All that is self melts into the air:

The crisis of self in social psychology and its implication for Filipino sociology of self

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Ang kanluraning teoryang panlipunan ay sumasailalim ngayon sa isang matinding krisis. Ang mga pagbabagong dulot ng krisis na ito ay nangangahulugan ng pagrerebisa sa pagtanaw sa konsepto ng sarili sa sosyal saykoloji. Ang pagbabagong ito ay bunsod ng postmodernong pagtanaw sa teoryang panlipunan. Ang kasalukuyang papel ay tinitignan ang krisis na ito sa likod ng globalisasyon, ang pag-usbong ng bagong kulturang pang inpormasyon, at mga bagong teknolohiya ng bayo-medisina. Tinutunton ng papel na ito ang krisis na ito ng konsepto ng sarili sa pamamagitan ng pagtatalakay ng iba't ibang mga teoryang nabuo tungkol sa sarili sa sosyal saykoloji. Tapos nito, ginagamit din ng papel na ito ang mga pananaw ng postmodernismo, post-istrakturalismo, pag-aaral sa kasarian, at ang pagpaling ng pilosopiya sa pag-aaral ng linggwahe upang higit na maunawaan ang krisis na ito sa sosyal saykoloji. Bilang pangwakas, tatalakayin din ng papel na ito ang kahihinatnan ng krisis na ito ng konsepto ng sarili sa paghahanap ng identidad ng mga Filipino sa postkolonyal na kondisyon.

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INTRODUCTION

IT IS MY PRIMARY CONTENTION THAT SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY has to reexamine itself in the light of the general crisis in contemporary social theory. This reexamination spills over to Filipino sociological discourse on the self. A relevant rethinking of Filipino identity has to contend with the intimations of postmodern crisis in social theory. But Filipino sociology of the self has to do it within the spaces vacated by colonial discourse. The first part of the present essay discusses the tumultuous crisis created by postmodernist critique of Western rationality. Then I will discuss some of the percussions of this crisis for Filipino social psychology of the self. I hope that my insinuations at the end of this essay will be taken as preliminary guide in the search for Filipino identity.

THE PERENNIAL CRISIS IN SOCIOLOGY

The crisis has been a perennial part of social theory, and of sociology in particular. In The modern period Max Weber can be singled out as a great prophet of the crisis of European civilization. He diagnosed the malaise of sociology in the light of Nietsche's critique of modern nihilism (Weber, 1958). In the contemporary period Alvin Gouldner's *The Coming Crisis in Sociology* (1970) provides an analysis of the crisis of Western sociology. It simultaneously suggests the establishment of a reflexive sociology as the antidote to value-free sociology. Peter Manning (1973) in a short article in the *Sociological Quarterly*, also provides a diagnosis that summarizes the complaints of existential sociology -or subjectivist sociology—against the dominant objectivist-positivist sociological paradigm.

THE POSTMODERN CRISIS AND SOCIOLOGY

Today sociology is wrestling with another crisis This time the jolts are coming from the unlikely provenance ---the postmodern condition (Seidman, 1994; 1996; Denzin, 1995). For lack of space I will just summarize -which may prove to be very crudely unpostmodern—the main tenets of postmodernism tthat challenge the portals of established sociology. First, postmodernist attack foundationalism (Seidman, 1994; Bernstein, 1984). The latter is an epistemological claim in which knowledge to be accredited as true, should be based on something incorrigible and self-evident (candidates for such foundation abound: Plato's Form, Descarte's clear and distinct ideas, Kant's a priori, Hegel's Absolute Spirit, Augustine's sub species aeternitatis, Thomas Aquinas' natural law, Locke's sensations, Russel's atomic facts, etc. etc.). Second, it repudiates the claim that science has a privileged access to external

reality (Rorty, 199.; Putnam, 1990). The definition of truth as language in correspondence with external reality (or mirroring of the language of nature) is strongly set aside (Putnam, 1983). Truth and objectivity are seen as contextual (Rorty, 1982:338). Truth is redefined now as a rhetorical device which persuades rather than as a mirror that faithfully reflects on the facts (Weimer, 1977; Brown, 1977, 1983). The claim that human knowledge is culturally universal is challenged as a disguised particularistic culture of white, middle class European male (Giroux, 1993; Said, 1986). Finally, there is a growing skepticism towards the modernist assumption that human knowledge and culture are advancing towards the Final Convergence Point, i.e., the final truth about things (Rorty, 1991). Belief in progress is now put in abeyance.

