

Transcending Parochialism: Pitfalls and Promises of Postcolonial-Postmodern Approaches to the Study of Knowledge Production in Southeast Asia¹

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INTRODUCTION

The heyday of area studies, in general, and Southeast Asian studies, in particular, has long been gone. What replaced initial outburst of optimism and excitement is a sense of uncertainty and foreboding characteristic of a field under threat. Survival rather than growth seems to be what holds for the future. While such pessimistic estimation captures more adequately the state of Southeast Asian Studies in North America, something not essentially different can be said of that in Australia³ and Europe. Apparently, it is only in Singapore (and perhaps Japan) where area studies, especially the Southeast Asian branch, is on the rise⁴.

The reasons for the above-cited condition are many. These include shift in the thrust of funding agencies⁵ -- a move that was related to area studies' close

¹ This paper was originally presented at the Frontiers in Asian Studies Workshop, Old Canberra House, ANU, 2-3 October 2002. This workshop is sponsored by AsiANetwork, spearheaded by Tessa Morris-Suzuki.

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³ Views on the state Asian Studies in Australia are mixed. Milner (1999) and Reid (1999) are way more optimistic than Burgess (2002) who talks about 'crisis' in Asian Studies.

⁴ The recent establishment of Asia Research Institute and the hiring of Prof. Tony Reid to spearhead it, clearly indicate increased commitment of the NUS to vigorously promote Asian Studies. In Japan, there is long tradition of well-established scholarship on Asia, but it seems to me that maintenance rather than growth characterizes it.

⁵ As cited by Reynolds (1998:12-3): "The rationale for area studies in the federal government and in other funding agencies...has already weakened. The Social Science Research Council and American Council of Learned Societies, whose work is financed by foundations such as Ford, Mellon and Luce, has moved to

association with Cold War era and with modernization project, both of which have seen their days. Of equal, if not more, importance is the nature of conventional area studies itself that lends it increasingly becoming incongruous with the changing configuration of the globalizing world.⁶ I will not dwell on the financial and the political factors mentioned above as the focus of this paper is the last one: the intellectual or academic factor. By nature of conventional area studies, I take it here to mean the often narrow concerns for a specific area, usually a nation-state, at the expense of all others, including the theoretical and methodological developments in other fields⁷. This underlies Anderson's observation that "the bulk of North American scholarship on Southeast Asian politics is ...decidedly untheoretical , ... uncomparative and thus, from a disciplinary point of view, unsophisticated"(Anderson,1984: 42) Seen from the Australian perspective, Sundhaussen blatantly calls similar phenomenon as a manifestation of parochialism. He was referring specifically to the study of politics and history of Indonesia, but his critique may as well cover all other countries, and other fields of study (except perhaps anthropology) that deal with the region.(Sundhaussen, 1986) According to Ruth McVey, one almost fatal consequence of this is, specifically referring to the case of the US, that once area studies ceased to be the 'darling of the grant-makers', it has been easy for those in the discipline to 'ghettoize' and marginalize it. (McVey, 1998: 44) While Asian

abandon its area-commitment structure in favor of committees that will pursue comparative and regional studies.

⁶ For a more recent and thoughtful exposition of the weaknesses that bedevil Southeast Asian Studies, see Ruth McVey (1998); see also Chris Burgess (2002?) for a compelling justification for a reconfiguration of Asian Studies by engaging itself with new intellectual movements, especially Cultural Studies.

⁷ Anti-theoretical attitude seems trenchant in conventional area studies. The very idea of 'area studies' presupposes the importance of the particularities as opposed to the general, as espoused by theories. Theories are often seen as Euro-centric and therefore can not capture reality found in specific areas of study. For instance, in the engaging debate between Benda (1962/1982) and Feith (1982), Benda's critique of Feith shows clearly the cautious attitude towards the usefulness of theorizing. (Lev, 1982), for his part, shows his dismissive attitude towards theories by praising the articles in the book "Interpreting Indonesian Politics" for having '...little of the opaque conceptualizing that clutters much of modern social science (p. v)

Studies in Australia is hardly at the same dire position⁸, the sense of 'crisis' that seems to haunt the field may indicate a trajectory leading to that. The Australian area studies community, therefore, cannot be too paranoid so as to take proactive steps to prevent similar fate to happen in the future. On a second thought, practitioners in Australia may prove to be even more vulnerable. The fact that most of future area specialists here continue to be narrowly trained with one-track focus of producing a thesis – a thesis that is often centered on a highly specialized, sometimes non-theoretical research question—might make it difficult for them to compete with their discipline⁹- and post-discipline¹⁰-based counterparts once centers for Asian Studies found themselves unceremoniously merged with a discipline-based department, if not abolished altogether. Such scenario is not a remote possibility especially in the event of further cuts in federal budgets for higher education. Against such backdrop we can easily understand Ruth McVey's call for reinventing the concept of "area studies" that traditionally underpins Southeast Asian Studies. We better heed the words of Kenneth Prewitt who said that the area studies we have known for so long is "not the optimum structure for providing new insights and theories suitable for world in which the geographic units of analysis are neither static nor straightforward" (cited in Reynolds, 1998: 13) Seen against this light, I would like to situate Sundhaussen's plea for a more comparative (and decidedly theoretical) approach as one way to achieve reinvention and to transcend parochialism. As I will argue, arming ourselves with theoretical and methodological weaponries drawn from fields other than ours will not just

⁸ For a sanguine view on the state of Asian Studies in Australia, see (Milner, 1999) who argues that unlike in the US where Asian Studies has been in 'crisis', in Australia it possesses 'certain added resilience' that saves it from similar ill. See also (Reid, 1999)

⁹ Actually, area studies specialists are not the only ones under pressure. Even the traditionally-focused discipline-based scholars have begun to feel the pinched of pressure to re-orient their field as more recent trends almost everywhere to become more multi- or inter- even anti-disciplinary. See for example (Burgess, 2002) The advantage of the discipline-based scholars is that disciplines seem to have a more sturdy, more permanently anchored moorings, which area studies do not have, making the need for reconfiguration seems to be more urgent and pressing for areas studies than for discipline-based ones.

¹⁰ Post-discipline refers to a range of non-discipline-based areas of critical inquiry, such as Cultural Studies and postcolonial studies. ((Burgess, 2002)

provide us an edge necessary in an increasingly competitive academic marketplace. It will also make us more relevant and thus ensure the continuity and possibly even growth of the field that lends us rationale for our scholarly existence.

