



UNDERGRADUATE
PHILOSOPHY
JOURNAL *of*
AUSTRALASIA

Volume 6, Special Issue
November 2024

Founded in 2019, the *Undergraduate Philosophy Journal of Australasia* (UPJA) is the first undergraduate philosophy journal run by students from Australasia. We publish one volume and host two conferences annually and interview philosophers with a substantial connection to Australasia. We aim to be an inclusive and diverse journal and welcome submissions from undergraduates (and recent graduates) worldwide, on any philosophical topic, so long as the author attempts to make a substantive contribution to contemporary philosophy. Submissions from women and other members of underrepresented groups in philosophy, including those for whom English is not their first language, are particularly encouraged.

 Undergraduate Philosophy Journal of Australasia – UPJA

 @UPJA_Philosophy

 upja.philosophy@gmail.com

 www.upja.online

ISSN: 2643-3146

Front and back cover photography by Leon Yin, all rights reserved

2024 Editorial Team

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Billie Angus (Te Herenga Waka: Victoria University of Wellington)

Leon (Chenglong) Yin 尹呈龙 (University of Sydney)

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Beau Kent (Deakin University)

Grier Rollinson (Te Herenga Waka: Victoria University of Wellington)

EDITORS

BILLIE ANGUS, VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

Billie is a Masters student in Philosophy at Te Herenga Waka: Victoria University of Wellington. Their thesis is focusing on Existentialism, Authenticity, and Social Media. Billie's main interests in philosophy include: Metaphilosophy, Continental Philosophy, and Philosophy of Gender.

LEON (CHENGLONG) YIN, UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Leon is an Honours student at The University of Sydney. His honour thesis is on Plato, Foucault, and *Techné*. Leon's research interests include: 20thC Continental Philosophy, Ancient Greek Philosophy, and Philosophy of Sex.

BEAU KENT, DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

Beau is a recent graduate from the honours philosophy program at the University of Melbourne. His philosophical work centers predominantly around critical phenomenology, adoption studies, and deconstruction. Beau currently works as a research assistant at the Alfred Deakin Institute at Deakin University.

GRIER ROLLINSON, VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

Grier is an undergraduate student at Te Herenga Waka: Victoria University of Wellington. She studies five majors: Philosophy, Political Science, International Relations, Economics and Public Policy. Grier's main interests are applied ethics, political philosophy, and existentialism.

REFEREES

Eva Skinner is studying for a Bachelor of Advanced Humanities (Honours) at the University of Queensland

Edwin Chia-En Chen is studying for a Research Masters in philosophy at Macquarie University

Jemma Cusumano holds a Bachelor of Advanced Humanities from the University of Queensland

Sanae Ejebli is undergoing a PhD in Cross-cultural and intercultural research at the University Mohamed I

Mira Gibson is studying for a Bachelor of Advanced Humanities (Honours) at the University of Queensland

Ruiwen Guo is studying for a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) at the Australian National University

David He is studying for a Bachelor of Arts () from the University of Sydney

Jenna Johnston is in the final year of a Bachelor's Degree majoring in Philosophy and International Studies at Hollins University

Tam Maxwell is studying for a Bachelor of Arts at Victoria University of Wellington

Zoe Nelson is studying for a Bachelor of Philosophy (Honours) from the University of Western Australia

Jacob Ritz is completing a Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Mathematics, and a Diploma in Languages at the University of Queensland

Will Salkeld is studying for a Bachelor of Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (Hons) at the Australian National University

Tom Vlamis is studying for both a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Science at Deakin University

EDITORS' LETTERS

Tēnā koutou, and thank you for reading our special volume.

My time at UPJA has been wonderful, due to having the support of our past, and current editors. I want to extend my biggest thanks to Brigitte Assi and Leon (Chenglong) Yin, for the immense amount of work they have done to keep UPJA going. We couldn't have done this without the two of you taking on huge roles, and ensuring everything runs smoothly behind the scenes. Leon has put in a lot of hard mahi to start our podcast series, and the episodes so far have been so interesting and enlightening.

We are also so pleased to be passing on the role of Editor in Chief to Beau Kent and Grier Rollinson, and are excited to see what you both end up doing in the coming 6 months. Our new Associate Editors, William Smith and Paul Kim, also deserve a warm welcome. We are so proud to be handing off to this new team, and we have the utmost faith that you will continue to publish outstanding philosophy from undergraduates across Australasia, along with giving a platform to underrepresented topics, authors, and issues in philosophy.

This is an incredibly special mini volume, with two papers focusing on some of the most underrepresented topics in philosophy. We are so honoured to be publishing papers from Phước Lâm Huy Trần and Nathan Navarro, to showcase philosophy that is so often missing from the "Western" curriculum. These papers are both high quality investigations into interesting, and complex topics, and my hope is that these topics influence readers into learning more about not only Filipino and Chinese philosophy, but other Asian and Australasian topics in philosophy. These topics deserve a spotlight.

It has been a huge honour to serve as editor for UPJA, and thank you to everyone who has made this, and all our other issues, possible. We wouldn't be able to do this without the authors, referees, and readers of UPJA, and the journal just keeps getting better. A huge ngā mihi to all those who contribute, and keep pushing the field of philosophy. Together, we are making philosophy a space where those like us are given a voice on complex, and important topics.

Nāku noa,

Billie Angus (Any/all)

Te Herenga Waka - Victoria University of Wellington

November, 2024

This special issue is created on the Gadigal land of the Eora Nation, where I have had the privilege of serving as an editor for UPJA over the past year. It has truly been a pleasure to contribute to the journal during this time. I would like to express my gratitude to Brigitte Assi, our former editor, whose leadership and dedication helped guide the editorial team during the first half of my tenure as sub-editor. I am also deeply thankful for the support of Billie Angus, whose collaboration has been invaluable. Billie has been an exceptional Editor-in-Chief and an essential part of the daily operations at UPJA, including helping us bring this special issue to fruition.

I would also like to congratulate Beau Kent and Grier Rollinson on stepping into the roles of Editor-in-Chief. At the same time, we're pleased to introduce our new Associate Editors, Paul Kim and William Smith, and look forward to the insights they will bring to the team.

This year, UPJA has launched a new podcast series, *Conversations from the Region*, expanding upon our previous written interviews. So far, three episodes have been released, where Beau and I sit down with Dr. Sam Shpall, Dr. Bryan Mukundi, and Prof. Alex Lefebvre. These conversations showcase the diverse and vibrant philosophical community in Australasia, and we hope our listeners have enjoyed these exchanges as much as we've enjoyed conducting them.

Finally, and most importantly, we are excited to present this special issue on Asian philosophy, which includes two papers on Chinese and Philippine philosophy. Phức Lâm Huy Trần's *Confucius and Epistemic Injustice* offers a unique comparative reading of *The Analects* and the concept of epistemic injustice, drawing connections between Confucius's characterisation of *xiaoren* (小人) and fake *junzi* (伪君子) and the phenomenon of testimonial injustice. Nathanael V. Navarro's *Some Critical Notes on Leonardo Mercado: Rethinking Filipino Philosophy and Beyond* highlights the work of Filipino philosopher and educator Leonardo Mercado, exploring his rich political and social philosophy, which still remains relevant to contemporary postcolonial thought. We hope these insightful papers will resonate with readers as much as they have with the editorial team.

Leon Yin 尹呈龙

On Gadigal Land

University of Sydney

November, 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Confucius and Epistemic Injustice	[1]
PHƯỚC LÂM HUY TRẦN, VIN UNIVERSITY	
Some Critical Notes On Leonardo Mercado: Rethinking Filipino Philosophy and Beyond	[24]
NATHANAEL V. NAVARRO	

Confucius and Epistemic Injustice

Phước Lâm Huy Trần¹

Vin University

Abstract

Epistemic injustice theory, introduced by Miranda Fricker (2007) has been a topic of discussion among philosophy scholars. However, the notion of epistemic injustice in relation to virtue in Asian philosophies is left unexplored. In this paper, I attempt to draw attention to a comparative approach between Confucianism and testimonial injustice, a central case of epistemic injustice. By analyzing *The Analects*, I reveal Confucius's opposition to testimonial injustices with *Xiaoren* & *Fake Junzi* being two examples of lacking virtues of testimonial justice. From there, I propose two Confucian virtues for enhancing the reliability of virtues of epistemic injustice: the *Love of Learning* (*hao xue* 好学) and perspective reflection (*si* 思). The *Love of Learning* would enable a hearer to increase the appropriateness in their credibility judgment. While the perspective reflection brings a new dimension to Fricker's notion of reflection. To conclude, I analyze how *Ren* (仁) could be an ideal state of testimonial justice.

1. Introduction: Fricker's Epistemic Injustice And Confucius

In the book *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, Miranda Fricker has attempted to formulate a normativity for epistemic injustice — the unfair distribution

¹ Phước Lâm Huy Trần is a senior studying Bachelor of Business Administration at VinUniversity, Vietnam. Huy is interested in philosophy of education, educational anthropology and the contribution of Asian philosophy, with a focus on Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism, as well as current debates in agency-based epistemology.

of epistemic goods (knowledge or education).² In this paper, we will focus on testimonial injustice as a case of epistemic injustice.³ The existence of *testimonial injustice* is rooted in identity power — the capability of a person to control others' behavior or thought as a result of a shared social conception of identity.⁴ When identity power gets corrupted, it exists in the form of identity prejudices between information-exchange agents.⁵ As identity prejudices influence credibility, Fricker emphasizes identity-prejudicial credibility deficit as the central case of testimonial injustice.⁶ The concept can be defined as a phenomenon when the speaker receives less credibility than he should have due to an identity prejudice of the hearer which eventually hurts both sides' epistemic value.⁷ Overall, the book initiates theorizing on the intersection between social epistemology and the theory of justice.⁸ This social approach to epistemology has been witnessed as a shift in focus of Western scholars and becoming a fertile field.⁹

As part of the shift, Confucian theories — as an Asian philosophy — have potential to contributively enrich and develop the field. Many scholars have attempted to engage Confucianism with the Western concept of (in)justice.¹⁰ However, these scholars have focused on social, distributive (in)justice, leaving epistemic (in)justice (specifically testimonial (in)justice) unexplored. In this particular paper, I attempt to make an analogy between Confucian thought (especially from *The Analects*) and Fricker's testimonial injustice. In section 2, I introduce a widely accepted view of Confucianism as an epistemically unjust philosophy followed by my counter-argument on the lack

² Fricker, Miranda (2007) *Epistemic injustice power and the ethics of knowing*, Oxford University Press.

³ Testimonial injustice occurs when "prejudice causes a hearer to give a deflated level of credibility to a speaker's word", according to Fricker (2007).

⁴ Fricker, 14-16.

⁵ For definition of identity prejudices, see pg4

⁶ For definition of identity-prejudicial credibility deficit, see pg4.

⁷ Fricker, 28-29.

⁸ Anderson, Elizabeth (2012) "Epistemic Justice as a Virtue of Social Institutions", *Social Epistemology* 26: 163–73. doi:10.1080/02691728.2011.652211.

⁹ Mi, Chienkuo (2017) "Reflective Knowledge: Confucius and Virtue Epistemology", *Comparative Philosophy* 8. doi:10.31979/2151-6014(2017).080206.

¹⁰ This includes: Cao, Deborah (2018) "Desperately Seeking 'Justice' in Classical Chinese: On the Meanings of Yi", *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law - Revue Internationale De Sémiotique Juridique* 32: 13–28.; Chi-Pin, Chao (1972) "The Origin of Confucius's Ideology of 'Harmony But Not Equality' And the Logical Goal of His Theory of Reconciling Contradictions", *Chinese Studies in Philosophy* 4: 100–164.; Cline, Erin M (2014) "Justice and Confucianism", *Philosophy Compass* 9: 165–75.; Duvert, Christophe (2018) "How Is Justice Understood in Classic Confucianism?", *Asian Philosophy* 28: 295–315.; Xiao, Yang (1997) "Trying to Do Justice to the Concept of Justice in Confucian Ethics", *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 24: 521–51.

of evidence for that claim. In section 3, I propose an amending approach in interpreting Confucius's thought which, in contrast to the common view, proves his opposition to testimonial injustice. In section 4, I conclude the paper by drawing attention to Confucius's idea of *Junzi* (君子 — the exemplary man) as a responsible hearer. Through *Junzi*, I examine how Confucius's concept of (1) *Love of Learning*, (2) *Zhi* (知 — Wisdom) through reflection and (3) *Ren* (仁 — humanness, benevolence) could contribute to developing Fricker's virtue of testimonial justice.

2. Confucianism as Testimonial Injustice Philosophy?

Since Classic Confucianism and the concept of testimonial injustice stems from two distinct philosophical backgrounds, I will start the paper with a more common historical counter-argument to bridge the two. According to many scholars, men are not intrinsically equal.¹¹ Classical Confucius society is a society of class and hierarchy:

Ten thousand things come into being from the existence of heaven and earth. After ten thousand things come into being, male and female exist, when male and female come into being, husbands and wives exist. By the time husbands and wives come together, fathers and sons exist, with fathers and sons there comes rulers and ministers. When rulers and ministers emerge, hierarchy emerges, after hierarchy emerges, the rules of propriety and righteousness put into practice.¹²

This extract from the I Ching (Book of Change) demonstrates how Confucianism social orders lays its foundation on cosmological orders. The separation of "heaven" and "earth" leads to the separation of social roles: husband and wife, father and son, prince and subject, superior and inferior. As these social relationships naturally come from cosmological hierarchies, each individual within the social bonds, in their essence, also undoubtedly holds a certain power in relation to other individuals. This power relation is emphasized in *Five Cardinal Relations* (五伦 — *wu lun*). It is the five

¹¹ Cline (2014); Duvert (2018); Xiao (1997).