THE "POSTMODERNIZATION"[1] OF SOCIOLOGY

Now all these postmodernist complaints are directed against the corpus of modernist sociology. This development has several implications for sociology. Here I can only explore some of the more germane consequences. That sociology is a value-neutral discipline is now seen as something primitive and indefensible (Seidman, 1994). Sociology spews values in all directions. This has been the rallying cry of feminist scholars (Nielsen, 1989). That sociology is a privileged enterprise that mirrors social reality is now taken to be a myth of realist metaphysics (Brown, 1977). That sociology should model itself on the "hard" sciences is now considered as misguided (Siedman, 1989; Rorty, 1982). That sociological concepts (e.g., class, society, social change, nation-state, race and ethnicity, etc. etc.) are all tainted with modernist hang ups, and are therefore anachronistic (Smart, 1993). Amidst these ruptures there are rancorous talks about what would be the successor discipline for a descrepit modernist sociology (Bauman, 1992).

THE HISTORY OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND THE POSTMODERN CHALLENGE

Social psychology as a discipline in sociology is of course not immune to this crisis (Gergens, 1994). To situate the crisis in social psychology it will be helpful here to have a cursory look at the historical development of the discipline. I will do this in the following discussion by framing it within the problematic of the self.

Sociological social psychology is indebted to *George Herbert Mead* for the first systematic attempt at clarifying the enigmatic concept of the self. This tradition bequeathed by Mead provided a behavioristic and linguistic heuristic analysis for the study of the self. After the death of the master

the tradition itself bifurcated into two mini-traditions. *Manford Kuhn* established the less known school, the empirically oriented sect of symbolic interactionism, known as the IOwa School. *Herbert Blumer*, championing "sensitizing concepts" in the study of the self, founded the more popular humanistic sect of symbolic interactionism (Meltzer. Petras, and Reynolds, 1980). The sibling rival between the two legitimate heirs of Median social psychology of the self centers mainly on the methodological issues (Hammersley. 1992). This is the first moment of crisis in social psychology of the self. Is the self empirically quantifiable and operationable? Should the self be studies in humanistic manner (Blumer) or in positivistic mode (Kuhn)?

Another development stirred the tradition when *Goffman* started a heretical movement called dramaturgical sociology. Goffman provides a redescription of the Median self in terms dramaturgical vocabulary. But the early Goffman maintains an unsullied faith in the presence of "authentic self" through his concepts of the "back stage" and the self behind the mask. His can also be found in Mead's concepts of the "me." The late Goffman, after peeling off all the layers of the self, arrived at the conclusions that there is no core self after the mask is removed (Fontana, 1980). The second crisis point occurs with Goffmanesque turn. Is there an authentic self, an unsocialized part of the self?

At the same time Goffman was developing his strategic analysis, phenomenological and existential sociology also begun to take its hold among sociologists and symbolic interactionists. Here another shift occurred. The focus of the study of self was redirected away from experimental-Skinnerian approach to the analysis of meaning and consciousness. Both approaches appealed to sociologists who were quite weary about the prosaic vocabulary of Parsonian structural functionalis (Gouldner, 1970). With the turn to consciousness and existence promoted by phenomenological and existential rebellion in sociology, another crisis occurs to social psychological discourse of the self. Is the self a pure consciousness (Husserl's phenomenological reduction) or an embodied subjectivity (Merleau-Ponty and existentialists).

LINGUISTIC TURN IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

I separate the discussion of *Garfinkel's* ethnomethodology here, albeit it developed almost concomitantly with phenomenology and dramaturgy, because it provides a very different approach. Garfinkel invented the term 'ethnomethodology' to describe a special method of studying the self as constructed in rules and accountings (Garfinkel, 1967). This time the self is seen as rule following and is reflective. Such approach puts to rest the

passive view of subjects (Heritage, 1994). However it raised new crisis: the self is dissolved in language and rules. This signals the linguistic turn in social psychology (May, 1997).

Of course this linguistic turn can be traced earlier to *Peter Winch's* (1958) classic attack on Comtean notion of sociology. The only difference is that Winch draws resources from Wittgenstein's arsenals, while *Garfinkel* had *Schutz* and *Parsons* at his disposal. Another source for this linguistic turn can be grounded on hermeneutic tradition elaborated by *Gadamer* (1975) and *Paul Ricouer*. Paul Ricouer (1991) has dealt directly with the problem of modeling the meaning of human action to a text. More recently, a growing number of social psychologists have rediscovered *Lev Vygotsky's* linguistic contribution to developmental social psychology (Wertsch, 1994). Others are exploiting the model of narrative to explore the new re-definition of the self (Gergens, 1989). With this linguistic turn social psychology enters another crisis: Should the meaning of human actions be framed in terms of language or in cognition or consciousness?