To elaborate Sundhaussen's proposal, by comparative approach he refers to two possible paths. First, by direct comparison of "facts and situation which share some qualities with the matter(s) selected for investigation".(Sundhaussen, 1986) As an example I can cite the role of the monarchy in Thailand and in Japan in influencing the trajectory of political developments in the two countries. For want of better term, I shall call such approach an *explicitly comparative* method. The second way is what I will dub as *implicitly comparative*. This method does not require two or more separate entities (such as nation-states, institutions, etc. across geographical areas) to be directly compared, as in the case of the above-cited method. What distinguishes it from the earlier type is its decidedly theoretical underpinnings. As argued by Sundhaussen, a study of a single case can be made comparative if it is framed within the broader theoretical question and is based on similar premises.(Sundhaussen, 1986) A collection of individual cases based on the same theoretical premises will then be liable to comparison. It would be better, I think, if explicit comparison of two or more cases would be combined with the theoretically informed implicit comparison. Given the difficulty of learning more than one foreign language, however, it is understandable that not many scholars can do that . Either way such efforts will tremendously help refine theoretical formulations that oftentimes originate from the disciplines.¹¹ Better still if cases gathered from specific works in area studies would be quantitatively sufficient to

¹¹ In Anderson's, McVey's and Neher's estimations, there are only a handful of area specialists who had lasting contribution in theory building. McVey's (1998) lists, for instance, include Geertz, Anderson and Scott. Neher, on the other hand, includes Boeke's ('dualistic economy), J. S. Furnival (plural societies), Geertz (agricultural involution), J. Embree (loosely structured social systems) and J. Scott's (moral economy). (Neher, 1984)

formulate a new theory altogether. When that happens, area studies would have proven its usefulness as a field worthy of an extended lease of life.

Unlike Sundhaussen who refused to endorse specific theoretical project, I will be rash enough, aware of all the risks, to suggest the two most maligned and perhaps most misunderstood sets of approaches – postcolonialism and postmodernism (hereafter referred to as PC-PM). Cultural Studies is also a very promising field and it shares overlapping areas of concern with the other two. Due to space limitation, however, I plan to discuss it on another occasion. Given the multiplicity of meanings that gathered around postcolonial and postmodern theories, the way how I use them here and the justification for their use will be explained in the second section of this paper. On the third part, a review of the works of Ileo and Phillipott will be made. I will use the output of such review to exemplify some of the promises and pitfalls of PC-PM approaches as applied in the study of knowledge production in Southeast Asia.

MAKING SENSE OF PC-PM: SEPARATING THE HUSKS FROM THE GRAINS

That PC-PM theories and approaches are easily misunderstood is perfectly understandable. Many of its proponents write in a convoluted manner defying comprehension. Some of them even celebrate their inaccessibility, probably deriving from it a false affirmation of their intellectual superiority. Furthermore, the nature of PC-PM project itself renders it not easily comprehensible, much less acceptable to many people given its outright rejection of many long-established views held not just by the academe but also by the rest of the society. In many instances, one has to turn his/her beliefs inside out in order to make sense of PC-PM views. On the other hand, the reasons why it is controversial and still widely rejected, and I think this is more important, lie in its profoundly political implications. Its iconoclasm threatens almost everyone,

especially the powerful and the influential. It tends to deny them anchor for their claim to power and influence (such comment seems to be truer for PM more than for PC). I know this begs lengthy explanation and this will be done below. What I will do first is to delineate the boundary of the PC and PM approaches as referred to in this paper. This is necessary to avert confusion that may be generated by the complexity immanent in these theoretical projects. Given the sometimes contradictory assertions made by PC and PM proponents, I limit myself to the ideas of Edward Said (Ascoft & Aluwalia, 2001) as a representative of the PC and those of Hayden White (Jenkins, 1995; White, 1987) for the PM. Needless to say, it is possible that taking the views of other proponents into consideration may alter the picture. For the purpose of this paper, I take PC-PM primarily as an anti-foundational¹² critique of knowledge and knowledge-production. As a critique, they focus on the level of discourse and aims to uncover power relations that are deeply imbedded in knowledge. They expose hidden assumptions that lend knowledge appearance of naturalness, certainty and transparency – a smokescreen, they believe, that conceals insidious character of power-knowledge nexus. Both are politically charged project, but I think PC is more openly so. Said's insistence on the materiality of text not only defines an important diverging point with PM's almost exclusive concern for the textual and the discursive, it also set a direction for an open political advocacy. It aims its guns at colonial knowledge and practices and their residual effects on postcolonial condition. It is supposed to arm postcolonial people a tool for understanding and dealing with postcoloniality. PM, on the other hand, covers much wider target in its critique of knowledge. It does not confine itself with knowledge underpinning the colonial or postcolonial condition. Rather, all forms of knowledge, including itself, are object of suspicion. For the purpose of this

¹² This is to emphasise the difference with other critiques, such as sociology of knowledge and Marxist-inspired critical theories of Habermas and the Frankfurt School, which are 'foundational'. Crudely put, to be 'foundational' requires a belief in the existence of 'reality' out there which will serve as the foundation for building a body of knowledge. To be anti-foundational, on the other hand, starts with the notion that while there may be reality out there, such reality can only be accessed indirectly, as a text, in a form of a discourse, thereby rejecting and deconstructing the foundation of (realist) knowledge .

paper, I took the liberty of conflating the two despite my awareness of some fundamental differences in their views and concerns. What I pay more premium to is the overlapping sphere that binds them together, rather than the differences that separate them apart.

Going back to the earlier cited political nature of PC-PM. At the heart of the PC-PM project is the effort to uncover power structures that are deeply imbedded in almost all aspects of knowledge governing our lives, from the most personal as about bedroom relationship to the most public as outer-space or environmental programs. Such uncovering has all the potential to make everyone aware of the hitherto unnoticed unnaturalness (or constructedness, the more common PC-PM jargon) of knowledge systems that underpin their position in the society and thereby question such position, if one belongs to the sub-altern class, or to question such questioning, if one is among the ruling class (to put it very crudely). One may rightly say that such questioning is anything but new. The Marxists and their precursors have been doing that for so long. I should say, however, there is a whole lot of important difference that sets the PC-PM project apart from the others and thus makes it a punching bag, not just by the left-leaning Marxists or Neo-Marxist, but also by the centrist liberals as well as the rightist conservative.(Jenkin, 1995) Indeed, the whole ideological spectrum is arrayed against the PC-PM project. The main difference lies in the epistemological basis of their knowledge claims. This has a far-reaching implications on the type of inequality they are concerned about. For the leftists, the centrists and the rightists, the bone of contention is inequality – social, political, economic and even cultural – that rests on some material and social foundation. For the PC-PM (more so for PM), the kind of inequality that concerns them, and such type of inequality is often ignored or merely considered as an epiphenomenon or a direct consequence of materially-based inequality, is one based on knowledge. It seems to me that the reason why the leftists, centrist and rightist who all have stakes at power would like to hold on to the idea of