¹² Changsha: Hunan Renmin Chubanshe (1993) "*Book of Changes - Yijing* 易经."

fundamental relationships in Confucianism between: sovereign and subject, father and son, elder and younger brother, husband and wife, and friend and friend. Within that, Mencius — Confucius's student — emphasizes the first two relationships of the *Five Cardinal Relation*:

If at home, the important rule governing human relations [*lun*] is that between father and son. If not at home, it is between the prince and the minister.¹³

Within these two relationships (father and son, prince and minister), identity power can be identified as father and prince being ones that hold more capability in manipulating the actions and behaviors of the son and the minister. Therefore, they hold more identity power. As this identity power is cosmological and universal, it potentially cause prejudicial credibility deficit when the weaker roles — minister and son — receive less credibility than they should have. In a scenario where the prince is the hearer and the minister is the speaker, the prince has a tendency, according to Confucianism ethics, to be epistemically distorted. This distortion can happen as the prince gives less credibility to the minister's word than he deserves. Here, we focus on credibility being distorted solely due to the prince's prior prejudice about ministers as a social lower class, not due to his analysis and critics of the minister's words. Some can conclude from the above argument that Confucius ethic enables testimonial injustices to emerge.

However, not every idea attributed to Confucianism comes from Confucius himself. Regarding the first cited extract above from I Ching (the book of Change), it originates from the Western Zhou period (1000–750 BC) prior to Confucius (6th–5th century BCE). During that age, class is the central idea with people separated by their origination, the virtue of blood. Within that hierarchy, *Junzi* (the exemplary man) belongs to the aristocratic society and *Xiaoren* (the petty man), in contrast, refers to people outside the aristocratic class, in other words common people.¹⁴ As the Western Zhou age (prior to Confucius age) deteriorated, the aristocracy demonstrated stupidity, ignorance, and a lack of virtue.¹⁵ Therefore, Confucius's idea of class is

¹³ Mencius, 2B, 2 (James R. Ware's translation. See *The Sayings of Mencius* [New York: New American Library, 1960], 72

¹⁴ Li, Ling (2010) "Gentlemen and Petty Men", *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 41: 54–65.

¹⁵ Li, Ling (2010) "Gentlemen and Petty Men", *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 41: 54–65.

different. Confucius classified people by their virtue. In *The Analects*, all 15 entries describing the *Junzi* and *Xiaoren* used virtue as the standard.¹⁶ The *Junzi* can be a common person — someone without an aristocratic background. It is one's performance in life, not social class, that defines whether he is a *Junzi*. This proves that Confucianism is not built based on the idea of class and hierarchy.

Moreover, though the *Five Cardinal Relations* are deemed to be a central idea of Confucianism, this idea is in fact, not mentioned by Confucius himself. Confucius did stress on the importance of the relationship between father and son, and ruler and minister.¹⁷ But, he and his students never mentioned those ideas of relations in *The Analects* — the most important text in Confucianism.¹⁸ This proves the weakness of the argument that, with Five Cardinal Relations, Confucianism is a hierarchical philosophy. And it is even more problematic to claim that Confucianism is against Fricker's idea of epistemic injustice regarding the above evidence. I would further develop this argument by proving Confucius's acknowledgement of identity prejudice and his opposition toward testimonial injustice in *The Analects*.

3. An Amendment: *Xiaoren* & Fake *Junzi* as Confucius's Opposition against Epistemic Injustice

Testimonial injustice, as discussed by Fricker, is most harmful or noteworthy when it is presented in the form of identity-prejudicial credibility deficit which is defined as:

The injustice that a speaker suffers in receiving deflated credibility from the hearer owing to identity prejudice on the hearer's part.¹⁹

There are two examples from *The Analects* that perform identity-prejudicial credibility deficit: *Xiaoren* and the fake *Junzi*. First is the case of *Xiaoren* (小人 — petty man).

¹⁶ Li, 62.

¹⁷ Confucius (孔子) (2003) *Confucius Analects: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries*. Edward Slingerland, trans. Hackett Classics, 12.11

¹⁸ Dau-Lin, Hsü (1970) "The Myth of the 'Five Human Relations' of Confucius", *Monumenta Serica* 29: 27–37.

¹⁹ Fricker, 4.

According to *The Analects*, when making judgments about individuals, Confucius emphasizes the idea of *Junzi* as the most realistic objective of a virtuous example for his students and everyone.²⁰ In contradiction to the *Junzi* is *Xiaoren* (petty man). *Junzi* and *Xiaoren* are two personal concepts in which Confucius and his students usually mention and draw distinctions. *Xiaoren* is usually used with a culpable sense to better clarify the qualities of the *Junzi* (Pines, 2017).²¹ As Confucius once said to his student, Zi Xia: “Be a scholar after the style of a *Junzi*, and do not be a petty scholar”.²² Therefore, *Xiaoren* was depicted in Confucius' idea as an ethically negative example.²³

Examining the characteristic that *Xiaoren* holds (mentioned in *The Analects*), we can see many cases of ethical violations which causes Frickers's identity-prejudicial credibility deficit. To Fricker, for someone to fall into identity-prejudicial credibility deficit, he/she needs to: (1) give the speaker T's testimony less credibility on the basis that T belongs to a social group G. This credibility deficit is due to an identity prejudice: (2) a judgment embodies a generalization that displays some resistance to counter-evidence owing to an ethically bad affective investment.

Therefore, for *Xiaoren* to be considered as a case of identity-prejudicial credibility deficit, below statements need to be proven:

1. *Xiaoren* gives the speaker T's testimony less credibility on the basis that T belongs to a social group G.
2. *Xiaoren's* judgment embodies a generalization that displays some resistance to counter-evidence owing to an ethically bad affective investment.

Xiaoren has been consistently depicted with contradictory characteristics to the *Junzi*. In *The Analects*, Confucius said:

²⁰ Li, 54.

²¹ Pines, Yuri (2017) “Confucius' Elitism”, *A Concise Companion to Confucius* 164–84.

²² *Analects*, 6.13.

²³ All 15 entries that mentioned *Xiaoren* in the *Analects* describe them as people who lack virtue.

The *Junzi* does not esteem a person merely because of his words, nor does he disregard words merely because of the person."²⁴

It can be inferred from this text that *Xiaoren*, in reverse to *Junzi*, is someone who "disregards words merely because of the person". Since the "person" in Confucianism is attached to social class, *Xiaoren*, in a testimonial exchange, will give that speaker less credibility on the basis that T belongs to a social group G. However, this is not enough to prove that *Xiaoren* can fall into identity-prejudicial credibility deficit. More evidence showing that *Xiaoren's* credibility judgment is due to ethically bad affective investment leading to resistance to counter-evidence is needed.

In *The Analects*, Confucius depicts *Xiaoren* as "partisan" and "not fair-minded".²⁵ The text emphasizes "being prejudiced" as a differentiator between *Xiaoren* and *Junzi*. Additionally, Confucius said "What *Junzi* seeks, he seeks in himself. What *Xiaoren* seeks, he seeks in others."²⁶ Since *Xiaoren's* judgment of credibility originates from "seek[ing] in others', instead of "seek[ing] in himself", it shows a lack of reflection, or in other words, a lack of affective investment. Moreover, Henrique explains *Xiaoren's* vices as a lack of self-critical and rationality.²⁷ He further explains that *Xiaoren* acts without consideration of others but on "basal instincts of directed at envisaging specific outcomes". In other words, *Xiaoren* is only capable of asking "how will this affect me", neglecting moral relationship with the surrounding communities and social interactions.

Therefore, *Xiaoren's* credibility judgment, which is prejudiced (resisted to counter-evidence) due to a ethically bad affective investment, causes a case of identity-prejudicial credibility deficit. As Fricker argues that credibility judgement is the association between a social group (an identity) with some attributes. When these associations entail generalization that display resistance to counterevidence owing to ethically bad affective investment, it is prejudiced. These prejudices in credibility judgement will cause misattribution of identity which, in negative cases, engender

²⁴ *Analects*, 15.23.

²⁵ *Analects*, 2.14.

²⁶ *Analects*, 15.21.

²⁷ Schneider, Henrique (2019) "Virtues and the Interested 'Self' in Confucius and Adam Smith", *Humanities Bulletin*, London Academic Publishing.

credibility deficit.²⁸ Since identity-prejudicial credibility deficit is the central case for testimonial injustice, *Xiaoren* is an example of testimonial injustice. Therefore, Confucius's claim of *Xiaoren* as an unethical example can be inferred as his warning against the fallacies of identity-prejudicial credibility deficit.

Let's put *Xiaoren* in the context of Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which was used by Fricker as an example of testimonial injustice. The scene depicts courtroom where Tom Robbison — a young black man — is accused of raping a white girl, Mayella Ewell. The prosecution was corrupted by the advantageous identity power of both the white members of the jury and the white plaintiff over the black defendant. This has caused Tom Robbison, who in an unprejudiced condition at the courtroom would evidently be innocent, is now found guilty and put into jail. This is due the epistemic failure of the jury members in believing in Tom Robbison as a speaker in the courtroom. The failure is a result of racial prejudice, which caused an identity-credibility deficit against Tom Robbison. In this case, the jury members can be considered as *Xiaoren* as they have, according to Confucius, "disregarded the words because of the person". However, some might argue that the jury members' judgment of Tom Robbison's testimony as less credible based on his blackness is justifiable and valid. It is worth noting that the jury members' judgment is not based on past data that indicates black defendants have a tendency to be less credible in his words, but based on a prejudiced association of blackness with dishonesty. As explained above, these association of an identity (blackness) with an attribute (dishonesty) is a generalization that display resistance to counterevidence owing to ethically bad affective investment or, in other words, prejudices. The jury members, though lacking evidence for his credibility judgement, decides to mistrust Tom Robbison's testimony. Being *Xiaoren* is being lack of self-reflection and consideration of others in his/her judgement. Therefore, the jury members are *Xiaoren*, partisan and lack-self-critical people. Since Fricker accuses jury members for causing testimonial injustice, identifying jury members as *Xiaoren* brings Confucius to an agreement with Fricker's accusation.

While all *Xiaoren* are real *Xiaoren*, *Junzi* includes real and fake *Junzi*.²⁹ Fake *Junzi* are those coming from high-end societal backgrounds who could have some virtues and

²⁸ Fricker, 35.

²⁹ Li, 64.

intelligence, but not necessarily so. These are the gentlemen by status. Confucius only directly mentioned this type of *Junzi* twice. Once was to criticize one of his students — Zigong, which is the second example of Confucius regarding testimonial injustice. Mentioned a lot in *The Analects*, Confucius's perceptions of Zigong are not linear. In general, Zigong is notable as one of the most avid pursuers of refinements and an eager learner of ritual traditions and literature.³⁰ Confucius is also confident in Zigong's capability in undertaking political positions due to his attentiveness.³¹ Amy Olberding also analyzes Zigong as a partial exemplar — one that holds many characteristics of a *Junzi* but missing some of virtues to truly be considered as one.³² One of the main weakness of Zigong is his overconcentration on judging people, ignoring their implicit qualities:

Zigong was given to criticizing others. The Master remarked sarcastically, "What a worthy man that Zigong must be! As for me, I hardly have the time for this."³³

In another text, Confucius urges Zigong to perceive beyond appearances and reputation when evaluating others.³⁴ His characteristic is a consequence of his intrinsic desire for personal success and political positions.³⁵ This desire motivates Zigong to practice rituals and learn literature without cultivating *Shu* (恕 — sympathy) in his practice.³⁶ Zigong ignoring *Shu* in the self-cultivation process is a bad ethical investment. *Shu*, to Amy Olberding, enables people to avoid abrupt and ignorant generalizations when associating people with certain circumstances or features in the process of interacting with others.³⁷ This abrupt generalization of associating people with certain features is defined as prejudices, according to Fricker.³⁸ Therefore, *Shu* is the virtue that prevents people from prejudiced judgments that decrease one's credibility. Zigong's lack of *Shu* and his self-positioning (or at least desire to self-

³⁰ Olberding, Amy (2013) *Moral Exemplars in the Analects: The Good Person Is That*. Routledge.

³¹ *Analects*, 6.8.

³² Olberding, 162.

³³ *Analects*, 14.29.

³⁴ *Analects*, 5.15.

³⁵ *Analects*, 11.10.

³⁶ *Analects* 6.30; 15.3; 5.12.

³⁷ Olberding, 166.

³⁸ Fricker, 35.

positioning) as a *Junzi* would, in many cases, result in identity-prejudicial credibility deficit for those who speak to him.

I will justify this conclusion with one specific conversation in *The Analects* where Zigong's ethical failure lead to identity prejudice:

Zigong asked, "Guan Zhong was not a benevolent person, was he? When Duke Huan had Prince Jiu murdered, Guan Zhong was not only incapable of dying with his master, he moreover turned around and served his master's murderer as Prime Minister."

The Master replied, "When Guan Zhong served as Duke Huan's Prime Minister, he allowed him to become hegemon over the other feudal lords, uniting and ordering the entire world. To this day, the people continue to enjoy the benefits of his achievements—if it weren't for Guan Zhong, we would all be wearing our hair loose and fastening our garments on the left. How could he be expected to emulate the petty fidelity of a common husband or wife, going off to hang himself and die anonymously in some gully or ditch?"³⁹

Zigong was accusing Guan Zhong — the chancellor and a reformer of the State of Qi during the Spring and Autumn period of Chinese history — for not being a benevolent man, or, in reverse, being a *Xiaoren*. Identifying an individual's benevolence is not purely a personality description, for the man of *Ren* (benevolence) is a class or a systematic societal identity in Confucianism. A man without benevolence is both untrustworthy and incapable of delivering high epistemic value in his words. Zigong justifies his judgment by Guan Zhong's unloyal action of not dying with his master — as he was murdered — and serving his master's murderer as Prime minister. Therefore, Zigong associates Guan Zhong with a less credible social group — the non-benevolent man.