DISCURSIVE TURN IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

While the crisis in behavioral psychology is being fueled by the concerted attacks of phenomenology, ethnomethodology, hermeneutic, and symbolic interactionism, a new intellectual movement is sweeping France. Structuralism is on the rise. *Structuralism* heralded the "death of man" (Foucault, 1973). Structures displaced the self from the center of analysis. Structures are rules that constitute a language-like system or text. In this model the self is dissolved in the play of signifiers within a system of signs. The self is no longer the supreme giver of meanings but is in fact constituted in a given discourse. The origin becomes the effect. Here the crisis of the self appears to vanish. For the question of whether there is an authentic self does not make any sense in structuralist paradigm. The self is an effect of system of signs, and not the other way around (Hollinger, 1997).

But no sooner had structuralism superceded phenomenology and existentialism than poststructuralism had taken over structuralism. Dissolution of the self is now re-baptized as a form of anti-humanism and de-centering. *Humanism* simply means that the subject is the sovereign legislator of the meanings of her actions (West, 1996). Man (read: "male") is center of and originator of language. Poststructuralism demolishes this humanistic discourse by showing that the self is implicated in the seamless

web and play of signs and signifiers (Rosenau, 1992). The self is what is
constructed in a given discourse. The self is now seen in Nietzschean
orchestration as a fiction. Jacques Lacan, in particular, challenged strongly
the neo-Freudian notion of a unified ego. The self is now invented through
positioning in language. (the Symbolic). The "I' is an illusion created by
the Imaginary. The Imaginary is the mirror of the self which the self
deludes itself into thinking as the authentic unified self (Bowie, 1979). The
project of a stable, unified self is now seen as reactionary and conservative.
It reproduces the economy of bourgeois conformity.

Foucault's brand of poststructuralism carried the de-centering of the
subject a little further by insisting on the indissoluble link between
discourse and power (Foucault, 1980). Power and discourse are linked
together through the regime of truth. The regime of truth creates the self.
And Foucalt is at pains to show that the self is not trapped unhappily and
helplessly in the regime of truth. For power breeds resistance (Foucalt,
1980; 1978). The subject is created by discourse but resistance allows the
subject to reconstitute the field of power circulating in a given discursive
formation. But Giddens (1994) sees in this concession of poststructuralists
a failure to develop a defensible theory of agency.

EN-GENDERING THE DISCURSIVE TURN

Within the developments of poststructuralism, the shift from subject-
oriented approach to discourse analysis invited very strong reactions from
feminists. The crisis itself divided the house of feminists. Feminists
argued among themselves whether the dissolution of the subject is still
compatible with the feminist struggle for identity formation and
recognition (Curthoys, 1997). Feminists contest not only the logocentric
character of the self (the self as beyond the contigency of language and
history), but also is phallocentric nature (i.e., the universalization of male-
centerd definition of the self). Another hotly debated terrain is essentialism
and feminism (Weir, 1996). For some feminists like Chodorow (1978) to
be a woman is to have a definite identity separate from the male. This
gives some feminists the hope that there can be an identity of woman that
can be retrieved once the trappings of patriachal language are peeled off.
Nevertheless some (post) feminists writings within Nietzschean lines, are
very vocal on resisting what they perceive as the new "subtle essentialism"
in the new discourse about woman (Butler, 1990). The crisis now spills
over among feminists: Is the constitution of the gendered subject through

discourse not another version of "subtle essentialism," linguistic logocentrism?

GROUNDING THE CRISIS IN THE NON-DISCURSIVE

What I have discussed so far is the mapping out or the crisis of the concept of the self in social psychology based on a particular reading of the history of the discipline. The picture that might have emerged might contain many oversights and overgeneralizations. Nevertheless what it intends to accomplish is merely to provide a sweeping view of the crisis of the self in social psychology. And I deliberately posed each moment of crisis in interrogative form to highlight the dilemmas being faced by social psychology today.

Now that I intend to do in the remaining sections of this essay is to map out some of the sources of the crisis outside the discipline itself. For social psychology of the self and any other discipline, scientific or otherwise, is embedded in spatio-temporal fracas of society and history. However what I will attempt is not a sociology of knowledge but a modest attempt to connect the discursive with the extra-discursive. I can only deal here with some sources and not an exhaustive inventory of the elements involved.

