

The “Token” Woman on Marginalized and Underrepresented Voices

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Background

When Peter Paul Elicor (one of the co-editors of the *SES Journal of Applied Philosophy*) and I met at a conference in 2018, I had no idea that I would be editing a special issue for the journal four years later. Having devoted a decade of my life to corporate advertising, I was an outsider to philosophy circles up until a few years ago. So, when Elicor contacted me to discuss plans for a special issue, one of the first questions I asked myself was, why me? The only answer I could think of was that I was to be the “token” woman guest editor.

Some would say that such an editorial privilege is a consolation prize for *not* being a man, or a reply to the pressures put on philosophy journals by Philippine social media movements to be more inclusive. I realized that neither was the case, because it would mean that I was unworthy to work on such an endeavor. With a *hwaiting*¹ mindset I agreed to accept the editorship challenge. Not doing so for whatever reason would just be an excuse, and a supposed injustice to my underrepresented biological sex.

In the course of my planning and discussions with the editorial board of the journal, I confirmed this “tokenism” though. The “tokenism” was not due to my being a woman per se, but rather the diversity of the novel perspectives and approaches that I could present as someone who is rather different from the previous editors in terms of background, specialization, or even place. The editorial team was

¹ 'Hwaiting' or 'fighting' is a Korean word which is a statement of good luck, or as if encouraging or cheering someone on. The term is used to show support towards another's actions.

open to suggestions and ideas, and the special issue is a product of that sincere collaboration. So rather than a consolation prize, really, I see the affirmation of my voice and the voices of those featured in the special issue as an accolade of the organization. While “tokenism” usually has a negative connotation, the inclusion of a “token” is actually the “first step in leveraging the potential power of diversity in teams”.²

Given the invitation to leverage this power for the journal, the editorial team and I decided on the theme of *Marginalized and Underrepresented Voices* to deliver divergent perspectives, to borrow bell hooks’ title, from the margins to the center.³ This practice is not new to the journal though. In the past seven years, after all, the journal’s article themes have already tackled issues faced by the marginalized, disenfranchised, and oppressed. Some of these include articles on the plight of the elderly,⁴ gays,⁵ transgender individuals,⁶ indigenous peoples,⁷ fisherfolk,⁸ women,⁹ peasant,¹⁰ prisoners,¹¹ and the poor.¹²

² Andrew Yu, “The Potential of the ‘Token’ Woman,” *Pursuit*, September 27, 2020, <https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/the-potential-of-the-token-woman>.

³ bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Pluto Press, 2000).

⁴ Jeffry Oca, “Philosophy at the Margins: Exploring the Philosophy of Work of the Elderly People in Some Remote Areas of Negros Oriental,” *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy* 1, no. 2015 (2015): 1–18.

⁵ Victor John M Loquias, “Foucault’s Problematization of,” *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy* 4, no. 2 (2018): 53–74.

⁶ Colleen Andrea M Castaño, Christel Kate Q Labrador, and Chloe Nicole D Piamonte, “A Cynic and Epicurean Take on the Morality of Sex Change,” *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy* 4, no. 1 (2018): 49–68.

⁷ Regletto Aldrich D Imbong, “Living (with an Idea) in the Time of Social Media and Fake News: Emancipatory Politics and Critical Media,” *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy* 4, no. 1 (2018): 91–113; Rogelio Bayod, “The Future of the Environment and the Indigenous Peoples of the Philippines under the Duterte Administration,” *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 2018, 229–53.

⁸ Guiraldo C Fernandez, “Enlightened Anthropocentrism in the Filipino Visayan Fisherfolks’ Notion of,” *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy* 4, no. 2 (2018): 31–52.

⁹ Raymundo R Pavo, “Finding One’s Stall in Roxas Night Market: Framing the Stories of Women Street Vendors,” *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy* 5, no. 1 (2019): 81–98.

¹⁰ Guiraldo C Fernandez, “The Peasants’ Notion of Peace: Kinabuhi Sa Kinaiyahan Ug Gugma Sa Isig Ka Tawo,” *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy* 5, no. 2 (2019): 63–84.

¹¹ Menelito P Mansueto, “Dance Music and Creative Resilience within Prison Walls: Revisiting Cebu’s Dancing Prisoners,” *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy* 5, no. 2 (2019): 133–61.