Confucius, however, considers Zigong's judgment clumsy and therefore, a generalized association that is epistemically culpable. Though Zigong's thoughts are aligned with the virtue of loyalty (*Zhong*) in which serving two kings and two dynasties is a betrayal associated with a *Xiaoren*, Confucius counters by crediting Guan Zhong for helping Qi

³⁹ *Analects*, 14.17.

unite the Chinese feudal lords and prevent Di barbarians from overrunning China.⁴⁰ Confucius believed that all Chinese owe Guan Zhong a debt. And, therefore Guan Zhong's later achievements can outweigh any potential initial impropriety. As an avid learner of ritual traditions, Zigong must have known about Guan Zhong's contribution to the Qi dynasty.⁴¹ Therefore, Zigong's judgment of Guan Zhong's identity is a lack of holistic consideration — an ethically bad affective investment, rather than a mere lack of knowledge about Guan Zhong. Confucius, who complimented Zigong for his knowledge, must have known that Zigong is aware of Guan Zhong's contribution.⁴² Confucius's protection over Guan Zhong inferred his suggestion that Zigong should have ethically invested more in his attempt to understand Guan Zhong and not fall into judging Guan Zhong as non-benevolent. This is not the only time that Confucius showed a dismayed attitude toward Zigong's judgment of others. Confucius has commented similarly on Zigong's judgment of Yan Hui in another text.⁴³ As Zigong never had the chance to directly converse with Guan Zhong, no testimonial exchange has occurred for testimonial injustice to emerge. However, if that happened, Zigong's misjudgement of Guan Zhong's identity — as a non-benevolent and epistemically untrustworthy man — would likely distort his information-absorbing process by giving him Guan Zhong less credibility than he deserves. This might lead to identity-prejudicial credibility deficit.

Confucius's comments on *Xiaoren* and fake *Junzi* have proved his objection to *identity prejudice* — the unholistic association of someone to some attributes due to their identity. Here, some might find it unconvincing to claim that Confucius is opposed to testimonial injustice in Fricker's definition. Since there are no examples in *The Analects* where identity-prejudicial credibility deficit or testimonial injustice is mentioned in a straightforward manner nor is there any concept of Confucius that is a direct equivalent to Fricker's concepts. Such a counter argument, I find, is valid and undebatable. The cultural and time gap between Classical Confucianism and contemporary concepts such as testimonial injustice is so huge that it would be absurd to try and perfectly match or compare the two philosophies. However, both Fricker

⁴⁰ Confucius (孔子) (2003) *Confucius Analects: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries*. Edward Slingerland, trans. Hackett Classics, 14.17.

⁴¹ Olberding, 164

⁴² *Analects*, 1.15.

⁴³ *Analects*, 5.9.

and Confucius discuss shared ideas of virtues for epistemic justice. Similar to two scholars, Randall Peerenboom and Ruiping Fan, who have proved that some Classic Confucianist ideas have achieved many aims of justice, I will argue in the next section that values of Classic Confucianism can positively contribute to testimonial justice.⁴⁴

4. Junzi as a Responsible Hearer

Through proving Confucius's opposition towards testimonial injustices, I find that virtues of Confucianism hold great potential in enhancing the virtues of testimonial justice proposed by Fricker. Fricker calls for attention towards testimonial sensibility as a second-nature epistemic virtue. For Fricker, fighting against testimonial injustice requires a distinct reflexive critical awareness that enables the hearer to neutralize the impact of prejudice in her credibility judgment.⁴⁵ This is a process where the hearer suspects prejudices in her credibility judgments and moves out of the spontaneous, unreflective mode to an active reflective status to navigate the fallacies in their credibility judgment. As long as we identify our credibility misjudgment, we render it a neutral state. In the context of human societies where prejudice is ubiquitous and constantly revolving, an ideal virtuous hearer, to Fricker, should both reliably possess a reflexive second nature against familiar prejudice and an active awareness for critical reflection to render less familiar prejudice.

5. Love Of Learning (*Hao Xue* 好学) and Reflection to Achieve Wisdom (*Zhi* 知)

One virtue of Confucius that is epistemically significant is *Zhi*. *Zhi* (知 — wisdom, knowledge) is one of the five virtues of held by the Confucian *Junzi*: benevolence, wisdom, trustworthiness, forthrightness, courage. In *The Analects*, Confucius mentioned *Zhi* as he said "The wise are never perplexed; the humane, never anxious; the brave, never afraid".⁴⁶ This proves *Zhi*'s significance for Confucius. *Zhi*, in Confucianism, is not only the capability to absorb knowledge, but also the capability to make appropriate judgments and distinguish between right and wrong, acceptable

⁴⁴Fan, Ruiping (2010) *Reconstructionist Confucianism, Philosophical Studies in Contemporary Culture*; Peerenboom, Randall (1990) "Confucian Justice", *International Philosophical Quarterly* 30: 17–32.

⁴⁵ Fricker, 91-92; 99.

⁴⁶ *Analects*, 9.29.

and unacceptable. The most epistemologically significant passage of *Zhi* would be in *The Analects* (2.17) where the term was used six times:

When you know, to know that you know; and when you do not know, to know that you do not know; that is knowledge.⁴⁷

By analyzing the passage with Ernest Sosa's AAA (Accurate, Adroit, and Apt) model of virtue epistemology, Sosa himself has proposed a disruptive translation of the passage viewed under his tenets of the distinction between animal knowledge and reflective knowledge:

When you have first-order (animal) knowledge, to know (recognize) that you do know; and when you do not have such knowledge, to know (recognize) that you do not know; "that" is (reflective) knowledge (where the reference is to the first order knowledge, which rises to the better, higher level of reflective knowledge, and does so through the proper, "recognitional" second-order endorsement).⁴⁸

Sosa argues that the second-order (reflective) knowledge is what Confucius considers to be *Zhi* (wisdom), distinct from the first-order (animal) knowledge of *Shi* (識 — recognizing, identifying)⁴⁹. Here, we can understand *Shi* as the knowledge gained in Fricker's "spontaneous, unreflective mode" where no reflection of credibility judgment has been done.⁵⁰ As *Shi* goes through reflective rendering, we achieve a "higher level of reflective knowledge" — *Zhi*.⁵¹ It is the state of "know[ing] that you know, to know that you don't know".⁵² Similarly, Fricker has proposed reflexive critical awareness as a process of escaping prejudices in his/her credibility judgments through active reflection to reach the neutral states. Therefore, Fricker's neutral states might be where people can absorb *Zhi*.

⁴⁷ *Analects*, 2.17.

⁴⁸ Sosa, Ernest (2015) "Confucius on Knowledge", *Dao* 14: 325–30. doi:10.1007/s11712-015-9450-1.

⁴⁹ Sosa, 2015.

⁵⁰ Fricker, 64.

⁵¹ Sosa, 6.

⁵² *Analects*, 2.17.

To Fricker, for the virtue of testimonial justice to be established, the reflexive critical awareness needs to also be reliable (through time and across a span of prejudices).⁵³ However, in her book, Fricker has not suggested a solution for this reliability but simply mentioned it.⁵⁴ I would elaborate below that the “*Love of Learning*” and skillful reflection of *Junzi* could bring reliability to testimonial justice.

The *Love of Learning* (*hao xue* 好学) is used to define one’s attention in behavior, carefulness in words, and an aspiration to learn from those who have the *Way* (*dao*) to correct himself.⁵⁵ The term specifically means learning to behave appropriately to cultivate and acquire virtues. As an intellectual virtue, the *Love of Learning* does not refer to the love to acquire knowledge, but as focus on orienting behavior to adapt particular circumstances and select what is appropriate (*ze* 擇):⁵⁶

Loving Goodness without balancing it with a *love for learning* will result in the vice of foolishness. Loving wisdom without balancing it with a *love for learning* will result in the vice of deviance. Loving trustworthiness without balancing it with a love for learning will result in the vice of harmful rigidity. Loving uprightness without balancing it with a *love for learning* will result in the vice of intolerance. Loving courage without balancing it with a *love for learning* will result in the vice of unruliness. Loving resoluteness without balancing it with a love for learning will result in the vice of willfulness.⁵⁷

It is clear throughout Confucius’s texts that these six virtues are all positive. However, practicing them without the *Love of Learning* brings disastrous results, turning virtues into vices. What makes the *Love of Learning* complementary to these qualities lies in its ability to manifest them in different situations.⁵⁸ For instance, a man can apply *Ren* (humanness) similarly to everyone they encounter, which means that they care for

⁵³ Fricker, 98.

⁵⁴ Fricker, 98.

⁵⁵ *Analects*, 1.14. According to Graham, the term *Way* (*dao*) is used in the *Analects* as “only of the proper course of human conduct and of the organisation of government”. Graham, A.C. *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China*. La Salle, Ill. : Open Court, 1989.

⁵⁶ *Analects*, 7.28.

⁵⁷ *Analects*, 17.8.

⁵⁸ Yong, Huang (2013) “Virtue Ethics and Moral Responsibility: Confucian Conceptions of Moral Praise and Blame”, *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 40: 381–99. doi:10.1111/1540-6253.12044.

everyone equally regardless of their backgrounds and demands. But this would lead to foolishness as he would disregard the fact that each individual needs a different caring approach. The *Love of Learning* is what keeps one's humanness flexible, for them to care appropriately in different contexts. Therefore, to Confucius, the purpose of learning is to avoid inflexibility.⁵⁹ Li Zehou — a contemporary Chinese scholar — has elaborated this idea as he commented the Confucius purpose of learning is “to grasp the appropriate degree”. More than a preference, keeping the habit of untiring learning as being flexible to situations, according to Confucius, is a necessary discipline in everyday life.⁶⁰ Such discipline is the foundation for moral excellence, and in Fricker's sense, the foundation for reliability in virtue of testimonial justice as well.⁶¹ Advocating for flexibility in this case does not mean disregarding the existence of a definite epistemic justice or the ultimacy of knowledge, but means putting the flexibility (*Love of Learning*) as a foundation for epistemic and testimonial justice to exist. Then, how can *Learning (xue)* help one achieve reliability in virtue of testimonial justice? Confucius's dual reflection as a form of learning would elaborate this.

Confucius drew a clear distinction between two types of reflection: retrospective reflection (*xing* 省) and perspective reflection (*si* 思). Retrospective reflection, similar to Fricker's idea of reflection, is to consciously look back at past thoughts and behaviors, drawing lessons in order to make corrections. Perspective reflection, in contrast, has not been mentioned by Fricker. It is a perceptive process of rationally looking ahead to align your thoughts and behavior with certain goals and goods. The below text demonstrate how *Xing* and *Si* could separately contribute to building up one's virtue of testimonial justice:

The Master said, “When we see men of worth, we should think (*si* 思) of equaling them; when we see men of a contrary character, we should turn inwards and reflect (*xing* 省) on ourselves.”⁶²

⁵⁹ *Analects*, 1.8.

⁶⁰ *Analects*, 1.14.

⁶¹ Kim, Hye-Kyung (2003) “Critical Thinking, Learning and Confucius: A Positive Assessment”, *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 37: 71–87. doi:10.1111/1467-9752.3701005.

⁶² *Analects*, 4.17.

As we see an intellectually and morally worthy man, Confucius suggests for us to actively reflect on how we could perform similarly well. That is perspective reflection, consciously thinking of how to direct our thoughts and behavior in the right way. In reverse, as we see a man with less virtue, we should use retrospective reflection to reexamine our past experience, from there, make adjustments. However, retrospective and perspective reflection does not only happen as we encounter some external phenomena (someone's good or bad behavior), they also occur as we encounter our personal event of performing either good or bad. Fricker also emphasizes on acquiring testimonial sensibility by collecting sufficient active reflection experience. However, she only focuses on corrective experience conducted with retrospective reflection. As the goal of reflection is to neutralize the prejudices in our credible judgments, it is equally important to comprehend the neutral point as it is to make corrections to reach that neutral point. And that is the function of perspective reflection in acquiring testimonial sensibility. It helps us formulate an ideal sense of anti-prejudice and testimonial sensibility by marking and consciously learning from both ours and others good testimonial performance.

To be more specific, the role of retrospective reflection and perspective reflection can be seen as we break down the purpose of reflection toward acquiring virtues of testimonial justice into three: critical alignment, self-awareness, internalization.⁶³ First, perspective reflection would be used to put headers from a passive state into an active reflective status by aligning information received, from there, identifying self-misjudgment in the process. As Confucius claims that his teaching can be strung into a single thread,⁶⁴ he believes that there is ideal knowledge (wisdom), that corresponds with the virtuous state to acquire such knowledge. Therefore, perspective reflection helps us identify the virtuous state by looking at the man of worth, and spot epistemic fallacies happening in a non-virtuous state. Second, retrospective reflection brings us to being self-aware of our limitations in epistemic capabilities creating testimonial injustice. From there, we are motivated to make corrections for our prejudice. To Confucius, it is reflection that allows us to know that you do not know.⁶⁵ Third, both types of reflection would coordinate to help one internalize the virtues of testimonial justice into our second nature. Retrospective reflection, through helping to realize

⁶³ Kim, 82.

⁶⁴ *Analects*, 4.15.

⁶⁵ *Analects*, 9.29.

one's limitation, would be the cognitive foundation for epistemic virtues of humility, open-mindedness, and fairness.⁶⁶ Perspective reflection, through collating and navigating self's judgment with the ideal prejudice-free judgment, helps one to practice performing virtue of testimonial justice.

Let us revise the example of Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* to better demonstrate how perspective reflection could be applied in coordination with retrospective reflection. I would develop a scenario when after Tom Robbison's prosecution, a jury member did retrospective reflection about the case and realized that he had made a prejudiced decision influenced by race identity. As soon as he realizes that, he makes an attempt to adjust his prejudice encountering the next case involving black defendant. This process is what Fricker calls reflexive critical awareness.⁶⁷ Meanwhile, perspective reflection enhances the jury member's testimonial sensibility in two ways. First, in order to conclude that he had been influenced by a prejudice regarding races, he himself must have experienced a comparable case (either of himself or of others) where judgments are made prejudicially free to set as a standard. So that perspective reflection on that experience (either consciously or unconsciously) helps him realize his wrong-doing. Second, as he succeeded to be free from racial prejudice in the courtroom next time, he needs to make a perspective reflection to comprehend his success and reinforce the habit of consciously escaping from prejudice until it became a second-nature. Through the example, I argued that combining Confucius retrospective and perspective reflection in the self-rendering process would increase the reliability for credibility judgments.

6. Ren (仁) as the Ideal Virtue of Testimonial Justice

As Fricker emphasizes the action of correcting or rendering to achieve testimonial justice, she implicitly claims the existence of an ideal concept of testimonial justice and its corresponding virtue. She chose to conceptualize the virtue of testimonial justice as a state of prejudice-free.⁶⁸ While this ideal state of judgment requires a person to hold certain traits, it is too subjective to attempt proposing a universal, one-size-fits-all definition for such a state. However, as we localize the terms to people

⁶⁶ Kim, 84.