knowledge as a transparent, innocent tool and as something anchored on “reality” (not just a discourse as many PC-PM proponents argue) is precisely for them to have something with which to secure their claim to power. Their success in appropriating knowledge for their own interests depends on the extent of invisibility of power impinging on knowledge. What PC-PM project precisely does is to free knowledge from the invisible ‘prison house’ of power. This can be done by exposing the supposed non-existent or the disguised link between knowledge and power with the ultimate aim, so it seems to me, of democratizing not just access, but more importantly, use of knowledge. Awareness by everyone of the vicious link between the two will render knowledge less useful as a tool by the powerful to perpetuate their position. The powerless or the less powerful will then gain more space to exercise their freedom to design their own lives as knowledge will be transformed as everyone’s own¹³ --- as a tool for or as a site of resistance; as a location of struggle rather than as an instrument of control.

A REVIEW OF ILETO AND PHILPOTT AND A SEARCH FOR PITFALLS AND PROMISES

At this point, I think it is instructive to look into the works of Iletto and Philpott that deal with Orientalism in the writings on politics produced by American scholars about the Philippines and Indonesia. Iletto wrote an article, *Orientalism in the Study of Philippine Politics* (1998) while Philpott, a book, *Rethinking Indonesia* (2000). I should emphasise that my review of Philpott is focused not on the entire book but only on chapters dealing primarily with Orientalism. (chapters 2 and 3) These two works are very important for a number of reasons. Firstly, they broke grounds being the first works in their class (Philippine and Indonesian Studies). Secondly, they cast doubt on a number of important canonical views in the field by exposing the “taintedness” of

¹³ These are my appropriations of ideas from Jenkin’s (1995) interpretation of Hayden White’s postmodernist historiography.

scholarship that produced them. They were able to do it by interrogating scholarship and scholars as the subject of analysis. Thirdly, they blow fresh air into otherwise staid state of political studies on Southeast Asia, in fact into the whole Southeast Asian Studies, having introduced refreshingly debatable theoretical and methodological insight long current in other fields. And lastly, for the purpose of this paper, they can exemplify some points I like to raise – the promises and pitfalls of PC-PM approaches. Before moving on to the review, I would like to take note first that works on Orientalism such as Ileo's and Philpott's are more in line with PC rather than with PM. However, since both PC and PM draw on the arsenal of poststructuralist (PS) analytic tools that underwrite Orientalist critique, I think it is justifiable to use works on Orientalism as a starting point for searching possible problems and potential benefits both of PC and PM approaches.

DIFFERENCE IN EMPHASIS

While Ileo and Philpotts both deal with Orientalism, their emphases differ. Ileo talks about Orientalism that is closely tied to colonial relationship between American scholars and their subject, Filipinos and their politics. What underpin such Orientalism are the feeling of condescension towards (former) colonial subject and the unspoken sense of superiority that persists among American scholars in post-colonial period. He is equally emphatic, however, of the methodologies that underwrite the whole project and that mask the sinister character of such scholarly undertaking. He argues that contemporary American scholars of Philippine politics continue to follow the line of analysis as well as patterns of attitude of their colonial predecessors. Such analysis, he avers, is anchored on the essentialist views of politics and culture in the Philippines and such views satisfy perfectly the need to present the Philippines as the backward, irrational 'Other' of the progressive and rational US. Philpott, on the other hand, was more concerned with the methodological rather than attitudinal aspect

of Orientalism, although the latter was by no means totally absent. He argues that "(t)he study of Indonesian politics ... is treated as an object of knowledge that precedes that attempts of social science to know it, to elaborate it and to explain it." It "constitutes the object it putatively describes and establishes the rules under which it is possible to make knowledge claims". (Philpott, 2000) In other words, the discursive parameters set by the confluence of factors outside scholarship greatly influence or determine the character of political studies about Indonesia done by American (and Australian) academic establishment. It thus says as much, if not more, about the US (or American scholarship) than about Indonesia that is supposedly the object of analysis.

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS : A PROMISING BUT DEMANDING METHOD

The foregoing brings us into the first major promise of PC-PM approach that I would like to emphasise in this paper– the potentially vast application of discourse analysis in the study of Southeast Asia. By discourse analysis, I take it here to mean a thorough examination of, borrowing from Hayden White's definition of discourse, "the ground whereon to decide what shall count as fact in the matters under consideration and to determine what mode of comprehension is best suited to the understanding of the fact thus constituted" (White, 1987: 13 cited in Loomba, 1997) I would argue that area studies, in general, and Southeast Asian Studies, in particular, are ripe for this kind of analysis. The very idea that most of the influential figures in area studies are foreigners requires close scrutiny of their subject position. Moreover, the very nature of scholarship on Southeast Asia, purporting to capture reality out there, makes it a perfect resource for this type analysis. It is not just colonial discourses that have to be uncovered. More importantly perhaps are discourses that shore up the position of the powerful and abusive elites in the postcolonial societies. One of the ideas behind discourse analysis is to expose underlying power structure that lurks behind commonly accepted knowledge as well as those being introduced for

acceptance to the general public. This can be done by digging up its archaeology and tracing its genealogy, to borrow Foucault's methods. And following Foucault further, I have an inkling that his cues on the nature of positive power being diffused in all levels of the society add to the potential of opening up the whole province of Southeast Asian Studies as a fertile field for discourse analysis. How that can be done fully is a question I am continually grappling with.

GOOD AND LESS THAN GOOD EXAMPLE

From methodological viewpoint, I think what Iletto did in his article is a good lead to follow. He started with a deeply penetrating analysis of a popularly received (in the US) Pulitzer-prize winning book on the history of Philippine-American relations, Stanley Karnow's *In Our Image* (1990). He wonders what makes the book very appealing to the American public. Piece by piece he scrutinized the author's main arguments and identified the analytic tools he used. The idea was to be able to trace the provenance of such assertions and the tools used for analysis. In so doing, he critically reviewed works that go to as far back as colonial scholarship, thereby drawing the parameter and showing the internal consistency of colonial discourse simmering just beneath American scholarship on Philippine politics covering the period up to mid-1990s. The exposition is neat and at the first glance compelling and the implications revealed are disturbing indeed. All major American scholars (of Philippine politics) are seen to be deeply implicated, or so it seems.