¹² Hazel T. Biana, “The Matter of Class: COVID-19 in the Philippines,” *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy* 6, no. 2 (2020): 17–36.

These articles likewise bravely discuss the social realities that the marginalized have to deal with every day, such as violence, injustices, and human rights violations.

What makes this special issue unique, however, (aside from the self-professed “token” woman guest editor) is that it puts together voices that are not seen as “traditionally” marginalized but still dismissed nonetheless. Furthermore, it also appends, albeit controversially, some papers on underrepresented philosophical discourses. While the call for papers was open to all, these particular voices and discourses saw the need to be heard at this time, and these novelties are amplified in the collection.

The special issue is divided into two parts, the first of which features four articles on philosophy and marginalized voices, and the second showcases critical research on some underrepresented philosophical discourses.

Philosophy and Marginalized Voices

Joshua Miguel Sanchez’s *Vice Ganda: A Voice Against Homophobia?* is a Barthesian critical appraisal of the voice of one of the most famous and influential Filipino celebrities of this time, Jose Mari Vical or Vice Ganda. Sanchez evaluates whether Vical, as an advocate of LGBTQ+ rights, truly represents the plight of the gay community through various platforms such as movies and variety shows. Sanchez concludes that Vical is inconsistent in his voice, and that he falls short in combating homophobia and representing the LGBTQ+ community. Such conclusion brings about the necessity to further explore the social and ethical responsibility of icons in how their influence and power are used in media. Given the gullibility of social media users,¹³ powerful voices such as role models and public intellectuals should be held doubly accountable for inconsistent voices that they deliver to the public. Despite the overwhelming nature of their occupations, celebrities have the responsibility to “their various audiences, to their families and friends, to the governance of the self, to moral and ideological public standards”.¹⁴

¹³ Cynthia Nichols, Lori Melton McKinnon, and Anna Geary, “Rumor Has It: Examining the Effects of Facebook Addiction on Political Knowledge Gullibility,” *The Journal of Social Media in Society* 5, no. 1 (May 31, 2016): 229–64.

¹⁴ David Giles, “The Immortalisation of Celebrities,” 2017, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315601700-6>.

Dennis Tion's *Listening to the Voices of the Walwal Filennial Generation* is an exploration of the topic of ageism from an alternative perspective. While the elderly are more commonly considered marginalized in terms of their age, Tion discusses how the youth have been stereotyped by society as irresponsible and recalcitrant. He, therefore, defends *Filennial* voices, and provides a re-understanding of the word *walwal* through Ilocano language and culture. While the discrimination of young people is not an entirely new phenomenon considering their inclusion in vulnerable groups, Tion's contribution to the literature is the healthier, deconstructed view and understanding of the Filennial generation. Tion also pushes for a "more inclusive, non-ageist" society that embraces generational differences. Tion's positive approach is reminiscent of the work that has already been done on the philosophy of hope, which affirms hope, a positive culture, and a focus on possibility as crucial resources for marginalized or disadvantaged youth.¹⁵

Blaise Ringor's *"She Will Crush Thy Head": Edith Stein's Emancipative Empathy as a Critical Voice Against Neoliberalism in Education* is an elucidation of Edith Stein's phenomenology of empathy and how it can serve as an emancipative voice against the threats posed by the neoliberal methods and ideologies in education. Ringor strongly criticizes certain practices in education and deems them as tyrannical. While the publication of Ringor's work in this journal is, ironically, a contribution to the tyranny, he flourishly argues, through Stein, for the defiance of neoliberal tendencies in education. Ringor's voice is quite unpopular in the world of institutions that prioritize rankings, Scopus-indexed-article addicts, grade-conscious students, and rubrics-obsessed educators; it however reminds us of the "emphatic act", and the act's role in humanizing education. While I do not entirely agree with Ringor (as I may be somehow considered an accessory to the alleged tyranny), I concur that there must be a constant critique of the practices and methods employed in education.