⁶⁷ For definition of reflexive critical awareness, see pg9.

⁶⁸ Fricker, 93.

influenced by certain cultures and ideas, Confucius's idea of *Ren* (仁) (benevolence, humanness) can be a state in which people hold the ideal virtue of testimonial justice.

Ren (仁) is a Chinese character composed of two components: one means 'person' (人), and the other means 'two' (二), which originally means the 'relationships' between dear ones.⁶⁹ Confucius deems *Ren* as an transcendent, higher-order, more central virtue which lays on top of other particular virtues.⁷⁰ As *Ren* was used with different meanings and context throughout *The Analects* and other Confucius texts, there has been many debates on the meaning of *Ren* as scholars refer to it as humanness, benevolent, caring or even sympathy. However, within this paper, I will focus on using *Ren* with the interpretation proposed by George Rudebusch: a priority in one's motive and humane courtesy.⁷¹

As one is fully motivated by *Ren* and keeps *Ren* at the utmost priority in his actions, their actions and behavior would naturally become virtuous.⁷² What does it mean to prioritize the motives of *Ren*? It means to set the utmost priority towards humanity. As a self-treatment approach, it inferred priority in improving the self's human character.⁷³ Confucius describes *Junzi* as one that is concerned about his own ability and seeks for improvement in himself rather than the others.⁷⁴ By developing one's character by practicing the five virtues: respect (*gong* 恭), tolerance (*kuan* 寬), trustworthiness in word (*xin* 信), diligence (*min* 敏), and kindness (*hui* 惠), Confucius believes that one would achieve *Ren*.⁷⁵ *Ren* is not any particular virtue in Confucius, *Ren* is the attitude and the ultimate priority in cultivating all human virtues. For the virtue of testimonial justice to be a humane value, cultivating *Ren* means cultivating the virtue of testimonial justice also. Secondly, in interacting with others, *Ren* is a priority in righteous treatment. It is the treatment navigated by empathy, as Confucius

⁶⁹ Tan, Chuanbao (2022) "The Interpretation of Love and Its Educational Realization: A Comparative Analysis of Nel Noddings' Caring and Confucius' Ren", *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 1–7. doi:10.1080/00131857.2022.2075261.

⁷⁰ Luo, Shirong (2012) "Setting the Record Straight: Confucius' Notion of Ren", *Dao-a Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 11: 39–52. doi:10.1007/s11712-011-9256-8.

⁷¹ Rudebusch, George (2013) "Reconsidering Renas Virtue and Benevolence", *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 40: 456–72. doi:10.1111/1540-6253.12055.

⁷² Rudebusch, 461.

⁷³ Rudebusch, 462.

⁷⁴ *Analects*, 15.21.

⁷⁵ *Analects*, 17.6.

defines *Ren* as treating others the way you want others to treat you.⁷⁶ It is the priority toward “rightness” rather than “profit”, “virtues” rather than “physical assets”, “harmony” rather than “blind conformation”, helping people realize their “good qualities” rather than “their bad”.⁷⁷ *Ren* treatments toward others is not any rigid code of conduct, it is the humane interaction rooted from a whole-hearted attitude. As a person holds *Ren*, he would not act in manners against *Ren* even for the cost of his own life.⁷⁸ Encountering tyrants or death, a *Ren* person feels no fear but the fear of losing *Ren*.⁷⁹ Inferring to testimonial justice, we could claim that a man of *Ren* would hold the virtue of testimonial justice in the most stable and ideal form as he cultivates *Ren* motivated by nothing but *Ren* itself and puts it in the top priority outgrow the fear of self-harm or even death. By putting such virtue as an utmost priority, one also needs to prioritize cultivating in himself other particular virtues needed for testimonial justice and strive to treat every human being with testimonial justice.

While *Ren*'s interpretation as a priority brings a sense of direction to the virtue of testimonial justice (a direction toward humanity), the other interpretation of *Ren* as humane courtesy brings a sense of destination to testimonial justice. The word Courtesy is rooted from the word courtly and is derived from the Greek *choros*, χορός: a place for dancing.⁸⁰ This gives a sense of effortlessness (*wuwei* 無為) without desire to strive for anything. *Ren* as humane courtesy does not hold any desire for improvement, but serves as a respect and celebration for humanity's character. This interpretation emphasizes the distinction of value of an action depending on its motivation. As Confucius said “Those who are *Ren* feel at home in *Ren*, whereas those who are clever follow *Ren* because they feel that they will profit from it”.⁸¹ *Ren* only exists when humane action is conducted for the sake of celebration for humanness, not for the sake of another result. As *Ren* is an overarching virtue laying under the foundation of all human virtues, the celebration of *Ren* naturally includes the cultivation of the ideal virtue of testimonial justice as a humane value. Combining the

⁷⁶ *Analects*, 12.2.

⁷⁷ *Analects*, 4.16, 4.11, 13.23, 12.16.

⁷⁸ *Analects*, 15.19.

⁷⁹ *Analects*, 7.23, 4.8.

⁸⁰ Rudebusch, 465.

⁸¹ *Analects*, 4.2.

two interpretations, *Ren* — as an ideal virtue — can be defined as one's ultimate priority for humanness that only exists as one cultivating and celebrating such humanness for the sake of the humanness itself. As one achieves *Ren* in its fullest sense, he/she would effortlessly hold the ideal virtue of testimonial justice.

7. Conclusion

In an attempt to comprehend the intersection between Western philosophies and classical Asian philosophies, I have depicted for the possibility for some mutual understanding of epistemic injustice between Fricker and Confucius by giving *Xiaoren* and *Fake Junzi* as both ethically and epistemically culpable cases in Fricker's idea of testimonial justice. This point has been reinforced by the proposal to include Confucius's values: "the *Love of Learning*", *Wisdom*, *Reflection* and *Ren* to the development of understanding testimonial justice. As we transcend the barriers of time and school of thought to facilitate communication between philosophies, it enables progress. Since no scholars have studied Confucius in relation to testimonial (in)justice, this paper calls for attention to possibilities for deeper comparative study between Confucianism and the contemporary concept of testimonial (in)justice.⁸²

⁸² Acknowledgement: I am indebted to Prof. Billy Wheeler for advising and commenting on the drafts of this paper. I am also grateful for the four anonymous referees who have given invaluable feedback for the refinement of the paper.

References:

Anderson, Elizabeth (2012) "Epistemic Justice as a Virtue of Social Institutions", *Social Epistemology* 26: 163–73. doi:10.1080/02691728.2011.652211.

Cao, Deborah (2018) "Desperately Seeking 'Justice' in Classical Chinese: On the Meanings of Yi", *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law - Revue Internationale De Sémiotique Juridique* 32: 13–28. doi:10.1007/s11196-018-9566-9

Chi-Pin, Chao (1972) "The Origin of Confucius's Ideology of 'Harmony But Not Equality' And the Logical Goal of His Theory of Reconciling Contradictions", *Chinese Studies in Philosophy* 4: 100–164. doi:10.2753/csp1097-1467040102100

Cline, Erin M (2014) "Justice and Confucianism", *Philosophy Compass* 9: 165–75. doi:10.1111/phc3.12108

Confucius (孔子) (2003) *Confucius Analects: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries*. Edward Slingerland, trans. Hackett Classics.

Changsha, Hunan Renmin Chubanshe (1993) "*Book of Changes - Yijing 易经*."

Dau-Lin, Hsü (1970) "The Myth of the 'Five Human Relations' of Confucius", *Monumenta Serica* 29: 27–37. doi:10.1080/02549948.1970.11744983.

Duvert, Christophe (2018) "How Is Justice Understood in Classic Confucianism?", *Asian Philosophy* 28: 295–315. doi:10.1080/09552367.2018.1535477

Fan, Ruiping (2010) *Reconstructionist Confucianism, Philosophical Studies in Contemporary Culture*; Peerenboom, Randall (1990) "Confucian Justice", *International Philosophical Quarterly* 30: 17–32. doi:10.5840/ipq199030146.

Fricker, Miranda (2007) *Epistemic injustice power and the ethics of knowing*, Oxford University Press.

Confucius and Epistemic Injustice

Graham, A.C. *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China*. La Salle, Ill. : Open Court, 1989.

Kim, Hye-Kyung (2003) "Critical Thinking, Learning and Confucius: A Positive Assessment", *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 37: 71–87. doi:10.1111/1467-9752.3701005.

Li, Ling (2010) "Gentlemen and Petty Men", *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 41: 54–65. doi:10.2753/csp10971467410205.

Luo, Shirong (2012) "Setting the Record Straight: Confucius' Notion of Ren", *Dao-a Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 11: 39–52. doi:10.1007/s11712-011-9256-8.

Mencius, 2B, 2 (James R. Ware's translation. See *The Sayings of Mencius* [New York: New American Library, 1960], p. 72

Mi, Chienkuo (2017) "Reflective Knowledge: Confucius and Virtue Epistemology", *Comparative Philosophy* 8. doi:10.31979/2151-6014(2017).080206

Nylan, Michael (2016) "Li Zehou's Lunyu Jindu (Reading the Analects Today)", *Philosophy East and West* 66: 739–56. doi:10.1353/pew.2016.0073.

Olberding, Amy (2013) *Moral Exemplars in the Analects: The Good Person Is That*. Routledge.

Pines, Yuri (2017) "Confucius' Elitism", *A Concise Companion to Confucius* 164–84. doi:10.1002/9781118783863.ch8

Peerenboom, Randall (1990) "Confucian Justice", *International Philosophical Quarterly* 30: 17–32. doi:10.5840/ipq199030146.

Rudebusch, George (2013) "Reconsidering Renas Virtue and Benevolence", *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 40: 456–72. doi:10.1111/1540-6253.12055.

Schneider, Henrique (2019) "Virtues and the Interested 'Self' in Confucius and Adam Smith", *Humanities Bulletin*, London Academic Publishing.

Confucius and Epistemic Injustice

Sosa, Ernest (2015) "Confucius on Knowledge", *Dao* 14: 325–30. doi:10.1007/s11712-015-9450-1.

Tan, Chuanbao (2022) "The Interpretation of Love and Its Educational Realization: A Comparative Analysis of Nel Noddings' Caring and Confucius' Ren", *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 1–7. doi:10.1080/00131857.2022.2075261.

Tan, Sor-hoon (2007) "Confucian Democracy as Pragmatic Experiment: Uniting Love of Learning and Love of Antiquity", *Asian Philosophy* 17: 141–66. doi:10.1080/09552360701445026.

Van Overmeeren, Jules and Jean-Baptiste Kao (1940) "La Philosophie Sociale et Politique Du Confucianisme.", *Monumenta Nipponica* 3: 341. doi:10.2307/2382432.

Xiao, Yang (1997) "Trying to Do Justice to the Concept of Justice in Confucian Ethics", *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 24: 521–51. doi:10.1163/15406253-02404006

Yong, Huang (2013) "Virtue Ethics and Moral Responsibility: Confucian Conceptions of Moral Praise and Blame", *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 40: 381–99. doi:10.1111/1540-6253.12044.

Some Critical Notes On Leonardo Mercado: Rethinking Filipino Philosophy and Beyond

Nathanael V. Navarro¹

Abstract

In this critical re-reading of Leonardo Mercado's project that validates the existence of indigenous elements of Filipino Philosophy, I argue that such a scholarship is against the idea of paying attention to the necessity of cultural transformation, to address the pressing issues affecting Filipinos' well-being. What is the scope of Leonardo Mercado's critical enterprise in his brand of Filipino Philosophy? Did Mercado tolerate the native forms of political manipulation to simply prove that there is a unique way of living, thinking, and a set of human values among the Filipinos? Did Mercado underestimate the potential of Filipinos to philosophise and improve their social conditions? This research characterises Mercado's scholarship as anti-dialogical as it puts a rigid boundary between scholarly works in the intellectual landscape and the intensity of social predicaments in the Philippine cultural setting. This research attempts to be a venue for the critical involvement of various thinkers from different academic disciplines to magnify the impractical and reactionary underpinnings in Mercado's brand of philosophising. Signalling the call for more dialogical philosophising, this research aims to recover intellectual humility from the threats of cultural triumphalism.

¹ Nathanael V. Navarro holds a degree in Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy at the University of Santo Tomas. His research interests include dialogical and comparative approaches in metaphysical investigations, democratisation, philosophical issues in sustainable social development and cultural studies. He is currently handling administrative roles in various civil society organisations in the Philippines and the global community.

1. Introduction

The coming into being of a burgeoning amount of literature from various philosophical traditions can be attributed to a movement towards a more inclusive way of thinking, which can make philosophising be defined by intellectual tolerance and anti-hegemonic tendencies. Perhaps this has been the penchant of Leonardo Mercado's scholarship for having been known as one of the most prolific researchers in Filipino Philosophy. Mercado's brand of philosophising takes as its point of departure the belief that it "is a behavioral science, [and] it is inseparable from culture".² Despite the colonial forces that ravaged and left its vestiges in almost every aspect of Philippine society, Mercado believes that the existence of Filipino Philosophy cannot be doubted. It will not measure the fruition of unique lifeways in pre-Hispanic temples, formidable bureaucracies, and religions with a large number of adherents.³ To trace our oriental outlook, according to Mercado, is to magnify the patterns of cultural phenomena that naturally unfold in the lives of ordinary masses that resemble other Asian characteristics. Mercado's scholarship to prove that there is an organic Filipino way of philosophising is oppositional to the claim that the lack of developed culture, collective psyche through a written language, and even written philosophical literature before the arrival of the first colonisers in the Philippines would suffice to prove there is no such a thing as Filipino Philosophy without the academic development.⁴ Emmanuel Batoon commented that this scholarship opposes "those who maintained academic disciplinal rigidities and territorial limits in terms of research methods".⁵ Perhaps one of the greatest contributions of Mercado is, indeed, to prove that philosophising is not only confined to what is imposed by dominant academic standards of thinking but also encapsulates reflections and actions regarding one's religious and/or personal beliefs, organisational affiliations, social interactions, consumption habits, environmental awareness, among others.

² Mercado, Leonardo (1994) *Essays on Filipino Philosophy*, Manila: Logos Publication, Inc., 22.