The same thing cannot be said of Philpott's approach in his book. I think it would have served him quite well had he encountered Iletto's article before or while in the process of writing his book. Unfortunately, he did not¹⁴. Iletto is not

¹⁴ This is not surprising considering the difficulty of getting a copy of that pamphlet. It was published by University of Hawaii in 1998 and the circulation seems to be limited. Even major libraries in the Philippines can not be assured to have it. At ANU, the one at Menzies is missing. It is good Dr. Craig Reynolds has a copy and graciously lent it to me. His generosity is hereby acknowledged. Sometime last year, the same article was reprinted in Philippine Journal of Political Science, thereby expanding readership especially in the Philippines

listed among those he consulted. It could have given him an idea what kind of discourse analysis could produce a more tightly argued case. While Philpott seems to very much aware of Foucault's archaeological and genealogical methods, it seems that he did not really apply these to a good effect in his analysis. Based on my assessment, the fundamental weakness that bedevils his approach is the imbalanced role played by theory in his effort to substantiate his arguments. He seems to be very eager to display his understanding of Said and Foucault (and other PC-PM-PS authors) as well as his flair for the use of their jargons, to the point that empirical basis of his work suffered. Apparently, he was more interested in demonstrating the elegance and proving the applicability of these theorists' ideas than in grounding his arguments on a strong empirical foundation. He tends to provide theoretical support to assertions that should be buttressed by empirical data – data that could have been easily culled from analysis of discourses discernible in his target texts. Unfortunately, his examination of the 'hegemonic' texts reveals less than thorough and thoughtful reading of these texts.

The problem seems to start at the very conception of his frame of analysis. He readily assumes the existence and the character, rather than demonstrate clearly the inner-working, of the discursive realm within which Indonesian politics discourse is supposed to operate. In my view, his approach sees the cart overtaking the horse. Had he started with a little more comprehensive review of literature (something he categorically stated as 'unnecessary') on Indonesian politics written by important American scholars, he could have avoided a number of problems. First, he could have shown the intertextual relationship, just like what Ito has done, among hegemonic (and other) texts and this is very necessary to establish if there is indeed a discernible discursive realm and if there is, define more or less its boundaries. Second, he could have offered a firm basis for identifying hegemonic texts, thereby not relegating such justification in a footnote merely citing people he consulted to

help him decide which could be these texts. Third, he could have not missed some subtle but nonetheless important nuances in the politics discourse. For instance, his attack on the neglect of the communists/PKI in politics discourse allegedly dominated by Kahin and his cohorts misses Ruth McVey's works on it. Indeed, his act at the outset of choosing five hegemonic texts in Indonesian politics studies and subsequently basing many of his assertions and critiques on what are expounded on these texts are problematic. He was bound to miss important nuances in Indonesian politics discourse as the five texts, notwithstanding their alleged hegemonic status-- in itself is open to question-- can hardly capture all essential streams operating within a discursive realm. Not only that, he failed to show how the discourse operates within the target texts. While his emphasis on extra-scholarship factors such as the Cold War era and the interest of the American government and funding agencies is no doubt useful, he should have worked harder in establishing connection between the hegemonic status of these agencies/institution and their supposed influence on political discourses as can be discerned from scholarly texts. He merely juxtaposed one with the other and from there, assumed that the link is made. As a consequence his effort at showing the Orientalist character of Indonesian politics discourse appears contrived, at best. As well be discussed below, discourse analysis is a demanding mode of analysis and there are attendant dangers that go with.

ON COURAGE

Allow me to digress. Philpott is very much aware that he pioneers this kind of analysis insofar as Indonesian Studies is concerned.(2000:4) He also seems aware that he is banging up against the wall of the establishment in undertaking such work. Just like Ileo's stinging attacks on Philippinists, hardly was there one among the gurus of Indonesian politics studies escaped his sweeping condemnation. On that note, I think Philpott's courage is nothing short of commendable. On the other hand, courage not backed by excellent results is

not helpful not just to oneself but to the field whose cause he/she wants to advance. (Note again that other parts of the book is not covered by such estimation.) Up to this very moment, resistance by custodians of the academe to anything that has a prefix "post" remains monumental. Any pioneering work that has serious flaws in it might easily give a negative impression of the field as a whole thereby strengthening even more resistance to it. In fairness to Philpott, he should be credited for breaking grounds, paving others to follow. One can just find comfort in the thought that, just like first-generation IT software and hardware products, future works along this line would produce 'upgraded' results badly needed to catapult the field into the status of respect and acceptance that, I think, it deserves.

ORIENTALIST CRITIC OF ORIENTALISM?

While I endorse Ileo's approach, it is not without some serious problems. Foremost of which is the danger of over-reading the texts and imputing meaning and intentions that can hardly be independently verified, even easily disproved. (In stating this I am very much aware that I invoke an empiricist-positivist yardstick to measure an essentially anti-empiricist approach. But since PC-PM is trying to integrate itself with the existing social science scholarship which remains largely empiricist in orientation, I have no choice but do that if only to illuminate on the problems at the practical level of scholarship. I will actually cite later the need to evaluate PC-PM on terms appropriate to its epistemological character). To continue, I think discourse analysis has an inherent tendency to be speculative and teleological. The fact that an analyst begins with the assumption that there is such a discursive realm waiting to be unfolded somehow affects the way he/she treats empirical evidences. A very subtle form of 'conspiracy theory' seems to pervade discourse analysis. For all the rejections of metanarratives by PC and PM proponents, what seems to me re-inscribed through the backdoor is a presupposition that beneath every knowledge is a bundle of concealed power relations connected by invisible nodes to other

bundles and the goal of the analyst is to expose the network and its contents. My question is, "Shall we consider such presupposition an indication of yet another metanarrative?" Both Iletto and Philpott did not seem to be aware of such problem. As will be discussed below, the PC-PM admonition for self-reflexivity has been ignored by both of them, as often the case by many other proponents of this approach. But as pointed out earlier, Iletto's approach was less problematic than Philpott's and he was more careful in his analysis. However, he seems to be not careful enough. He was rather hasty and sweeping in his generalization. The fact that there are American scholars who do not subscribe to, even critical of, say, the clientelist framework negates Iletto's charge of Orientalism. Ben Kerkvliet, for instance wrote an article specifically criticizing the limitations of patron-client relationship mode of analysis. (1995)¹⁵. Iletto's silence about Kerkvliet's article that specifically calls for a more nuanced treatment of Philippine politics – for going beyond patron-client relationship – really intrigues me. This article was published in 1995 and it is difficult to imagine that he missed it (innocently) for it appeared in a widely circulated journal, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*. Iletto's failure to extricate himself from a black and white mode of analyzing the works of American scholars, his failure to detect the shades of gray in the spectrum, inadvertently made him open to the charge of essentialism himself. Iletto's insistence, one can recall, of identifying a specific thread that underpins American scholarship on Philippine politics and links it to a certain attitude tied with colonial project¹⁶, it seems to me, has all the air of essentialism. He appears to have essentialized colonial bond as a well-spring

