

Editor's Note

NEW DIRECTIONS

The last two centuries experienced some of the most drastic epistemological shifts ever known to mankind. And at the center of it all is the phenomenon of science and technology to which humanity owes its physical survival and economic advancement. But the backlash has also been tremendous in terms of human lives and cultural erasures, which is why in the last decades, any change, science-driven or otherwise, cannot be seen as sustainable without an accompanying cultural knowledge and sensitivity.

The march of science seemed to have ignored the fact that we are all cultural beings too and that culture takes time to evolve—adapting, adjusting to real human needs. The new breed of knowledge conflates science and culture, on equal terms, and without prejudice to either. Science without culture, we have found out, can be cruel and inhuman.

The study of the humanities—philosophy, art and literature—has taken a backseat to other kinds of intellectual endeavors because it is regarded as a soft field, a soft science, so called because it cannot change policy, increase the GDP, stop epidemics, provide food and shelter, promote industry—to all intents and purposes, useless knowledge. This is why it is the last to be noticed by funding agencies compared to the hard sciences, which are harbingers of progress, and the social sciences, which shape policy.

But as the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu has said, it is the weak and the soft that embodies life, hardness refers to the rigidity of death. The soft sciences of art and philosophy portray their strengths in a different way. They move mountains, not with a bulldozer, but with drops of rain. And if all else fails, convince the mountains to move by themselves. Art studies the various ways of human expression. It may be the technique in lacquer design, the use of rocks in a classical garden, the use of the snake concept in a Buddhist temple roof. These did not move mountains but the lacquer technique perpetuates tradition that connects generations who do not know of each other except through the use of a bowl. The rocks in a classical garden located in the capital of a former empire remind viewers and visitors that the city was the center of an empire, and the empire was once the center of the world. The snake keeps away evil elements and protects the monks who in turn serve the people and spread the faith.

Religious and philosophical studies also do not move mountains but they explain why people believe they can. They can trace unexplored origins, why the strengths of two systems of beliefs are similar. They explain why an esoteric persecuted religion has prospered outside its native soil, influencing other communities the way it has likewise been influenced by other cultures.

Literature does not move mountains but it can move men and women who will. While on the one hand it can be used as tool of containment, its transgressive potential allows it to explore that containment and subvert it.

So, you see, the soft is not useless. A lacquer design, a garden rock, a snake ornament in a temple roof, a theatrical performance—all these give a human dimension, a specific human face, to the phenomena tackled by the natural and social sciences. These are artistic expressions, subjective, creative, hard to quantify, elusive and eliding. They cannot move the mountain but they can move the hand that will.

Humanities Diliman was conceived as a scholarly venue for all the soft fields—dance, painting, literature, sculpture, music, film, architecture, languages, theater, etc. It also privileges three languages of scholarship in the Philippines—Filipino, English and Spanish. This distinguishes *Humanities Diliman* from other journals in the Philippines.

So far, it has been an effective scholarship venue for scholars especially from the University of the Philippines, and for scholarship on Philippine culture by Filipino and non-Filipino scholars alike.

As it approaches the beginning of its second decade, *Humanities Diliman* now extends its international reach by encouraging submission of articles from international scholars on any topic in the humanities. It also recognizes Filipino scholarship by assigning at least one Filipino referee to vet a submission. As a first stage, the journal will expand connectivity with scholarship within Southeast Asia, calling for papers on Southeast Asian cultures, preferably but not necessarily by Southeast Asians. Southeast Asia is our geographical, political, historical and cultural region and yet there is still little convergence between Philippine and Southeast Asian scholarship, especially in the humanities. *Humanities Diliman* hopes to address this lack with the new direction it is taking.

This special issue is a good example of the synergy that *Humanities Diliman* advocates. Celebrating the hybridity of Filipino music, the issue includes articles on the global presence of Filipino music as seen in Filipino musicianship in Hong Kong and the internet success of Charice Pempengco and Arnel Pineda. It also contemporizes the indigenous in the articles on the *salidummay*, the *kulintang*, Muslim protest songs and Manobo music. Yet not every author is Filipino and the authors' areas of expertise are themselves multidisciplinary and hybrid.

We hope to see more of these synergies in future issues. As *Humanities Diliman* enters its second decade, its editors aim for a more critical Filipino scholarship and a stronger Filipino presence in international scholarship in the humanities. The journal proudly and continuously promotes the soft fields that remind us that we are human beings—complex, diverse, possessing an inner life that is amazingly resilient and creative.

Lily Rose Tope
Editor