³ Cf. Jose, F. Sionil (2008) 'We Are Not Asian', in Alejandro D. Padilla, ed., *Why We Are Hungry: Rats in the Kitchen, Carabaos in the Closet*: 1-3, 1st Printing, Solidaridad Publishing House, 1-3.

⁴ Co, Alfredo (2009) 'In the Beginning a Petit Personal Historical Narrative of the Beginning of Philosophy in the Philippines', in *Across the Philosophical Silk Road*, Vol. VI: 28- 46, University of Santo Tomas, 29-30.

⁵ Batoon, Emmanuel (December 2020) 'A Tribute to Leonardo N. Mercado, SVD: His Legacy to the Filipino Nation', *Kritike* 14, no. 2: 2.

As one reflects upon one's own thinking, one may notice "cultural items like language (which is also a perception of reality, be it from the individualistic or the social perspectives)".⁶ However, this should not be taken to mean that the categorisation present or absent in linguistic instrumentalities of one's culture can be the end of critical analysis of social reality. While there is no use of gendered pronouns when referring to persons in the native languages of the Philippines,⁷ language cannot stand as the sole reference to which we should let passivity eat up the core of our political commitment towards social justice.⁸ Instead of aiming to narrow down the objects of critical enterprise, cross-cultural methods must be appreciated at the level of assuring the universality in the rich bases of findings, that is, "to realize that science is not value-free and that culture is a context for the scientific enterprise".⁹ One must attempt to prevent cultural elements from getting in the way of social development. Hence, wisdom must be constitutive of contextualised points of understanding to know the difference between hospitality as a positive trait to accommodate what is genuinely positive for our individual good and the common good, and the right moment to be inhospitable or "inimical", as it were, to anything negative that can be deleterious to social development. Filipinos must not be indiscriminately flattered when the value of hospitality is generally attributed to the indispensable form of their cultural milieu, especially if colonial forces in Philippine history are not to be taken aside.

Filipinos are bound to keep the promise of political allegiance not only because of coercive measures that cage the fullness of political freedom and choices but also because blind acquiescence to the prevailing political manipulation will only

⁶ Mercado, Leonardo (2009) *Explorations in Filipino Philosophy*, Manila: Logos Publications Inc., 21.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Cf. Guillermo, Ramon (2009) *Pook at Paninindigan: Kritika ng Pantayong Pananaw*, Diliman, Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 28-29. Also see Philippine Institute for Development Studies (March 31, 2023); 'Women in the Workplace: Paving a Better Landscape in the Labor Force', webpage, Philippine Institute for Development Studies. The labor force in the Philippines continues to dismally experience the problem of gender inequality. Under a society that generally attenuates the gender roles of women to stereotypical child-rearing and marriage-dependent relations, the intellectual and economic capacities of women are not put into full realization since they are constrained to domestic responsibilities. While there is no need to deny the biological implications of being a woman and the need for orderly human reproduction in society, the government does not adequately address the problems about the equality of opportunity to secure one's work and in developing the potentiality of women to experience and provide meaningful and decent work as a service to the collective progress of the nation.

⁹ Enriquez, Virgilio G. (1992) *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology: The Philippine Experience*, 3rd Printing, Diliman, Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 112.

forestall the genuine sense of collaboration.¹⁰ One must even go beyond how we are simply moved by tantalising sensations and other fleeting emotional motivations to do good, or how we are discouraged to go against the current of the forceful waves of cultural commonalities and traditional identities. Hence, there is a need to challenge the hold of social order by not simply compelling an obligatory line of out-and-out charitable acts to mitigate the issues on human rights, but to directly diagnose and identify the deep sources of the problems – and all the vanguards that made possible the perpetuation of social maladies.¹¹ Rather than feeding ourselves with the collision of secluded brackets of belongingness – ironically sliding toward societal dissolution – even the subtle forms of power bargaining must be put into question. There are several socio-political phenomena that speak of this issue in the Philippines. What and whose interests are we really of service when, in the name of financial indebtedness, the Philippines absorbs into its educational system the orientation of partnered capitalist institutions to promote a sense of learning that is exceedingly equated to how a docile person can be lucrative for the commercial interests of a globalised world at the expense of deeper purpose of education?¹² Before we celebrate the so-called forging of an alliance of the *Association of the Southeast Asian Nations* (A.S.E.A.N.) countries to prove that “harmony” is indeed a breath of life for Asians,¹³ one must be wary if this international organisation is a bastion of upholding the rule of law and the political values that unswervingly protect universal human rights, or if this is simply a regional amalgamation of narrow profitable interests only swayed by tariffs, economic sanctions, and other

¹⁰ Cf. Hume, David (2009) ‘Of the Original Social Contract’, in Matt Zwolinski, ed., *In Arguing About Political Philosophy*: 71-77. Routledge, 71-77.

¹¹ Cf. Singer, Peter (2007) ‘The Singer Solution to World Poverty’, in James Rachels and Stuart Rachels, eds., *The Right Thing to Do: Basic Readings in Moral Philosophy*: 138-144, 4th edition. McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 138-144.

¹² Tuibeo, Amable G. (2005) *Philosophy of Education: A New Perspective*, Makati City: Grandwater Publications, 166-170. For instance, the commodification of education in the Philippines can be traced to its adoption of foreign standards from its biggest creditors that put a highfalutin value on globalisation, modernization, and income-generation strands in the neoliberal line of thinking. A strong case for this would be when the World Bank “funded the implementation of the Revised Basic Education Curriculum (RBEC), the main product of the government’s 10-year Master Plan for Basic Education (1996-2005) that sought to develop and prepare students with skills needed by the global economy. This made the teaching of Filipino, [H]istory, [S]ocial [S]cience, and [V]alues [E]ducation secondary to English, [S]cience, and [M]athematics.” Also see Del Rosario-Malonzo, Jennifer (2007) ‘Economics of Philippine Education: Serving the Global Market’, in Bienvenido Lumbea et al., eds., *Mula Tore Patungong Palengke: Neoliberal Education in the Philippines*: 81-94. IBON Books, 93.

¹³ Cf. Mercado, Leonardo (1979) *Elements of Filipino Ethics*, 2nd Printing, Tacloban City: Divine Word University Publications, 54-62.

trading benefits at the expense of more humane causes.¹⁴ Even those working under the cloak of so-called local collaboration, regionalistic demands, and national progress must be critically evaluated if they allow any form of political exclusion and manipulation to take place.

If the mind is fed with too much complacency or the illusory elements that superimpose the reception of “normalcy”, the energy for the critical understanding of taken-for-granted societal assumptions might dwindle. The liberating potential of the mind is not to succumb to powerlessness in the face of oppression propped up by a culture of blind conformism. “Military victory”, Renato Constantino asserts, “does not necessarily signify conquest. As long as feelings of resistance remain in the hearts of the vanquished, no conqueror is secure”.¹⁵ Nevertheless, this definition of effective subjugation is not to be taken as isolated from one’s cultural milieu. A nation with a tragic past from colonialism, such as the Philippines, will probably intend to walk through the present and the future with vengeful ambition. It is clear, however, that this must not be a scapegoat to be insensitive to the need to develop by correcting the faults of one’s culture. One must not be hoodwinked that recognising the traditional roots in philosophising might be to place an absolutising ground for indignant sentiments to be planted and mature to the extent that one takes pride in the “native” forms of social domination. Instead of ignoring it, this philosophical caveat in the practice of cultural examination will be highlighted more as we go deeper into the critical re-reading of Mercado’s idea of Filipino Philosophy.

2. Examining the Underlying Assumptions

¹⁴ Bagulaya, Jose Duke (2022) *ASEAN as an International Organization: International Law and Region-Building in Southeast Asia*, Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 1-57. ASEAN is a regional organisation addressing the security and economic concerns of its member states which include Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. In this book, Bagulaya argued that the regional order in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations is burdened by mutual suspicion of economic leveraging and market sanctioning. Consequently, the ASEAN does not unequivocally commit itself to oppose the legitimization of the lawlessness due to human rights violations in the recently established Myanmar junta, and the strong evidence of extra-judicial killings in the Philippines brought about by the “anti-illegal drug” war of the former President Rodrigo Duterte.

¹⁵ Constantino, Renato (1982) *The Miseducation of the Filipino*, 6th Printing, Quezon City: Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 2.

To put forward the essence of an effective resistance toward nation-building is also to be on guard against the temptations of cultural exoticisation, which is, indeed, a key component to promoting ethnocentrism and xenocentrism. Such an attitude can be gleaned from the motivational ground in the scholarship of Mercado. Mercado admitted that he wanted to place a point of unification in the status of Filipino Philosophy. Mercado sees the need to take a solid stance on the concern for a methodology in the investigative enterprises in Filipino Philosophy by bringing in standardised thematic guides and questions in philosophical fora.¹⁶ Two working assumptions can be uncovered. First, Mercado overemphasised the unchangeability of one's culture. Second, Mercado pinned down the role of Filipino philosophers to a descriptive practice of cultural phenomena, that is, to create a traction "from the implicit to the explicit".¹⁷ Mercado likened this so-called philosophical role to a midwife who simply assists in a mother's birthing. But if the overarching ambition of Mercado for promoting Filipino Philosophy is to "describe what is there",¹⁸ why is it that his methodology is simply geared towards defending what seems to be naturally residing on Philippine soil, without realising that this will be exclusionary of Filipino citizens who aspire for the betterment of society, combatting lurking cultural elements that hamper social progress?

Intellectual colonialism is like a process of conditioning; *it induces a person to forget his own culture and eventually makes him ape a supposedly superior model. But one man's medicine can be another's poison.* What works for the West can hurt the Filipino. God made all men different and intended each man to develop his unique [potentialities]. If a person is dissatisfied with himself and starts aping an idol – say a movie star – the former will turn out a neurosis. The analogy can be applied to the national level. *God made all nations different by heredity and environment and intended that each nation develop more in being herself. By being herself, each nation can make a contribution to the world.* But if the nation is contented with merely imitating a foreign model, she may turn out to be a false and a "neurotic" who possesses what Renato Constantino calls a "national inferiority complex." *In short, the Filipino needs a philosophy to explain and support his identity*¹⁹.

¹⁶ De Leon, E. C. and Marvin Einstein C. Mejaro (December 2016) 'An Interview with Leonardo Nieva Mercado, SVD,' *Kritike* 10, no. 2: 6.

¹⁷ De Leon and Mejaro, 'An Interview with Leonardo Nieva Mercado, SVD,' 8.

¹⁸ De Leon and Mejaro, 'An Interview with Leonardo Nieva Mercado, SVD,' 12.

¹⁹ Mercado, Leonardo (1974) *Elements of Filipino Philosophy*, Tacloban City: Divine Word University Publications, 7., Emphasis mine.

While Mercado admitted that he wanted to promote social diversity and respect for the variegated ways of living, predicating this objective to a theistic claim can be damaging to the essential development and inherent support of a dialogical practice. In a word, exclusivist from the beginning. That there are atheists in the world that we live in is no secret. Hence, there is a need to reformulate theistic claims and reconstruct theological categories to avoid cultural subordination in the place of dialogical paths that allow religious and theistic beliefs to participate.²⁰ Furthermore, instead of hastily declaring that all worldviews have the right to thrive – as the so-called “God” purposively designed them to generate cultural variations – Mercado should have been more careful to include questions on how doctrines and other outlooks can be devised to the detriment of the society.

By simply equating the modelling of foreign standards to national inferiority, Mercado prevented a developmental vision from thriving in the dialogue of cultures to learn from one another, which requires reasonable flexibility and adaptability. It is no less than Constantino himself who pointed out that being accustomed to the idyllic presentation of rural sceneries in the Philippines should not impede the realisation that the Philippines also needs to responsibly industrialise to be economically independent.²¹ Imitation is not a problem *per se*, any more than we should blame teachers when they strive to be the paragons of the political and intellectual values they teach to their students. In line with this, we must support a radical line of cultural studies that helps us realise “that what appears to it on first impression as the truth is most frequently the result of naturalisation and appropriation of unexamined impressions and are often no more than false assumptions that configure as forms of false consciousness”.²² Even cultures one typically takes pride in are not immune from power imbalances and oppressive power relations. Such a tendency forestalls the development of critical thinking that necessitates the examination of cultural assumptions on which the oppressive measures of culture rely.

²⁰ Timbreza, Florentino (2001) ‘The Struggle for Wholeness in the Asia-Pacific Region: Challenge to Education in the Next Millennium’, *Karunungan: Official Journal of Philippine Academy of Philosophical Research* 18, no. 1: 125.

²¹ Cf. Constantino, *The Miseducation of the Filipino*, 6-7.

²² Hornedo, Florentino (2002) ‘“Cultural Studies” and Hegemony’, *Karunungan: Official Journal of Philippine Academy of Philosophical Research* 19, no. 1: 151.

3. The Problem in Connecting Philosophy, Human Values, and Culture

Mercado believes that culture and philosophising cannot be torn apart. This view is considered “anti-elitist” since it points to the anthropological vision in explaining the so-called “existential postulates” that constitute a specific philosophy vis-à-vis geographical and cultural considerations.²³ Does Mercado prioritise cultural concerns over the rigour of philosophising? Mercado is ambiguous in this respect.

Mercado argued that to paint culture as completely immutable or extremely volatile is to disregard how philosophising shapes social acceptance and its significant implications in interpreting social reality.²⁴ In this sense, a particular way of philosophising creates its social reality by rejecting ideas and opinions, however prevalent these are – as its reactive and creative prowess. Mercado sees this as a reason to seek the philosophical nuances in the Filipino culture that have been submerged in the layers of the colonial past and other foreign influences. Mercado delineated the investigative enterprises that take Filipino culture as their object of study based on their respective purposes:

Since cognition is one chief concern of the social sciences and since cognition is interdisciplinary, perhaps the phrase “philosophy of knowledge” may be the more all-embracing expression. Hence[,] philosophy of knowledge is taken here at two levels. Firstly, in the sense that the different social sciences are interested in cognition from their respective viewpoints. Secondly, at the level of philosophy, that is, philosophy begins where the [social] sciences end. After the social sciences have given their findings[,] philosophy takes them over and gives them a higher synthesis[.] [...] Philosophy of knowledge is not to be understood here as epistemology[,] which is the science of the validity of human knowledge. [The] philosophy of knowledge is taken here to mean the philosophy of a people²⁵.