¹⁵ In his article, "Toward a more comprehensive analysis of Philippine politics: Beyond the patron-client, factional framework", **Journal of Southeast Asian Studies**, Vol. 26, No. 2, Kerkvliet who is an American political scientist criticizes the tendency among scholars of Philippine politics to be stuck in a clientelist framework in analyzing the Philippines. While he concurs that such framework does indeed capture elements of Philippine politics, it misses other important elements, and therefore, there is a need to transcend it.

¹⁶ His suggestion for Mojares, a Filipino scholar, to serve as a 'model', all the more sharpens the impression of the great divide separating Filipino and American scholarship on Philippine politics. Had Iletto limited himself to arguing just for the existence of Orientalist discourse in the study of Philippine politics and refrain from tying rather strongly such existence to colonial attitude, he could have been less vulnerable to totalizing and essentializing tendencies.

that can explain the character (and the intention perhaps) of American scholarship on Philippine politics. It makes me wonder if this is an act of returning a colonial gaze, an Orientalism in reverse? His tendency may have unconsciously, but I believe logically, emerged from the need to prove his point: that there is this more or less coherent discursive realm called Orientalism within which studies done by American scholars make sense, operate and do performative tasks beyond the purported aim of capturing "reality". I think I can understand why it appears difficult for Ileo to admit and present a more textured, more nuanced treatment of Philippine politics by American scholars. Doing that could cast doubt on the supposed coherence, even existence of such discursive realm! Any crack revealed on the purported wall of Orientalist American scholarship is bound to undermine the forcefulness of his critique. Thus, he was pressed to retreat to the totalizing, essentialising mode – the very pitfall he bitterly criticizes and which he is trying to avoid. On the other hand, I am thinking if there is really enough space for him to maneuver and avoid such a trap. What happens to Ileo, as described above, is I suspect something to be expected in many, if not all, works purporting to describe and criticize Orientalism, or perhaps any form of widely covering discourses for that matter. I think any effort to pindown a broadly encompassing discourse such as Orientalism will require some form of essentialism. Naming a concatenation of a wide array of phenomena and linking them to a certain set of causal agent, such as colonialism, makes it difficult to escape certain form of essentialism. There may be a way out of it, but one thing I am convinced, Ileo did not find it early enough.

The foregoing critique of Ileo is intended as a reminder of the danger I hinted at earlier. The presupposed existence of a discursive realm somehow affects the way scholars treat empirical evidence, encouraging them to gloss over evidences that do not fit. It only goes to emphasise that while PC-PM discourse analysis is a promising method to employ, a scholar who intends to use

it must be ready to meet its exacting demands and must be aware of the dangers it entails. One has to realize, and be constantly reminded lest one forgets, that built-in within PC-PM is the requirement of self-reflexivity whose boomerang effect is so powerful indeed it could destroy even the platform on which an unsuspecting analyst stands. (More on self-reflexivity below)

ON THE NEED FOR SELF-REFLEXIVITY AND COMPROMISE

I think what makes PC-PM analysis doubly exacting is the fact that it has to find a niche in the crowded scholarly room and in the process forced to compromise its ideas and methods. As I will argue below, PC-PM has to pay a heavy price for such a compromise. Being a 'Johnny-come-lately' in the field of scholarship, it has no choice but to prove itself, initially at least, in terms defined by the existing acceptable bodies of knowledge. At the same time, it has to do its main job of critiquing the very nature of that knowledge. How can one do it, and do it well is the double-edge task any scholar who intends to use PC-PM approaches has to grapple with. Failure to successfully deal with it will lend an air of hypocrisy to one's critique. Something that may be said of Ileo and to a lesser degree, Philpott¹⁷. And, if I may add, for all I know, my critique of Ileo and Philpott carries the same problem.

The question of self-reflexivity refers to the reasonable demand for scholars to be self-conscious of everything (including their subject position, stakes at power relations, ideological leaning, theoretical proclivities, epistemological vantage point, etc) about themselves that may bear some influence on their analysis and factor those things in their conclusion. I should submit, however, that such requirement should not be imposed only on individual scholars but on the whole scholarly enterprise, as I will elaborate

¹⁷ In my view, the facts that Philpott deals primarily with the methodological, rather than the attitudinal, aspect of Orientalism, that Indonesia was not a former colony of the US, that he is not an Indonesian and that his discourse analysis was loosely executed all add up to free him from the urge to connect the whole project to the essential and insidious character of colonialism. There was therefore less pressure to resort to essentializing, mode, something that can not be said of Ileo's case.

below. The requirement of self-reflexivity is what I consider as another promise that PC-PM holds. PC-PM approaches allow, in fact demand, a high level of self-reflexivity other approaches, such as Marxist-inspired Critical Theory and sociology of knowledge, do not. It is my contention that a high level of reflexivity is necessary to enable us to include the role of the scholars (including aspiring scholars such as this author) and the scholarly enterprise as a whole as an important factor in the analysis of the production and transmission of knowledge. For so long, analysis of knowledge-power nexus focuses on the powerful influencing the shape of knowledge and how such kind of knowledge affect the powerless or the less powerful. On the other hand, for some groups, the subject of interest are the "powerless" (such as the sub-alterns) and how they appropriate knowledge as a tool for resisting the powerful. In either case, we do not see the creator or the custodians of knowledge, the scholars and of his tools, the scholarship which, in any case, is taken *a priori* as neutral and unproblematic. It is about time that scholars and the scholarship should make explicit their position in the whole question of power-knowledge relationship. We can no longer maintain our pretension as "professional workers" or innocent bystanders in the whole project. I should be quick to point that this does not just concern the scholars' relationship with the politically powerful, as I am aware that some of them, on their conscious volition or not, allow themselves to be co-opted by the powerful regardless of ideological leaning. This also concerns the scholars' relationship, as gatekeeper of knowledge, with the powerless and the supposedly 'ignorant' or the simple-minded-- the sub-altern groups whose knowledge happened to be not congruent with the moulds or expectation of scholarship and therefore exists only in a marginal position. Before I proceed to elaborating this point, I would like to note at this juncture that both Ileo and Philpott are guilty of not being self-reflexive in their analysis of Orientalism. They criticize fellow scholars as if they are detached observers; as if their personal interests do not in anyway affect the character and outcome of their undertaking. It is revealing indeed that not at any point in their analysis did they

entertain possibility that they may be sharing the same 'tainted' epistemological platforms with those they criticise. I think I should emphasise that this is one pitfall one has to be on guard against if he/she decides to apply PC-PM approach. Otherwise, the force of one's analysis is inadvertently emasculated by the boomerang effect which could result from lack of self-reflexivity.