The last but not the least article in the first section is Ian Clark Parcon's *Between Feminism and Masculinity: Understanding the Role of Men in Feminist Theorizing*. Parcon's article may raise a few eyebrows as it navigates the complex terrain of the role of men in feminist theorizing. Parcon discusses men philosopher's critiques of masculinity

¹⁵ Kitty te Riele, "Philosophy of Hope: Concepts and Applications for Working with Marginalized Youth," *Journal of Youth Studies* 13, no. 1 (February 1, 2010): 35–46, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676260903173496>.

and manhood, and asserts that the self-reflection of men and masculine theorists (on understanding their manhood) is a virtue. Incorporating feminist views in the masculine imaginary provides a more holistic portrayal of manhood. Parcon likewise invites a rethinking of the relationship between feminist thinking and male theorizing in the hope of broadening theoretical horizons. The approach may be called out as essentialist, considering the seeming binary opposition between feminist and masculine thinking, it however represents the desire of non-women to be included in the crafting and building of feminist theory. While this is a conjecture, Filipino men (who do feminism) may be the ones who are usually unheard of in feminist theorizing in the country. Perhaps it is about time that the notion of a “thoroughly separatist politics” be abandoned and the voices of men who do feminism be heard.¹⁶ In feminist philosopher Sandra Bartky’s foreword to the anthology entitled *Men doing feminism*, she states that “men deserve a place at our table; they have listened and learned from us; there is much that we can learn from them”.¹⁷ By hearing out men’s contributions to feminist theory, the movement affirms the work that it has already done. Parcon’s article is an example of how men can be actual allies in the practice of criticizing social constructs. After all, Bartky proclaims, women cannot overthrow the patriarchy alone.¹⁸

Underrepresented Discourses in Philosophy

Leni dlR. Garcia’s *Return to Mythos: Re-Calling Ancient Connections Between Myth and Philosophy* explores how indigenous philosophies express metaphysics and epistemologies. Because of the perception that the mythical is purely imaginative or illogical, indigenous philosophies have often been dismissed from the philosophical arena. Garcia asserts that although these philosophies may differ in form from those in the Western (Ancient Greek) tradition, they are sources of wisdom and enlightenment as well. Furthermore, she argues that “other ways to wisdom” should be included in philosophy, and that the love of wisdom should not be limited by philosophy’s self-imposed parameters.

In A ‘Gender Turn’ in philosophical discourses in the Philippines, I argue for a ‘gender turn’ in philosophical discourses in the Philippines.

¹⁶ Tom Digby, *Men Doing Feminism* (Routledge, 2013), xii.

¹⁷ Digby, xii.

¹⁸ Digby, xii.

I also critically examine and supplement some existing bibliographies of works done by Filipino philosophers and academics on the said gender-related themes. While the article may stir controversy in Philippine philosophy circles, it may also be taken in a positive light. For the past six decades, scholars and philosophers have painstakingly struggled to produce quality gender-related works, and they should be celebrated (not gaslighted).

Jeremiah Joven Joaquin's *Are Filipino philosophers publishing in top philosophy journals?* is another controversial article that Ringor (see previous section) would probably frown upon. Joaquin, by encoding and analyzing the Scopus database, asks whether Filipino philosophers are represented in top philosophy journals. The answer to the question is obviously not, but the findings are rather encouraging; they can actually serve as motivations for universities and colleges to create more proactive, pro-philosophy research programs and policies. While metrics are not the sole basis of a philosopher's worth, they can be a benchmark on the quality of work that they produce. Furthermore, the metrics also give an idea of the type of representation that Filipino philosophers have in the global philosophical arena. Filipino philosophers and scholars may be currently underrepresented in the international sphere but it does not mean that it will still be the case in the future.

The "Token" Woman

The richness and diversity of the Filipino experience is a strength that philosophers can harness in their research. Just as the previous Filipino authors in the SES Journal of Applied Philosophy have done since 2015, the multiplicity of knowledge can be used for the betterment of Philippine society (and beyond). As the first philosophy journal based in the Southern Region of the Philippines that opened its doors to a "token" woman guest editor, the organization is not just a talking voice, but a force that challenges the *status quo*, makes criticism, and moves toward a new course of action.

Through this collection, the editorial team and I hope that we have leveraged the power of diversity, and amplified some of the marginalized and underrepresented voices in philosophy. It is with this that I wish that the journal receives more tokens in the future (women or otherwise).

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