What Mercado has in mind in defining the purpose of Filipino Philosophy is the meticulousness in finding the purity behind the patterns of behaviour and thinking

²³ Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy*, 4.

²⁴ Mercado, Leonardo (1983) ‘Philosophy of Knowledge in the Philippines,’ in Leonardo Mercado, ed., *Research Methods in Philippine Context*: 29-42, 2nd Printing. Logos Publications Inc., 34.

²⁵ Mercado, ‘Philosophy of Knowledge in the Philippines,’ 30.

found in Philippine society. Filipino Philosophy might be understood as, coming from Mercado's deciphering, the ultimately intuitive searching for the native ground of Filipino actions and thoughts and not a critical enterprise to counter any of these elements. But this might be an egregious misconstrual since Mercado believes that he champions a distinct methodology that takes philosophising at a "higher plane of synthesis" in which it is capable of transcending the "dangers of subjectivistic interpretations and of eclecticism".²⁶ For instance, Mercado assumed a level of objectivity that can be attained and should be maintained in his brand of metalinguistic analysis as well as in his other method that he calls the "phenomenology of behaviour".²⁷ After undertaking semantic comparisons, through lexemes and words, among the selected Philippine languages,²⁸ Mercado believes that this spells out the indigenous worldview of Filipinos in perceiving reality. Mercado also sees the need to magnify the coherence in the patterns of behaviour to uncover the native behavioural conditions of Filipinos.²⁹ These two

²⁶ Mercado, *Explorations in Filipino Philosophy*, 26.

²⁷ Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy*, 9-11.

²⁸ To illustrate the manner in which Mercado conducted his metalinguistic approach to Filipino Philosophy, Mercado, in one instance, tried to show that the Visayan, Tagalog, and Ilocano languages in the Philippines can be considered as linguistic relatives that can be a treasure trove to extrapolate a particularly obscure philosophy of causality, especially if it would be juxtaposed to Western conceptions of causality. As Mercado observed in the Visayan language: "*Tungod (because, due) can be affixed with various meanings. It can also mean 'by' or 'in' as in 'tungod sa timaan sa Santa Krus' (by the sign of the Holy Cross) or 'at' 'by' as in 'Thunong ang jeep tungod sa anang balay' (Stop the jeep by that house). It can also mean 'near' or 'directly beneath.'* See Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy*, 131.

The ambiguity in the vagueness and imprecision of the notion of causality was also noted by Mercado in the Tagalog words *dahil/dahilan* which can mean "circumstances", "reason", "motive", "cause", "pretense", and so on. Thus, Mercado claims that causality in the Tagalog language does not necessarily amount to the idea of origination or derivation. In a similar way, the Ilocano language exhibits a nebulous way of using the word *Gapó* that cannot be exclusively used to signify a "cause", for it can also mean "occasion", "motive", and "ground." See Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy*, 132-133.

²⁹ To illustrate the phenomenological approach to explicate Filipino behaviour, in one instance, Mercado contrasted the prevalent elucidation of health vis-à-vis the idea of being in harmony with the larger forces of human existence in Philippine society, with the mastery-over-nature orientation to health that is prevalent to Western societies. The consciousness of health of the Filipinos, as claimed by Mercado, arises out of the deep sense of not upsetting the *pagkakapantay, di pagkakatalo* (equilibrium-maintenance) of the various elements found in nature. That is, whereas the Filipino values the interconnectedness between all people, one's individuality, nature, and the supernatural domain, the Western model treats nature as a tool that can be exploited in which there is an attempt "*to make nature serve [the people] by altering the flow of a river, by changing the weather[,] [one's] genes. [One] tampers with the balance of nature to the extent that nature rebels in the form of ecological revenge such as polluted rivers, smog, extinction of certain biological species.*" See Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy*, 110-111. On a critical note, however, while Mercado argued that his methodology of the phenomenology of behaviour could be an instrument of verification in showing the so-called Filipino modal personality; he did not cross-check the above-discussed elements and realities in Philippine society to other reliable references in the social sciences. After stating an excerpt from F. Landa Jocano's study as well as indicating John B. Carroll and Lester O. Troyer's studies, Mercado hastily concluded that Westerners gave a mastery-over-nature disposition. While one may well argue that Mercado defined his phenomenological methodology as also of reflective overtones, the observational circumstances in which he was working must be explicitly noted in order to avoid, as he himself claimed to have done so, the dangers of

methods must be dovetailed to an ever-expanding experiential basis of comparison through exposure to other cultures and become less ethnocentric and narrow-minded. Mercado even claims that this will capacitate the observer – employing the two aforementioned methods – to be more disconnected when reflecting upon his own culture that, in turn, provides an external standpoint to an “objective spokesman [systematiser]”.³⁰ This is worth noting since there has been a defence in Mercado’s project that overemphasises the so-called emic observation in cultural settings to extract what seems to be naturally and philosophically occurring. For instance, Emmanuel Batoon contends that this cultural project of Mercado is contrary to a “detached observation that a tourist makes on other people’s lives but [it is] a participant observation of a people’s own view of their lives. The social behavioural data is meant as a basis for comparison to check if the people actually ‘do’ what they ‘say they do’”.³¹

The problem with Batoon’s commentary on Mercado’s work is his idea of distinguishing emic and etic constructs in anthropological studies. It must be noted that emic constructs have nothing to do with the gathering techniques used by the scholar – to directly elicit from human participants of research or infer from one’s observation – but only with regards to the nature of knowledge composed of “accounts, descriptions, and analyses expressed in terms of the conceptual schemes and categories regarded as meaningful and appropriate by the native members of a culture whose beliefs and [behaviours] are being studied”.³² Contrary to Batoon’s claim that Mercado’s approach to anthropological philosophising is emic as it is participatory in its data-gathering techniques – which contradicts Mercado’s own admission that his role as a Filipino philosopher is to come from an external standpoint to “systematise” a culture – empirical and logical analysis actually characterise etic analysis which entails the replicable, comprehensive, accurate,

subjectivism. In this way, the behavioural patterns – and all their limitations and selective processes – that Mercado indicated in his study can be verified and rectified by scholars in the social sciences. This will also emphasize that Mercado’s phenomenology of behaviour goes hand in hand with the observational route that he himself believes to be a requisite to attain philosophical objectivity and ensure the complementarity of pattern-finding schemes in the exposure of what he calls the “existential postulates” in the anthropological terrain of Filipino thinking. Cf. Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy*, 11-12.

³⁰ Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy*, 11.

³¹ Batoon, Emmanuel (June 2014) ‘Tracing Mercado’s Anthropological Perspective (First of Two Parts)’, *Kritike* 8, no. 1: 10.

³² Lett, James (1990) ‘Emics and Etics: Notes on the Epistemology of Anthropology’, in Thomas N. Headland, et al., eds., *The Emics and Etics: The Insider/Outsider Debate*: 127-142. Sage Publications, Inc., 130.

falsifiable, precise, and objective scrutiny of data at the backdrop of epistemological principles regarded as meaningful by the scientific scholars to generate more universal knowledge and critique of human societies.³³ While there seems to be an inconsistency between Batoon's defensive comment and the actual project of Mercado, the two converge in pointing out that there is a herculean task to immerse with cultural groundwork where the assumed philosophical indigeneity rests.³⁴

Does culture determine human values, or are these produced under the condition of philosophising? Mercado believes that there is a mutually influencing space between these elements. As Mercado puts it: "One part of culture is [the] world view which includes its values and its interpretation of reality. We take philosophy here to mean worldview, that is, how a particular group looks at reality from its perspective".³⁵ It is instructive to come to terms with how Mercado relates human values with the intersubjective nature of truth. Even if Mercado pushed for objectivity in a systemic rendition of philosophising in the Philippine context, in large measure, he emphasised that knowledge and the discovery of truth cannot be separated from the truth of human connectedness. Language, the crucial ventricle for knowledge formation, is encoded by the cultural ingredients that are deeply embedded in the fabric of our thoughts. Thus, Mercado argues that "a culture shapes the value of an individual[;] values are not taught, they are caught".³⁶ Does Mercado, for good or ill, believe that people are merely passive receptacles of values without exercising their intellectual autonomy to critically examine how these values affect their lives, as given by their cultural setting?

It is obvious that we need to discern and know the context in which our actions and thoughts must be adaptive. Our lives must not be spliced to ideologically prioritise a particular aspect of our lives over others – without any afterthought and second thought about how these affected and will affect the overall quality of our living.

³³ Lett, 'Emics and Etics: Notes on the Epistemology of Anthropology', 134.

³⁴ Mercado's task of seeking the uniqueness and indigeneity can be confirmed by how he described Filipino Philosophy: "Firstly, let us assume that Filipino philosophy and Filipino psychology exist. We distinguish 'music in the Philippines' from 'Filipino music.' The former includes the performance of foreign music in the stage, movies, radio, and television; the latter means something which uniquely reflects the Filipino soul. Similarly[,] we distinguish 'philosophy in the Philippines' from 'Filipino [P]hilosophy.' The former includes all the kinds of philosophy which are taught and read in the classrooms. But 'Filipino [P]hilosophy' is much narrower[,] for it is about the Filipino [worldview]." Mercado, Leonardo (1977) *Applied Filipino Philosophy*, 2nd Printing, Tacloban: Divine Word University Publications, 55.

³⁵ Mercado, *Explorations in Filipino Philosophy*, 5.

³⁶ Mercado, Leonardo (2000) *Filipino Thought*, Manila: Logos Publications Inc., 93.

This is congruent with Mercado's argument that we must be holistic in understanding human nature to understand particular values, like Filipino values, suitable to a specific condition.³⁷ Not all our claims and demands must have an alibi as afforded by the values we consider too rigid not to be adjusted to our needs and circumstances. As Mercado creatively explained this: "In the biologicistic perspective, God meant every part of the body to have its specific purpose, such as eyes for seeing, the nose for smelling[,] etc. [...] If this logic is to be taken to its logical conclusions, that means one should not shave his beard, have a haircut or trim his/her fingernails".³⁸ This aspect of Mercado's enterprise seems to counter, albeit partly, the critical observation that his philosophising seems "limited by its descriptive and constructive tendency to produce a 'universalized' reduction of Filipino thought".³⁹

In view of the foregoing discussion, one may suspect that Mercado has created a convoluted defence of his philosophical enterprise in which he failed to build a systematic fortress for Filipino Philosophy to thrive in its most original form. On the one hand, Mercado asserts the impenetrable characteristic of human values, which, in contrast to norms that prescribe rules for behaving in a particular context, are "standards of desirability [that] are independent of any specific situation".⁴⁰ In other words, Mercado accentuates what he believed to be a fact at the unshakeable core of human values, which are beyond the touch of intellectual adaptability or other forms of cultural reworking. On the other hand, Mercado must clarify what he meant by saying that "[i]nstead of focusing [on] philosophy, culture, and religion, our focus should be the human person who is the culture-bearer. If thinkers grow up in a certain culture, then such upbringing will naturally flower into persons who will produce philosophies and theologies corresponding to their respective cultures".⁴¹ In this regard, it is as if Mercado has been refuting his claim that human values do not come second to the formation of culture; instead, human actions are moved by the volitional and autonomous dimensions of decision-making and the weighing of values themselves. Furthermore, this forking in Mercado's philosophic exercise must be squared to the role that he attributes to

³⁷ Mercado, *Filipino Thought*, 12.

³⁸ Mercado, *Filipino Thought*, 13.

³⁹ Cf. Pada, Roland Theuas D.S. (June 2014) 'The Methodological Problems of Filipino Philosophy', *Kritike* 8, no. 1: 4.

⁴⁰ Mercado, *Filipino Thought*, 99.

⁴¹ Mercado, *Explorations in Filipino Philosophy*, 21.

Philosophy that “critically examines the most fundamental assumptions or the existential postulates that underlie our lives,” which he even noted that such a “definition includes culture”.⁴² For instance, in one of his works, Mercado underlined the subservience of strong political institutions to their cultural underpinnings simply because these very institutional measures that edify such are inextricably linked to the cultural configuration of specific populations or communities. As Mercado puts it, “Culture is an acquired thing[,] and the people who acquire it use culture for their purposes. And values are part of [the] culture”.⁴³ To illustrate, Mercado even explained why those who drive in Manila hardly follow the traffic rules because of the lenient police force, while the vigorous enforcement of laws as predicated on the predominance of American ethos present in Subic Bay makes the drivers obedient to legal terms of traffic. What is problematic in this deciphering is that it reverberates the static understanding of culture and human values that, as one may recall what was mentioned elsewhere in this essay, only blames human values that are simply “being caught” by persons who seem to have no direction of their lives. To prove and objectively describe that traffic violations are pervasive in society is one thing, but to give a chance for ethical assessment to thrive and for social transformation to take place in philosophising is another. Should we not give the Filipinos the autonomy to change for the better – to have better institutions and a better society that they scrupulously established for the common good? Therefore, it is of significant pursuit to know the limitedness of critical and intellectual enterprises in Mercado’s scholarship. A culture that becomes repugnant to a spirit of inquiry and educational endeavours is a culture that becomes enclosed in its echo chamber whereby the voices of truth, the reality of reasonable social diversity, and political emancipation are locked out.

4. What Makes Culture Unphilosophical According to Mercado

The ambivalence of Filipino values must not escape our critical attention to things. Rather than accepting these values *tout court*, Filipino Philosophy must deliver a space where contextual bearings of these human values must be discussed, not just

⁴² Mercado, *Explorations in Filipino Philosophy*, 29.