To illustrate further the need for self-reflexivity, let us take the case of the development of nationalist historiography in postcolonial societies and the ensuing criticisms of it. Nationalist historiography developed primarily as a response to colonial historiography that preceded it. In such case, it is easy to see the relationship between the power holders, the elites who run the newly established independent states, and the growth of nationalist historiography. The latter served to legitimize and strengthen the position of the earlier in the same way that colonial historiography underwrote the interests of the colonizers. Then later there came critics of nationalist historiography. They say that it is elitist and that it utterly disregards the views, knowledge and aspiration of the sub-altern sectors. Such criticisms have been substantiated by studies purporting to speak for these marginalized groups. Ileo's *Pasyon and Revolution*, for instance, has earned rave reviews for its 'success' in allowing the Tagalog peasants to speak with their own voices through their folklore, songs, myths and legends, etc. . The claim to fame of the Sub-Altern Studies group also rests on the same foundation. I am bothered , however, by the fact that it required passing through the processing machines controlled by the adept hands of the scholars (incidentally, this machine is called 'scholarship') before such folk knowledge could be recognized as the voices of the sub-altern. Folk knowledge has been there since time immemorial. What took the scholars so long to "validate" such knowledge and put it into the mainstream, acceptable knowledge? It is also bothersome to take notice of the absences in the whole equation. While it is very clear that the elitist historiography serves the interest of the dominant groups in the society, one can just wonder whether shifting the gaze to the sub-altern would really be

to the sub-alterns' great advantage. It is really ludicrous and it has all the patronizing air to tell them "Hey your knowledge is a valid kind of knowledge after all. You can now use it to empower yourselves!" For all we know, to the extent the scholars successfully represent the voice/knowledge of the sub-altern¹⁸, such knowledge could be used by the powerful to control or oppress them even more. A question, therefore, is inevitable: Who could be the "unseen" beneficiary of the whole sub-altern project? My response would be, who else but the scholars who serve as gatekeeper of knowledge! With their mastery of the scholarship machine, they have the power and authority to determine which type of knowledge is acceptable. By electing themselves into the task of speaking in behalf of the sub-altern, they in effect privilege their position, and even if they are not explicit about it, they have a huge stake at certain type of power that underpins the whole process of knowledge production. It is precisely on this account that I strongly advocate the inclusion of the scholars, as a class in themselves, along side the powerful 'elite' and the 'powerless' sub-altern in the analysis of knowledge-power relationship. One may argue that the scholars are parts of the elite and thus should be lumped together. However, since there are also scholars who do not identify with the interest of the elite and their power derives primarily from their 'control' of knowledge, rather than material wealth as in the in case of the elite, I think it is appropriate to regard them as a separate analytic entity. Besides, for all our concerns about inequality – social, political and economic – there is one kind of inequality that we often ignore – the knowledge-based inequality. And it is about time that we fully recognize it and understand very well its implications on ways how we analyse things.

SELF-REFLEXIVITY AS A DOUBLE-EDGE SWORD

If we can consider self-reflexivity as one of the cornerstone of PC-PM approaches, it can also be a source of its weakness. This is truer in the case of PM than of PC, but PC is also affected. The reason for this is that PM as an

¹⁸ Gayatri Spivak's forcefully denies such claim. She concludes that the sub-altern can not really speak.

analytical tool is so powerful like a juggernaut that it can demolish even itself, if really stretched to its logical conclusion. Its anti-foundational basis does not sit well with the foundational nature of modern scholarship. It seems to me that a truly postmodern scholarship is an oxymoron. A postmodernist scholar to be true to his calling has to abandon scholarship in order to be true to his/her beliefs. It may sound ironic that PM to be truly effective has to transcend the boundary of scholarship. That postmodernism thrives in the academe indicates a compromise with an utterly modern scholarly setting. While such compromise lends them visibility in academic setting and gives them right to participate in its discourse, it is also a source of serious problem. Such compromise, I think, is the root of all contradictions and the air of hypocrisy that surround postmodernist critiques. On the one hand, they call for rupturing all binaries. On the other, they cannot but make use of Western logic that is based on dialectical character of human thinking. On one side, they reject correspondence theory of language and representation but, on the other, they are left with no choice but use in their analysis the same language system inherent in which is the goal to capture a meaningful essence as well as the capacity to represent ideas generated by a thinking mind. (Otherwise, how can they explain what they mean or how they can launch a meaningful critique.) At one point, they chide traditional historians for their 'certaintist' pretension of capturing reality out there and suggest instead that rather than 'reality', discourse should now be the object of historical study. At the other end of the line, however, in order for discourse to be analysed, it also requires some kind of pretension that it is a 'reality' out there. One can cite contradictions after another and I think this only goes to show how heavy the price PM has to pay for such a compromise. While I consider such an awkward position as one of its pitfalls, awareness of it by prospective proponents will put them in a more strategic position to lend their analysis an added element specifically designed to buffer the problems of contradiction. In this instance, I think that self-reflexivity manifested in honesty can offer a way to grapple with the problem, if not really out of it.

A LENGHTY CONCLUSION

The advent of the PC-PM and other similarly inclined theories into the world of academic scholarship ushered in a new era. It has thrown the academe into a maelstrom of 'crisis' and confusion that up to this day has yet to settle. It opened a Pandora's box many scholars could only hope to have not happened. The radical shift in the debate has changed the focus from the issue of whether or not one's claim to knowledge is better or the right one to a more contentious and frightening question of whether we can 'know' at all. Having been exposed as deeply political, it would now require some dose of naivete to see knowledge with an innocent eye. If we take the debate to its logical conclusion, the battle-line has been drawn not just between or among contesting factions within the academic community but also between those in and out of it. We can adopt a cavalier attitude and maintain that nothing changed, that the 'old guard' still stands unscathed. But that wouldn't change anything. The 'crisis' won't go away. The sense of panic and oftentimes hostility felt by those who understand the situation is perfectly understandable. They do not like to see the house of scholarship that took hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years to build to crumble just like that. The battle has to be fought, and fight very well they will.