First is the contribution of the feminist movement and gay and lesbian movements. Queer theory led to the profound questioning of the essentialist construction of heterosexual self (Seidman, 1994; Martin, 1996). These movements problematized the biological foundations of the self. It also questioned the Platonic-Cartesian definition of the self that has dominated Western Philosophies of the self. Feminist movements in particular insinuated the return of the body in social theory. It affected the reconciliation of the body with the self (Schilling, 1996).

Second is the process of globalization. Globalization of sociological discourse enable sociologists to acknowledge the presence of the "others" (non- Western peoples). This put a big question mark on the assumption that there is a common core of traits that are common to all people by virtue of being a member of Homo sapiens (Clifford and Marcus, 1986). The presence of these "others" sent chills in the spine of Western sociologists who claim to represent the authentic voice of the natives (Denzin, 1994). Soon difference was praised while assimilation was held suspect. Postcolonial writers even challenged the project of recovering

the authentic voice of the native silenced by colonial discourse (Spivak, 1987).

Third is the rapid development of information technology. One writer suggests a shift from the classic mode of production analysis to a mode of information analysis (Poster, 1990). The self now becomes a simulacrum, a hyper-reality without any original source or double (Baudrillard, 1983). With the advent of e-mail, the net, virtual reality, and other time-space compressing or space-annihilating technologies the self as a stable entity with fixed boundaries and identity has become more and more difficult to accept (Turkle, 1995; Lyon, 1997). Cyber self is gradually effacing the space of self (Waskul and Douglass, 1997). On line chat in the net dissolves the vestiges of the embodied self. Databases digitalized identity (Poster, 1996) Surveillance is no longer forcibly enforced on docile subjects. Subjects willingly submit their forms to be encoded in databases, the superpanoticon (*ibid.*).

Finally, one cannot underestimate the revolution happening in biotechnology. Two phenomena are worth mentioning at this point. I am referring to organ transplantation and cloning. On the one hand, former assails the traditional social psychological definition of the boundaries of the self (Fox and Swazey, 1992). On the other hand, cloning problematizes the continuity of the narrative of self identity.

What I have discussed are just some of the new realities that confront social psychology of the self. The list, of course, is not exhaustive. Nevertheless it gives us at least a preview of what a future social psychology of the self might not be workable in the near future. That is why some social theorists are already talking about the successor discipline. Others are sanguine even about looking for a successor discipline. There are those who insist that social psychological study of the self can still be circumscribed within the conventional discourse of sociology (Lyons, 1997). These sociologists would want to have a sociology of postmodernity/ism rather than a postmodern sociology. The former insists on the continuity between modernity and post-modernity. This is very evident in Giddens' (1990) alternative characterization of postmodernity as "radicalized modernity" or "high modernity". Whether one opts to do a postmodern sociology of the self or a sociology of self in postmodernity the discipline of social psychology can no longer remain unshaken by postmodern onslaughts.

I, however, personally subscribe to a sociology of self in postmodern condition. But this is not simple "nostalgic return" (Turner, 1987; cf. Robertson, 1990) to the classical concepts of social psychology. Such study must be sensitive to current developments is a postmodern society, while careful no to celebrate prematurely the demise of these concepts. Some of these concepts and tools may still be handy. After all we are still looking for a new toolbox. To unconditionally throw away our old habits would be against the spirit of postmodern gaming itself: no language game ought to be eliminated from the conversation (Lyotard, 1979; Rorty, 1979).

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FILIPINO SOCIOLOGY OF SELF

What would these developments entail for Filipino sociology of the self? Here I can only give some introductory remarks. Social scientists working on the Filipino concept of self and identity may develop and explore these themes further.

First, social scientists should look at the transformation of Filipino identity in the era of globalization. This requires relating the process of identity formation of Filipinos to the globalization process such as international migration, hybridization, diaspora, time-space compression, post-Fordist capitalist accumulation, multiculturalism, and the eruptions of neo-tribalistic sentiments like ethnic conflicts. resurgence of nationalism, and the growth of religious fundamentalism.

For instance, one can understand the resurgence of both Christian and Islamic fundamentalism in the Philippines in the light of Manuel Castell's (1997) discussion of identity formation in the era of information society. The self is always embedded in a given cultural community. Therefore these movements are attempts of local communities to resists the onslaught of Western and modern cultural imperialism. In so doing, these religious communities also universalize their particular identity by linking with diasporic communities around the globe who share their own worldview (Robertson and Chirico, 1985; Beyer, 1994). Ironically, these communities also have to use the new information technology to connect with other communities (Caplan, 1987). In the process, globalization does two things to the self. First, the self in incorporated into the seamless web of global multiculturalism. Second, the self simultaneously retreats into the folds of the local community. Nationalism replaces, or may even fuse with, solidarity based on religion and ethnicity.