⁴³ Mercado, *Essays on Filipino Philosophy*, 48.

left for the culture to decide on its own. Emerita Quito noted that the two sides of these values must be seen as we spin the coin in the hope of our favour. For instance, the obsession with collectivist considerations and merely going after group interest, as often seen in the *sakop* (territorial) mentality, can be damaging in that it “stunts growth and prevents a person from growing on one’s own. [...] This mentality also makes us consider the world as one vast comfort zone”.⁴⁴ Indeed, this critical remark resonates with what this essay has been belabouring to discuss: to strike a balance between complete political apathy and the hegemonic bent of the illusory point of social unification. If left unresolved, the *sakop* orientation will push the citizens to be like-minded appendages of a social machine that will bring to the fore *hiya* (shame) and *pakikisama* (loyalty) as values that keep blind conformism spiralling down to mindlessness. Tracking down the conflictual baggage in Filipino values, psychologist Jaime Bulatao observed that the democratic attitudes in school that ideally promote critical thinking might be interpreted as brushing aside the authoritarian dispositions at home that highly cherish benevolent and compliant ways of thinking.⁴⁵ However, as great faith is placed in heroism in Philippine society, the emphasis on the struggle for social justice and intellectual progress must correspond to attaining a critical view of nuances, even in human values. The narrow understanding of old-new dichotomy in values shall be supplanted with the meaningful creation of social development that does not solely define nationhood in stringent rays of traditional values, but one that portends the incremental awareness that democratic social condition naturally endures, through intellectual humility, the moving dissensions which counter the regime that rests its case on a Procrustean bed as a pompous murderer of emerging truths.

Another problematic definition is given by Mercado when he has given flesh to what Filipino Philosophy should be: “It is the philosophy of the masses first of all, and not what [Jose] Rizal, [Apolinario] Mabini or other Filipino elitist thinkers have thought of, *except when these thoughts reflect the viewpoint of the masses*”.⁴⁶ This definition of Filipino Philosophy has been defended by Batoon as a search for

⁴⁴ Quito, Emerita (1994) ‘The Ambivalence of Filipino Traits and Values’, in Manuel Dy, ed., *Values in Philippine Culture and Education: Philippine Philosophical Studies I*: 51-54. The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 53.

⁴⁵ Bulatao, Jaime C. (1998) *Phenomena and their Interpretation, Landmark Essays (1957-1989)*, 2nd Printing, Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 240.

⁴⁶ Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy*, 4, Emphasis mine.

“philosophy sui generis and not merely an appendix of academic philosophy because it is constructed by a group of ordinary people (ethnos) that results in an empirical and observably unique but not idiosyncratic worldview”.⁴⁷ These elucidations assume that there is and there will be no connection between the academic and cultural types of philosophy. This calls into question the purpose of philosophising vis-a-vis the necessity of cultural transformation. Have we not acknowledged the fact that even the French Revolution’s dream of political autonomy from oppressive religion, government, and tradition has had an impact on the Philippine independence in 1898 and its forerunners, we cannot throw into light the truth that for human freedom to flourish, one must fight for it by resisting unbridled political control.⁴⁸ In fact, beyond violent revolution (which Rizal, one of the Philippine heroes, initially rejected) and the assertion of complete independence, Rizal argued that holistic education is the key to authentic human freedom – an education that completely transforms the personhood of the whole citizenry whereby even the temptation of the enslaved people to be the new tyrants is eliminated.⁴⁹ This sends a signal that Rizal also learned from the debacle of the French Revolution. As one may recall from one’s History lessons, it was one of the greatest ironies that the lists of grievances (*cahiers de doléances*) that were pushed forth before the French Revolutions included the abolition of censorship and reforms in the legal system, yet it ended up in the horrible hands of the *Jacobins* who, in the so-called pursuit of social justice, indiscriminately burned villages and killed civilians whom they thought were against the revolutionary objects towards the establishment of human freedom.⁵⁰

If the Filipinos during the Spanish colonisation accepted that their dire condition would remain for eternity as they were intentionally deprived of material resources and educational opportunities to become more decadent, iniquitous, and foolish – which then became an alibi for the perpetuation of so-called “civilising custody” of the Spanish colonisers – those hopeful Filipinos would not have known that they could shape their future. Disassociating ourselves from critical discourses, be it

⁴⁷ Batoon, ‘Tracing Mercado’s Anthropological Perspective’, 3.

⁴⁸ Hornedo, Florentino (2001) *Ideas and Ideals: Essays in Filipino Cognitive History*, Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 53-80.

⁴⁹ Gripaldo, Rolando, *Filipino Philosophy: Traditional Approach, Part I, Section I*, 2nd Printing, Manila: De La Salle University Press, Inc., 11-14.

⁵⁰ Sanderson, Stephen K. (2005) *Revolutions: A Worldwide Introduction to Political and Social Change*, London: Paradigm Publishers, 17-26; 141-143.

from the masses or the more academic side, is to place our consciousness entirely in keeping with the status quo without going beyond it, let alone be aware of what common ground the individuals should settle in as a nation and dignified people. The issue, perhaps, is not to deride the critical education that Jose Rizal has acquired in Europe, nor to disparage the attempt of Andres Bonifacio, another Philippine hero, to painstakingly undertake a self-study to be conscious of the world beyond the sheer dictates of tradition.⁵¹ Apolinario Mabini, a Philippine hero, even tried to put a recharging ember on the whole point of internal revolution to produce an external revolution that does not also allow the furtherance of exploitation even in women and children, a thing that Mabini saw when Filipino soldiers abused their military might to be the new oppressors.⁵² The solution to this is an enlightening of the heart and mind of the purpose of revolution – and so, individually, the citizens must embrace the challenge to mature beyond the know-how of the militaristic picture of warfare.

While culture can undeniably play a vital role in supporting the educational development of its citizens, this fact does not translate to allowing culture to make us its pawns. In the case of *sakop*-oriented social philosophy, Mercado argued that territorial limits and concerns must be expanded up to the national level to avoid parochialism and insularity among citizens,⁵³ yet he failed to direct his discussion on power distance – involved in the cultural framing of *sakop* mindset – to a critical examination. Despite the admission that centralisation of authority, worsening gaps in socio-economic statuses, status symbols, clientelist politics, populist rule, inter alia, are symptomatic of an exclusivist power distance, Mercado does not seem reluctant to say that “[i]f inequalities in society are desired, then it values obedience to authority, respect for parents[,] and other authoritative figures”.⁵⁴ Moreover, Mercado seems to normalise the occasion of exclusivist selection of job applicants based on what school the applicant graduated from without taking into consideration if this will result in massive unemployment, lack of partnerships among the educational institutions of the country, or if this is a reliable and equitable way to heighten economic growth.⁵⁵ Mercado did not exhaust his

⁵¹ Hornedo, *Ideas and Ideals*, 53-80.

⁵² Majul, Cesar Adib (1964) *Apolinario Mabini, Revolutionary*, Manila: National Heroes Commission, 196-207.

⁵³ Mercado, *Essays on Filipino Philosophy*, 135.

⁵⁴ Mercado, *Essays on Filipino Philosophy*, 124.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

scholarship to explore the non-duality between respecting one's authority and community as persons with dignity or institutions with honour and correcting them when they are not morally upright and politically reasonable. Respecting authorities does not mean we must be firm like a rock in obeying them, even when strings are attached and pulled on us. Instead of becoming a building block to erect the bureaucratisation of our intellectual pursuits, one must be supportive of dialogical channels to open questions that can be beneficial to nation-building, one that places a never-ending enthusiasm to solve problems, one that understands and critically weighs every idea from whoever has something to offer. As Paulo Freire once quipped:

One of the roots of education, which makes it specifically human, lies in the radicalness of an inconclusion that is perceived as such. The permanence of education also lies in the constant character of the search, perceived as necessary. Likewise, here lie also [the] roots of the metaphysical foundation of hope. How would it be possible for a consciously inconclusive being to become immersed in a permanent search without hope? My hope starts from my nature as a project. For this reason[,] I am hopeful, and not for pure stubbornness.⁵⁶

As Freire further elucidates the interdependence of a liberating education and an authentic sense of collective growth for society:

The statement, "Things are as they are because they cannot be any other way," is one of the many instruments used by the dominant in an attempt to abort the dominated's resistance. The more historically anesthetized, the more fatalistically immersed in a reality impossible to be touched, let alone transformed, the less of a future we have [...]⁵⁷

One, therefore, needs to know that we are one humanity that needs to fight a global order that condones power asymmetry and economic exploitation. On this view, the intellectual avenue for critical intervention is not to be sneered at as innately exclusionary and an ultimate display of prestige. Academic resistance can be a key to the crystallisation of warfare against all forms of social injustice – the issues that

⁵⁶ Freire, Paulo (2007) *Pedagogy of the Heart*, Donaldo Macedo and Alexandre Oliveira, trans., New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 93.

⁵⁷ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Heart*, 100-101.

transcend the barriers of nationality.⁵⁸ Intellectual inbreeding often leads to the adumbration of myopic interests that capitalise on the repulsive energy in self-improvement and conversational exercises in theory formulation. Thus, to disregard how Filipinos are shaped by a maddening educational system and political culture is to proceed to a nationalistic temper that only becomes indifferent to how things become crippling for proactive political participation, which, to begin with, requires a divarication from the often-peddled flirtation with the “native warp and woof” in society. Blind obedience characterises the Philippine educational system today, and this fact should be lamented by going back to the roots of our educational arrangement – to reflect on why we have to teach and learn, after all.⁵⁹ We should not simply unreasonably resort to “*hiya*” or shame to save one’s face from becoming repulsive to social relations and anything that supports those connections. The value of “*pakikisama*” or conformism seeps into every bloodline of social ties making possible the normalisation of sacrificing personal concerns for the sake of the group’s interest.⁶⁰ In this case, it is clear that someone has got to give. To illustrate the problem of being obsessed with so-called Westernised models in research methods and other institutional assessments, Mercado pointed out that there are cultural variables that we should not lose sight of when analysing the results of one’s assessments lest we face the ethical impasse of not appropriately and contextually resolving the dilemma.⁶¹ In an attempt to prove the point of this, Mercado argued that if the evaluation of the faculty members of educational institutions becomes *sakop*-oriented, that is, if it does not single out any educator as having a low rating in their performance in their classes as graded by their students, this will create a more accurate picture of performance-based improvement and will collectively compel the teaching force to do their job well. According to Mercado, there is a malaise in expecting students to be objective and fair in the evaluation of teachers who are strict with them and that will only force irresponsible teachers to simply give every student a high grade in his/her class as a bribe to the students during the evaluation period to save his/her face. Group pressure is preferred by Mercado rather than an individualised

⁵⁸ San Juan, Jr., Epifanio (2016) *Learning from the Filipino Diaspora: Lessons of Resistance and Critical Intervention*, Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 57-58.

⁵⁹ Estioko, Leonardo (2000) ‘Some Weaknesses of Philippine Education’, *Karunungan: Official Journal of Philippine Academy of Philosophical Research* 17, no.1: 251-257.

⁶⁰ Mercado, *Essays on Filipino Philosophy*, 69-76.

⁶¹ Mercado, ‘Philosophy of Knowledge in the Philippines’, 34-38.

improvement as he understands the former as alienating to a culture that avoids being left out from the rest of one's affiliations and other connections.

I find Mercado's elucidation problematic because it can give persons who do not take responsibility for what they did or omitted an alibi to effortlessly escape their negligence and imprudence. Consequently, this idea of Mercado might lead to blaming others who have no hand in a certain situation since it is beyond the scope of their work designation. One might expect a blame game to be prevalent in an organisation in which every member becomes obsessed with pointing their fingers at one another when a problem arises without having the slightest understanding that each of them has an individual bearing on their institutional successes. To get rid of this worry is simply to give in to the convenience of bureaucratic forms of thinking that do not address the issues of moral integrity since there is no pressure or disruption from the narrow operational expectations of a certain organisation. Harking back to Mercado's exemplification, I believe that teachers should also rethink not just the method of how they teach but also their purpose as teachers. They should ask if they should only mind their status in becoming promoted to professorial or teaching rank through impressive student evaluations, or if they are primarily concerned with an authentic learning experience that involves scholarly rigour even if that might deplete the chances of getting high scores from the evaluation of students. These are things that one cannot question if society has come to the habit of thinking that it is logically erroneous to assert personal convictions in the deliberative practices of organisations – a very dehumanising and demoralising rationalisation of so-called organisational efficiency.⁶² For a leader to ensure commitment and motivation in the workforce, he/she must be capable of facilitating periodic cultural diagnoses which are not one-person jobs since “[f]indings from this will serve as a jump-off for initiatives that will ensure the continued relevance of organization values and strengthen the alignment between the values of the organization and each individual employee”.⁶³ Such an endeavour involves a consultative character in establishing an institutional identity. From this purview, one cannot find it unnecessary that institutional

⁶² Ladd, John (1988) 'Morality and the Ideal of Rationality in Formal Organizations', in Thomas Donaldson and Patricia H. Werhane, eds., *Ethical Issues in Business: A Philosophical Approach*: 130-142. 4th Edition. Prentice-Hall Inc., 130-142.

⁶³ Teng-Calleja, Mendiola (2021) 'Cultivating the Filipino Workers' Motivation and Engagement', in Mendiola Teng-Calleja et al., eds., *Filipino Leadership: Stories and Science*: 91-103. Ateneo de Manila University Press, 99.

evaluation and problem diagnosis must permeate any level of the organisation and not just be fixated on a herd mindset.⁶⁴ Moreover, enlightening debates will not prosper in a society that parallels conversational points of knowledge formation to the terrorising unsettling of reason itself. Therefore, the extent of communication and communicability in knowledge production and differential access to it must not pass our critical senses.⁶⁵ Not even the reality of technological advancements in disseminating information and other publication concerns nor the ubiquity of research specialisations and expertise shall make us believe that everything is running smoothly for all the citizens to influence knowledge formation equally. Indeed, the ill-intentioned manipulation of influential platforms in knowledge, not the pursuit of knowledge itself, must be feared and rejected.

In the case of education, the overemphasis on products and evaluative results can take us away from the lustre of arduous and variegated processes of learning – this eventually leads to falsely equating the speed of learning to the depth of knowledge.⁶⁶ Peddling the idea that there is a one-size-fits-all learning style and strategy does not recognize the variance in personality, values, cultural upbringing, and natural talents in every student. One must be aware that in humbly accepting one's individual limitations, one also opens oneself to the potentiality of building relationships with other people as an opportunity to learn.⁶⁷ Indeed, one of the major problems that society faces is the hubristic arrogation of power – that one becomes too territorial not to be receptive to whatever good others have to offer which, in turn, leads to the failure to admit one's mistakes. If education is an endless quest for knowledge as it involves re-learning, unlearning, and questioning, to become a secluded, know-it-all group is to build a culture that destroys the very spirit of scholarship.