TOWARDS A PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE

I think that perpetual cutthroat conflict should not be an inevitable consequence of PC-PM's (and their cohorts) crashing into the gate of academic scholarship. As discussed earlier, PC-PM proponents proved to be willing to pay a price for their desire to find a niche in the academic community. For doing so, they become stakeholders in the continuity, even growth of such community. Obviously, they are "sensible" enough not kill the hen that lays the golden eggs.

The name of the game, therefore, has to be changed from conflict to compromise – a mutually critical, if not really peaceful, coexistence of the two paradigms. But this will not happen so long as the proponents of both groups set their goal on annihilating one another. PC-PM proponents should cease acting like they are here to render their realist counterparts obsolete. Followers of the more 'traditional' scholarship, on the other hand, should refrain from being stubborn. They have to give up something that they have been holding on for so long – the exclusive use of the key to the door of acceptable knowledge. It is about time that such key open wide the door to the plurality not just of ideas and approaches but also knowledge-types. In short, proponent of the two groups have to realize that they are dealing with two different but complementary types of knowledge.

One step to achieve such coexistence is to accept different epistemological basis for knowledge acceptance or validation. Bitter conflict that ensued between the proponents of PC-PM (and their cohorts) and those of 'traditional' (I am using the term in descriptive rather than in evaluative term) scholarship can be traced to their non-recognition and non-tolerance of the differences in their epistemological grounds. 'Traditional' scholarship holds on to its 'realist' epistemology insisting that it can represent reality while PC-PM, on the other hand, the 'non-realist' counterpart arguing that reality could only be accessed as a text on a discursive plane. It seems, therefore, that it is not only their epistemological, but also their ontological foundations that are different. What does this mean, practically speaking? Recognizing such difference will allow both groups to realize the futility of attacking one another with the hope of wiping each other from the face of scholarly world. Critical engagement will thus replace cutthroat conflict as the basis of their relationship. To explain further, a scholar subscribing to a non-realist epistemology (in other word the PC-PM) cannot prove a realist knowledge-claim as wrong. This is because if he does indeed prove it he already operates on the latter's epistemological ground. And if

that happens he/she would be inadvertently refuting oneself by undermining the validity of his/her epistemological standpoint – the one that supposes that reality can only be accessed as a text or a discourse. It must be borne in mind that PC-PM is primarily a critique of realist knowledge. It cannot lay claim to it. What can PC-PM scholars do is only to cast doubt on it by scrutinizing and exposing the hidden assumption and power structure beneath it. In this sense, PC-PM cannot be an alternative to a realist form of knowledge, as the impression one can get from the actuations and pronouncements of some PC-PM proponents. Its critique can cast doubt on it (realist knowledge) but it cannot offer a real alternative. It can only complement/supplement it with its critique. If PC-PM analyst insists in doing otherwise, chances are he/she would fall into the pit of contradictions mentioned earlier that effectively undermines his/her position. Having said that, realist scholars should continue doing their work, aware that PC-PM can never really prove them wrong. However, they must always be aware and ready for PC-PM's critique. It would now be a matter of competition, whose version is believable, for the concurrence of an intelligent reading and judging public

If PC-PM scholars can not disprove realist scholars' knowledge claim, it is also the case that PC-PM's claim of the existence of a discursive such as Orientalism cannot be disproved by realist scholars. As a discourse, it has its own ontological character that makes it a very slippery object for the limited capacity of the realist tools to capture. On that account alone, realist scholars should recognize the need for another kind of epistemology that can complement their limitation, rather than bury themselves in hatred towards non-realist scholars and hope that these non-realist 'barbarians' would evaporate. As a critique of knowledge, PC-PM needs the output of realist scholars, and those of fellow PC-PM proponents, so they have something to lay their critical tools on. Their insistence on indirect accessibility to reality necessarily means that, by default, they have to confine their concerns on knowledge purporting to describe and

analyse reality, rather than reality itself. On the other hand, realist scholars need PC-PM's critique to further sharpen their analysis, for there is a tendency among realists to be naïve, and unreflexive, in their work – an antidote to which could be provided by PC-PM. Once reciprocal need has been recognized, the boundary between the two has been identified, and the sense of territoriality has been established, then mutually reinforcing coexistence and partnership might be achieved.

ADDITIONAL DIFFICULTY

I should be quick to point out, however, that there is an added dimension that makes PC-PM position more difficult. While I argue that realists cannot prove the non-existence of a discursive realm such as Orientalism, that should not throw PC-PM into a celebration. It must be emphasized that by virtue of their compromise with existing scholarship, PC-PM proponents have to demonstrate the material or textual manifestations of such discourse. It is precisely this requirement that opens them to the attack of the realists. They are left with no choice but to use the language and the procedures commonly followed in the community and it is in such instance that a realist scholar can pinpoint lapses or errors in the specific argument or facts or interpretation utilized by a PC-PM proponent to prove the existence of such realm. While success by a realist scholar in pointing the problems with the specific proofs offered by PC-PM does not necessarily negate the existence of the discursive realm, it considerably weakens PC-PM's position in the eyes of reading, judging public. There is a need therefore for PC-PM proponents to be extraordinarily judicious in their scholarship if they can hope to win public's nod.

I hope I have demonstrated clearly enough the challenges entailed in adapting PC-PM approaches into the study of knowledge and knowledge production in Southeast Asia. Despite the difficulties, I am convinced that there is no better way to approach such area of study than through PC-PM. As I have

argued, theoretical projects other than PC-PM (and its cohorts) does not allow for self-reflexivity necessary to understand deeply the nature of knowledge and knowledge production. By pinpointing the difficulties, I hope to forewarn prospective users of the approach and help them put themselves in a more strategic position to grapple with the problems.

BY WAY OF PAYING LIP SERVICE TO SELF-REFLEXIVITY?

