspect of the state's totalizing powers. Marcos was the first Filipino president to appreciate the value of the social sciences, which he used for his own ends. However, as Makil and Hunt (1981) have shown, the martial law regime was marked by a vigorous and relatively unrestricted pursuit of sociological research, not all of which supported Marcos' limited understanding of its functions. Despite this relative autonomy, the machinery of martial law employed social science as it did the military and the bureaucracy as tools for implementing government policy through its domination of civil society. A non-critical, indigenous social science merely aids this process of internal colonization if it conflates national with societal needs.



### Social Science and Rational Amenability

The close links between a national consciousness and an appreciation of the artifactuality of culture is one primary reason why the nation-state, and not an ethnic community (e.g., a Singaporean but not a Balinese sociology), is the usual site for a social science practice. A national consciousness, guided by the modern state, is often developed in the context of a negotiated acceptance of difference as part of a process of achieving instrumental ends. Other forms of consciousness (e.g., gender, religion, ethnicity), being seen as more primordial or substantive, are therefore less amenable to rational and instrumental manipulation. However, under certain conditions, nation-states themselves employ these primordial notions (e.g., sexism, fundamentalism, racism) to pursue strategic goals even at the risk of undermining their own principles of rational negotiations.

Giddens (1990) is correct in associating late modernity with a sociological perspective. I would also include anthropology, which appreciates that the difference of the Other is part of a sense of Self. This complementation of Self and Other seeks the corrigibility of social life through rational and instrumental action, having previously functionalized society and culture on the recognition of their artifactuality. The project of social corrigibility is taken by the state, using the knowledge provided by science. The growing realization of the conventional basis of social life arose out of the global condition, exemplified in contemporary city life, where difference has to be negotiated as an on-going aspect of everyday life. However, the formal structures of the state do not allow for the full range of negotiating possibilities encountered in society, hence the increasing tension between the state and civil life. On the other hand, the contingencies of civil society cannot constitute a viable base for dealing with the complex realities of the global condition. The former results in the localization of the global, while the latter globalizes the local. As a consequence, experiences and representations are disembedded from their sources and are no longer collectively shared but only synchronically networked.

For this reason, Anderson (1992) refers to radical political action under these conditions as a revolution by fax. The facsimile not only allows for instant communication but also constitutes a world of hyperreal images that displace earlier and more concretely based ones. It allows



for an inter-subjectivity based mainly on representations, and hence leads to other forms of imagined and radical possibilities. Culture is no longer related to the representation of lived routines but becomes autonomous and self-referential. More radical imaginary homelands replace the possibilities envisioned by 19<sup>th</sup> century revolutionaries, who better appreciated the practical limits of their aspirations. Rizal was seen as a conservative, following his European exile, by his more radical Philippine-based contemporaries. They advocated open rebellion against Spain rather than accommodation as suggested by Rizal. In the present situation, Jose Maria Sison, the founder of the revolutionary New People's Army, in exile in the Netherlands, remains implacably opposed to suggestions of accommodation with the Ramos government despite the pleas of his locally based followers.

### Conclusion

In concluding let me summarize my argument. Social science developed as a form of self-understanding in functionally differentiated societies during the period of late modernity. The separation of the sphere of values and their progressive rationalization disembedded actions from their traditional routines, exposing their conventional nature. The standardization of space-time during the 1880s facilitated this conventional view, and society was henceforth seen as a synchronic entity, all of whose members being connected to one another not only by a common present but more importantly by a commonly anticipated future. This was expressed in the notion of a sovereign state which, using the metaphor of the individual, saw itself as a collective personality exemplified in the nation. The modern state projects an image of itself as a functional-organic unity, and nationalism expresses this unity in the cultural sphere. The state's functional unity is legitimated by the assumption of a homogeneously shared culture. The state as a structure of practical action is projected as a system of ontological principles locating its members within their existential realities. Rather than culture arising out of common practices, it instead determines them. From being a system of the signification of practice, culture becomes the domain of signifying practices performed by subjects whose projects operate within a shared simultaneity. This domain of purely signifying practices takes on important structure-generating capacities, once the conventional or artifactual constitution of culture is established. Among other things, this makes it



possible for knowledge to be steadily accumulated, following the discovery of the conditions for its own production.

The modern state invents the nation as its cultural expression, and the social sciences assist the nation-state in constituting and reproducing itself. The administrative needs of the nation-state require new forms of knowledge for its maintenance, in particular for the normalization of its subjects. However, social science also arises out of the conditions of civil society that, as part of the human *telos*, seeks universal conditions for reaching an understanding. From this perspective, social science must criticize the narrow interests of the state as well as the cultural assumptions of the nation. It can begin by showing the practical and contingent limits of the state's interests, including, at times, their conflictive basis. Social science can also examine the composition of a nation's membership, pointing out its often rich diversity and how this diversity can enrich culture. Collective experience is not exhausted by the state nor is it reflected in the nation, even if both have come to dominate the structures of everyday life. Their coming together in the form of the nation-state provided the initial conditions for social science, following the new requirements for rational and practical administration. But these administrative requirements should not be placed above the interests of society, which alone provides both the values and the ends for administration.

In the Philippine case, the absence of a strong and sovereign national culture in the 19<sup>th</sup> century prevented the development of social science. Rizal's attempts to generate such a perspective proved impossible under the conditions of coloniality. Nevertheless, his generation was laying the basis for a distinctive Filipino perspective arising out of the progressive consolidation of a national experience after three centuries of Spanish colonization. Following the economic changes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Filipinos began to perceive themselves as political actors with their own agendas, separate from their Spanish colonizers. The first glimmer of a secularist perspective, with its separation of spheres of value, was slowly taking root in the Philippines. But fate had decreed otherwise, and the imposition of American rule shattered this slowly forming Filipino national perspective. It would take nearly another century before Filipinos confidently proclaimed their own social science perspective.



Indigenization is an attempt to formalize this distinct perspective but its insistence on unproblematically using the nation as its reference limits its usefulness. In the present condition, the nation-state is no longer the only site for identity-formation. This formation now includes individual, local, global and other factors, following its increasingly polyvalent nature. In its attempts to imagine the nation through indigenous concepts, a Philippine social science risks essentializing Filipinohood by reducing its differences. Instead, a Philippine social science should explore the rich sources of difference within civil and global society, as well as point out the contingent and narrow interests of states, thereby helping to establish a universal basis for understanding. This understanding sees science as part of the human quest for emancipation. ●

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