Suppose Mercado, *arguendo*, really thinks that change is a natural part of a culture.⁶⁸ In that case, he must also decipher what undergirds these cultural

⁶⁴ Cummings, T. G. and Christopher G. Worley (2011) *Understanding Organizational Development*, Pasig: Cengage Learning Asia Pte Ltd, 109-111.

⁶⁵ Birnbaum, Norman (1971) *Toward a Critical Sociology*, New York: Oxford University Press, 431.

⁶⁶ Manahan, Didi P. (2020) 'Authentic Learning Requires Authentic Assessment', in Ani Rosa Almario and Tina S. Zamora, eds., *School is Life: Progressive Education in the Philippines*: 98-106. Ateneo de Manila University Press, 117-120.

⁶⁷ Nuncio, R. V. and Elizabeth Morales-Nuncio (2004) *Sangandiwa: Araling Filipino Bilang Talastasang Pangkalingan at Lapit-Pananaliksik*, Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 111-121.

⁶⁸ Mercado, *Applied Filipino Philosophy*, 76.

changes that affect the very lives of Filipino citizens. But this doubt may be deemed ineffectual if Mercado's reactionary obduracy will be magnified. Mercado once said, "In the long run, we cannot go against [the] culture because culture is selective: it accepts what it likes and rejects what it dislikes. Both Filipino psychologists and philosophers – if they wish to be really Filipino – have to follow the wisdom of Filipino culture".⁶⁹ But this dubious claim must be squared to how Mercado avowedly viewed human values as contextualised and not meant to be absolutised; otherwise, we face its adverse consequences.⁷⁰ Contrary to the suggestion that psychologists should merely follow the tracks that the footprints of cultural domination left, psychologist Jaime Bulatao argues that the "abject surrender to traditionalism" of Filipinos must be disturbed by a realisation that the re-inventing of self-image and world-image is necessary for the growth of the socio-psychological level of democratic governance. As this essay has pointed out, if education is a liberation of the mind even from a tyrannical culture, we must not be afraid to take individual responsibility to effectuate social responsiveness; that is, we need to profoundly appreciate the great dynamics between the group and the individual, the radical reflection of an individual and cultural transformation, and the authority figures and social accountability. While the changing of self-image does not come quickly as it is not simply the work of an individual insistence, to keep the ground running is to realise that intersubjectivity, as the *sine qua non* of transforming self-image, is made possible by many small efforts that the individuals exerted.⁷¹ As this research has shown, Mercado tends to de-politicise this transformational side. Ultimately, Mercado overemphasised the value of the so-called collectivist spirit to the extent that he derided the "*pilosopo*" (philosopher) by inappropriately categorising them as "anti-social" or "non-conformist" which Mercado believed to be contrary to the communal form of thinking and behaving.⁷² If Mercado's scholarship is examined carefully, this obscure traditionalism is perhaps because he believes in the psychological way of learning in which the Filipinos allegedly assimilate the from-concrete-to-abstract route in learning, allegedly the opposite of the more logical (or abstract) way of thinking of

⁶⁹ Mercado, *Applied Filipino Philosophy*, 64.

⁷⁰ Mercado, *Filipino Thought*, 95.

⁷¹ Bulatao, Jaime (June 1965) *The Technique of Group Discussion*, 8th Printing, Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 42.

⁷² Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy*, 96.

Westerners.⁷³ Ironically, the fact that Mercado asserts that Filipinos start from an “inductive” development of thinking cannot be logically reconciled with his claim that there are apparently static elements and categories of thinking in Philippine culture that any form of re-thinking and re-designing cannot dispel. The problem with the “inductive approach” that Mercado attributes to the educational force that the Filipinos allegedly possess is that it does not notice the conspicuous consequences of cultural tyranny, which also works as its very cause. Is this not an underestimation of the capacity of the ordinary masses to learn from and also contribute to the transformational praxis that authentic knowledge formation entails? By taking a blind eye to the real problem, from a hubristic standpoint, Mercado stifles the energy to capacitate the Filipinos, as learners of their own making, to question the power structure and hegemonic roots that perpetuate numbing complacency and simply seeing the frames of the cultural situation only between the road for the individual and the road for the country – not realising that there is a path, a road less travelled, where two directions meet at some point.

5. Conclusion: A Philosophical Challenge for Philippine Society

The Filipino people must refuse to be treated like puzzle pieces to be fitted to blank spaces as conditioned by a culture beyond the reach of social transformation. Inserting the nationalistic cheer when facing neo-colonial predicaments must not be deflective of public awareness to look more closely at the cultural causes of social maladies. Power imbalance knows no limits. The brutality of political exploitation and economic subjugation knows no gender, nationality, ethnicity, educational attainment, and the list goes on. To try to privilege a location for the gravitational pull of power struggle – as in the case of how Mercado presented a victimised Philippine society – will prove ineffectual when valuable ideas, even from a foreign land, come knocking at our door. In this critique, it has been presented that Mercado launched a challenge to the academic sphere that it should also be inclusive of the masses’ concerns and significant contribution to nation-building, so much so that one should give equal importance to the challenge posed towards

⁷³ Mercado, *Applied Filipino Philosophy*, 59-60.

Mercado not to underestimate the potential drive of the masses to surpass even the overwhelming and seemingly dazzling frontiers of cultural artifice.

There is nothing more of a humane desiderata in making society a better place than the idea that its people are for the reinvention and rethinking of their collective historicity. At the bottom of this cultural struggle is the constant reevaluation of the citizens who find inadequacy in the way things are: to deliver a message that nation-building is a learning process. This means that if philosophising remains under the atrocities routinely inflicted by the siege of domesticating malpractices and cultural domination, no one will see how change is necessary for a culture to grow. Indulging in philosophising as a pure game of “marketing a particular philosophical tradition” will only make a measure of protection from foreign influences but only to become a casualty of its disempowering stupor by preventing itself from engaging in a critical mode of intellectualisation. This is a problem exacerbated by a culture that disdains reasonable radicality by embracing a rubric of political correctness given by social conformism and amaurotic loyalty. It is not a disservice to the nation to listen and converse with the ever-changing global community to learn, and likewise teach, the lessons on how to extirpate the negative cultural traits that are, more often than not, the result of projecting superciliousness.

References:

Bagulaya, Jose Duke (2022) *ASEAN as an International Organization: International Law and Region-Building in Southeast Asia*. University of Santo Tomas Publishing House.

Batoon, Emmanuel (December 2020) 'A Tribute to Leonardo N. Mercado, SVD: His Legacy to the Filipino Nation', *Kritike* 14: 1-5. https://www.kritike.org/journal/issue_27/batoon_december2020.pdf.

Batoon, Emmanuel (June 2014) 'Tracing Mercado's Anthropological Perspective (First of Two Parts)', *Kritike* 8: 1-23. http://www.kritike.org/journal/issue_14/batoon_june2014.pdf.

Birnbaum, Norman (1971) *Toward a Critical Sociology*. Oxford University Press.

Bulatao, Jaime C. (1965) *The Technique of Group Discussion*. Ateneo de Manila University Press.

Bulatao, Jaime C. (1998) *Phenomena and their Interpretation, Landmark Essays (1957-1989)*. Ateneo de Manila University Press.

Co, Alfredo (2009) 'In the Beginning a Petit Personal Historical Narrative of the Beginning of Philosophy in the Philippines', in *Across the Philosophical Silk Road*, Vol. VI: 28- 46. University of Santo Tomas.

Constantino, Renato (1982) *The Miseducation of the Filipino*. Foundation for Nationalist Studies.

Cummings, T. G. and Christopher G. Worley (2011) *Understanding Organizational Development*. Cengage Learning Asia Pte Ltd.

De Leon, Emmanuel C. and Marvin Einsten C. Mejaro (December 2016) 'An Interview with Leonardo Nieva Mercado, SVD', *Kritike* 10: 1-20. https://www.kritike.org/journal/issue_19/de%20leon&mejaro_december2016.pdf.

Del Rosario-Malonzo, Jennifer (2007) 'Economics of Philippine Education: Serving the Global Market', in Bienvenido Lumbera, ed., *Mula Tore Patungong Palengke: Neoliberal Education in the Philippines*: 81-94. IBON Books.

Some Critical Notes On Leonardo Mercado

Enriquez, Virgilio G. (1992) *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology: The Philippine Experience*. University of the Philippines Press.

Estioko, Leonardo (2000) 'Some Weaknesses of Philippine Education', *Karunungan: Official Journal of Philippine Academy of Philosophical Research* **17**: 251-257.

Freire, Paulo (2007) *Pedagogy of the Heart*, Donald Macedo and Alexandre Oliveira, trans. The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc.

Gripaldo, Rolando (2000) *Filipino Philosophy: Traditional Approach, Part I, Section I*. De La Salle University Press, Inc.

Guillermo, Ramon (2009) *Pook at Paninindigan: Kritika ng Pantayong Pananaw*. University of the Philippines Press.

Hornedo, Florentino (2001) *Ideas and Ideals: Essays in Filipino Cognitive History*. University of Santo Tomas Publishing House.

Hornedo, Florentino (2002) 'Cultural Studies' and Hegemony', *Karunungan: Official Journal of Philippine Academy of Philosophical Research* **19**: 146-154.

Hume, David (2009) 'Of the Original Social Contract', in Matt Zwolinski, ed., *Arguing About Political Philosophy*: 71-77. Routledge.

Jose, F. Sionil (2008) 'We Are Not Asian', in Alejandro Padilla, ed., *Why We Are Hungry: Rats in the Kitchen, Carabaos in the Closet*: 1-3. Solidaridad Publishing House.

Ladd, John (1988) 'Morality and the Ideal of Rationality in Formal Organizations', in Thomas Donaldson and Patricia H. Werhane, eds., *Ethical Issues in Business: A Philosophical Approach*: 130-142. Prentice-Hall Inc.

Lett, James (1990) "Emics and Etics: Notes on the Epistemology of Anthropology," in Thomas B. Headland, et al., eds., *The Emics and Etics: The Insider/Outsider Debate*: 127-142. Sage Publications, Inc.

Majul, Cesar Adib (1964) *Apolinario Mabini, Revolutionary*. National Heroes Commission.

Manahan, Didi P. (2020) 'Authentic Learning Requires Authentic Assessment', in Ani Rosa Almario and Tina S. Zamora, eds., *School is Life: Progressive Education in the Philippines*: 98-106. Ateneo de Manila University Press.

Some Critical Notes On Leonardo Mercado

Mercado, Leonardo (1974) *Elements of Filipino Philosophy*. Divine Word University Publications.

Mercado, Leonardo (1977) *Applied Filipino Philosophy*. Divine Word University Publications.

Mercado, Leonardo (1979) *Elements of Filipino Ethics*. Divine Word University Publications.

Mercado, Leonardo (1983) 'Philosophy of Knowledge in the Philippines,' in Leonardo N. Mercado, ed., *Research Methods in Philippine Context*. Logos Publications Inc.

Mercado, Leonardo (1994) *Essays on Filipino Philosophy*. Logos Publication, Inc.

Mercado, Leonardo (2000) *Filipino Thought*. Logos Publications Inc.

Mercado, Leonardo (2009) *Explorations in Filipino Philosophy*. Logos Publications Inc.

Nuncio, R. V. and Elizabeth Morales-Nuncio (2004) *Sangandiwa: Araling Filipino Bilang Talastasang Pangkalingan at Lapit-Pananaliksik*. University of Santo Tomas Publishing House.

Pada, Roland Theuas D.S. (June 2014) 'The Methodological Problems of Filipino Philosophy', *Kritike* 8: 24-44. doi: [10.25138/8.1.a.2](https://doi.org/10.25138/8.1.a.2).

Philippine Institute for Development Studies (March 31, 2023) 'Women In The Workplace: Paving A Better Landscape In The Labor Force'. <https://www.pids.gov.ph/details/news/in-the-news/women-in-the-workplace-paving-a-better-landscape-in-the-labor-force>.

Quito, Emerita (1994) 'The Ambivalence of Filipino Traits and Values', in Manuel Dy, ed., *Values in Philippine Culture and Education: Philippine Philosophical Studies I*: 51-54. The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy.

San Juan, Jr., Epifanio (2016) *Learning from the Filipino Diaspora: Lessons of Resistance and Critical Intervention*. University of Santo Tomas Publishing House.

Sanderson, Stephen K (2005) *Revolutions: A Worldwide Introduction to Political and Social Change*. Paradigm Publishers.

Some Critical Notes On Leonardo Mercado

Singer, Peter (2007) 'The Singer Solution to World Poverty', in James Rachels and Stuart Rachels, eds., *The Right Thing to Do: Basic Readings in Moral Philosophy*: 138-144. McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.

Teng-Calleja, Mendiola (2021) 'Cultivating the Filipino Workers' Motivation and Engagement', in Mendiola Teng-Calleja, et. al. ed., *Filipino Leadership: Stories and Science*: 91-103. Ateneo de Manila University Press.

Timbreza, Florentino (2001) 'The Struggle for Wholeness in the Asia-Pacific Region: Challenge to Education in the Next Millenium', *Karunungan: Official Journal of Philippine Academy of Philosophical Research* **18**: 118-130.

Tuibeo, Amable G. (2005) *Philosophy of Education: A New Perspective*. Grandwater Publications.

Founded in 2019, the *Undergraduate Philosophy Journal of Australasia* (UPJA) is the first undergraduate philosophy journal run by students from Australasia. We publish one volume and host two conferences annually and interview philosophers with a substantial connection to Australasia. We aim to be an inclusive and diverse journal and welcome submissions from undergraduates (and recent graduates) worldwide, on any philosophical topic, so long as the author attempts to make a substantive contribution to contemporary philosophy. Submissions from women and other members of underrepresented groups in philosophy, including those for whom English is not their first language, are particularly encouraged.

2024 Editorial Team

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Billie Angus (Te Herenga Waka: Victoria University of Wellington)

Leon (Chenglong) Yin 尹呈龙 (University of Sydney)

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Beau Kent (Deakin University)

Grier Rollinson (Te Herenga Waka: Victoria University of Wellington)