Another worth looking at is the formation of Filipino identity in the family in the light of massive migration of Filipinos abroad to work. The self is nourished primarily in the family more than in secondary institutions. Now with a sizeable number of Filipinos (mostly parents) going abroad, this unprecedented movement is already changing the landscape of Filipino identity (Asis, 1994; Go, 1986). Migration may create a "large international family, an extended family spanning several countries, yet characterized by intense interaction, strong emotional ties, and a binding sense of mutual obligation" (Appelbaum and Chambliss, 1995:357). How far this global phenomenon will restrcuture Filipino identity is a very interesting topic to study.

Second, the crisis of social theory occasioned by postmodernist attack on representation invites the recovery of spaces left by colonial definition of a Filipino identity. A postcolonial clearing of the Filipino psyche is much needed at this point. This recovery however should not be seen as a metaphysical attempt to construct an essential language of Filipino identity. To do so is to fall into the same trap of colonial essentialism that plagues the Orientalist representation of the Other, and yet, doing away with the need for foundations or guarantee that we are getting things right. Scholars may of course follow the apt suggestion Gayatri Spivak, that the subaltern can assert their identity via "strategic essentialism". We can use this process of recovery to reassert our Filipino identity in opposition to the colonial representation. A recent suggestion of a Filipino Marxist scholar is worth considering here. San Juan (1996) suggests "replacing 'postcolonial' foundationalism with a hypothesis of situated 'national-popular' cultures that in their concrete dynamics of engagement with global capitalism in specific sites express the varied forms of responses by people of color (aborigines, women, peasants and workers, ethnic communities, etc.) to commodification. Such responses also illustrates their models of inventing autochthorous traditions that postmodernist skepticism of irony and offer 'sources of hope' not found in the classic European Enlightenment and its mirror-opposite, postcolonial relativism and pragmatic nominalism" (p.88). now whether such Marxist approach fares better than postcolonial paradigm is yet to be seen. The articulation of Filipino identity should not be phrased in rigid models, Marxist or otherwise. To fail to consider this caveat is to revert back once again to foundationalism.

Finally I would like to suggest that such process of postcolonial retrieval should be distinguished from state-inspired indigenization. As Raul Pertierra (1996) has recently noted, indigenization can become another instrument of the state in its bid to better govern and discipline its citizens. Filipino sociology of the self can easily deteriorate into a conduit of the postcolonial state to legitimize its political agenda. This is all the more true considering the fact that the rise of nationalism goes hand-in-hand with the project of the state to create its own "imagined past" (Rowlands, 1994). Unfortunately the state under colonialism has never been successful in achieving its autonomy from colonial power (San Juan, 1996:66). In effect, the search for Filipino identity, of collective memory, must be unmasked in its pretentious character to represent unifying voice of the Filipino. Such homogenizing project has to be deconstructed to show how it silences the plurivocality of Filipino identity. This does not, of course, mean that the search for Filipino identity is a will-o"-the-wisp. It only means that such recovery, if that is possible, can only be tentative. It must always be recreated, reinvented as new struggles for recognition arise.

Social scientists therefore must be very circumspect of the "political unconscious" (seidman, 1996) of their discipline. They must be aware of the indissoluble link between their social scientific discipline and the regimes of power that prevail in current Philippine society. It is the task of a Filipino sociologist of the self, operating in a postcolonial landscape, to expose the *dispositif — the regimes of power and knowledge—that* constitutes the Filipino psyche. This genealogy of the self should strive to recover the silenced voices, marginalized groups, and subjugated traditions within the colonial narrative of the self.[2]

Notes

[1] From Seidman (1996).

[2] Readers who are familiar with the works of the late Prof. Virgilio Enriquez may find the arguments of the present essay insufficient beacause it ignores Enriquez's pioneering efforts to develop "sikolohiyang Filipino." I, of course acknowledge such valid criticism. But I am not in the position now to address this very important issue. However I believe that a good case can be made for sikolohiyang Filipino using postmodernism, poststructuralism, hermeneutics, various contemporary post-feminist theories, and postcolonial theory. To discuss this interesting issue would take me very far from the original intention of this essay. Maybe I can devout another essay for this topic in the future.

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