Before I close this paper, I would like to be explicit about where am I standing in all these. I cannot deny that I have been attracted to the novelty (to me at least) and the blasphemous, anti-foundational character of PC-PM (and they cohorts). While my foray into PM is barely 2 months old, my engagement with PC goes back two years ago in a classroom at the National University of Singapore. I still remember, while I found the idea intellectually very stimulating, I was struck by, what it seems to me then, its practical uselessness. I still vividly remember the lines I wrote in a paper on PC I submitted to that class. It goes something like this: "I found PC intellectually exhilarating but practically sterile. It is only good as a tool for intellectual masturbatory exercises. Doing it is its own reward". I could only imagine what my teacher thought then upon reading those lines. I think that the past two months has seen the change in my position and attitude towards PC. My engagement with PM allows me to see the broader field of anti-foundational critique and it appears to me as compelling. I still consider it though as a very effective device for intellectual masturbatory exercises, to repeat what I've quoted earlier, but I can now see its practical usefulness. However, I am taking things very cautiously as, I hope, is evident in this paper. To be honest, part of the appeal of the PC-PM critique is the sense of power it lends to me or to anyone who engages with it. Seeing long-established and sacred beliefs crumble before my eyes pumps up adrenalin into my intellectual bloodstream. The sense of ascendancy is almost palpable. Being able to identify problems with the works of the towering canonical figures in one's field could

free one from the state of constant fear and intimidation. PC-PM tends to equalize the field. It is revolutionary as it is liberating and empowering.

While the above musings cast light on my attraction toward PC-PM, what follows will illuminate on why I tried very hard to rescue PC-PM from the claws of nihilism, a not altogether invalid alternative¹⁹. Actually, if I follow what I consider to be my 'logical' mind, and forget all about my worldly concerns, I would be happy to see PC-PM outside academic scholarship. Its voices might not be heard but, who cares, it can strip oneself of its pretensions and hypocrisy and be true to itself. Isn't it the most effective and the purist form of critique? We might fault the recluse, branding him/her stupid, for withdrawing from the world but will we really ever know whether the kind of world he/she withdraws to is in fact worse than ours? It might even be better. In the same way, we might say that putting PC-PM outside scholarship is nothing short of nihilistic, and therefore, downright silly. But have we ever thought how liberating it could be not to know? Shouldn't

¹⁹ In a paper I plan to write soon, I will argue why is there a need to demythologize nihilism and what benefit scholars would get from such move. I plan to uncover the unfounded basis of scholars' fear of nihilism that underlies their downright rejection of this philosophical position. I would also argue that without knowing it, we are paying a price for our uncritical rejection of nihilistic position. In my view, we can not say outright that nihilism is wrong as a path to "knowing" because for one, how do we know it is wrong, we haven't tried it as our basis for "knowing". In addition thereto, any attempt to prove nihilism wrong will only emphasise the validity of its opposite, and not the incorrectness of nihilism because we would only be judging the latter based on the former. On top of that, the kind of logic we use in our analysis operates on dialectical, binary relationship. It is but natural therefore to accept the existence of the opposite of knowing, that is, 'not knowing'. Since we can not really prove nihilism wrong and it a natural part in scheme of things, we have to allow it to occupy its rightful place in the spectrum of logical possibilities – that which range from the most positivistic in one extreme to the nihilistic on the other. Allowing such move does not necessarily erase all the foundations of knowledge, as feared by many people. It does not necessarily mean that the world will be plunged into the state of absolute anarchy with such move. This is because in knowledge-power nexus, power precedes knowledge. Knowledge can reinforce and help maintain power, but power is the starting point. Since the society is characterized by unequal distribution of power, such inequality will serve as the bedrock of knowledge. It would only be under a perfectly, hypothetically speaking, equal society where nihilism can operate. Having said that, what are then the benefits? Allowing nihilism to occupy its rightful position would make possible absolute self-reflexivity in scholarly undertaking. It would mean that scholars will be afforded a chance to take steps back and see not just their position within scholarly community, a kind of partial self-reflexivity, but also the position of scholarship in the whole scheme of things. While it is useful to see things from within, it is also limiting. Being able to see it from afar will pave the way for a better, more complete understanding of it. Our long-standing fear of nihilism denies us a chance to have a glimpse of the whole, and it distorts our views as we lose our sense of proportion. It is about time that we extricate ourselves from such a self-limiting, self-cheating situation.

we relish the idea of being able to deprive the powerful the basis for their power? Have we not realized that knowing is a burden, and nihilism is an absolute freedom? One may say that withdrawing from scholarship will only deny its proponents a chance to make a difference from within. A part of me asks, what difference indeed could PC-PM proponents make within the confine of established scholarship? They may be able to convince "traditional" scholars of the deeply tainted nature of knowledge and that they would become more self-conscious of the power relationship that underlies it, but would they be willing to go and reach the logical conclusion and say honestly to the "ignorant" on the farms and on the street: "Hey, your knowledge is as good as mine!" and, at the same time, be ready to take all the practical consequences of such honesty? And wouldn't it be that by joining scholarship, PC-PM in effect contributes to the process of its legitimization? They say that such an act of withdrawal is defeatist and cowardly. But what could be more defeatist and cowardly than just follow the lead of those before us without questioning the basis of such move and even if we do question and get to know the basis, we follow just the same because doing otherwise will deprive us a lot of thing we consider dear to us. Is there any act more courageous than being true to oneself against all odds?

Fortunately or unfortunately, I have a persona different from my logical mind described above. I am a PhD student on the verge of an academic career. I have been, and will always be a teacher and all my life I have been taught to believe that knowing is an inherently good thing. I was not aware in the beginning that what goes with knowledge is power, but I am right now. And I should admit that use of such power is both tempting and energizing. I fervently hope that once I get my PhD I would land a good job in the academe, earn a decent income, raise my family and enjoy life as much as my means could allow. I savor the thought that I have a kind of knowledge many people don't and, to be honest, it gives me some sense not only of pride and accomplishment but also a feeling of ascendancy towards people whom I consider less knowledgeable

Transcending Parochialism

than I am. I may not be rich but I have what I consider as a kind of wealth that even many rich people don't. My knowledge is my weapon as well as my capital. Like many others, I am a parasite to the organism called scholarship and as a parasite, I will not allow my host to die. The prospect of a bright future therefore depends on the continuity and robust growth of the academic community. Should anyone wonder then that I favor integration of PC-PM into the academic community rather than exile it to nihilism? I am too afraid nihilism will rob me of the basis for my power. I cannot bear the thought of me honestly saying to the "ignorant" on the farms and on the street that their kind or level of knowledge is just as good or as high as mine. Certainly, that will be the end of my day.

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