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The role of the philosopher of education in the task of decoloniality

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the meaning of 'decolonization' in relation to the school curriculum and the role of the philosopher of education in this task. Taking the Philippines as an example, this paper illustrates how coloniality has underpinned not only school curricula, but also entire systems of formal education in the post-colony. Following from this, it argues that decolonization in education must transcend the diversification of curricula and aim at a broader vision of justice. Drawing from the author's own attempts to reimagine the teaching of national identity, the paper proposes that philosophers of education who wish to participate in the work of decoloniality view their contribution as the three-fold task of historical critique, conceptual retrieval, and creative reimagination.

KEYWORDS: decoloniality, decolonizing the curriculum, philosophers of education, national identity, post-colony, Philippines

Systems of formal education are often the tools through which languages, practices, or cultures are suppressed, dismissed, and sometimes erased. This was true during the American colonial period in the Philippines, the historical context from which these reflections emerge. The American colonization of the Philippines occurred in the wake of the Philippine revolution of independence against Spain, which aimed to end 300 years of colonial rule. The leader of the revolution, Emilio Aguinaldo, declared independence in June 1898, formed a parliament, and ratified a constitution. However, at the same time, Spain and the USA were fighting the three-month long Spanish–American War. After the war was over, they negotiated their peace treaty in Paris, and the USA, which had originally considered recognizing
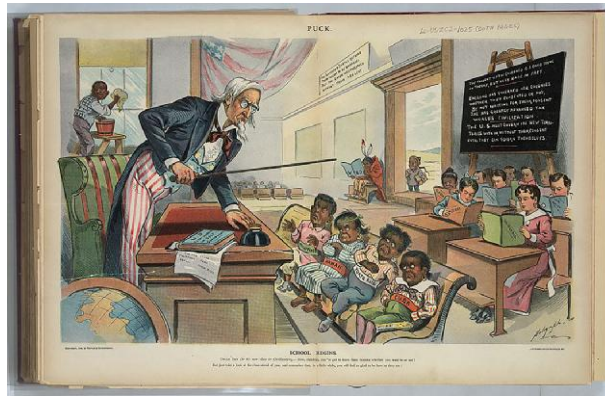
Figure 1. 'School begins' by Louis Dalrymple. Courtesy of the *Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress*, LC-DIG-ppmsca-28668.

Philippine independence, decided instead to colonize the Philippines and some of Spain's other colonial territories. This decision ushered in a brutal and bloody war between the USA and the Philippines, in which the Philippine forces, tired and depleted from their fight against Spain, were no match for American firepower. In March 1901, Philippine president Emilio Aguinaldo was captured by US forces. By 1902, the USA declared that they had won, and handed over the governance of the Philippines from the military to an American civilian bureaucracy. The Philippines would remain an American colony until 1946.

The decision to annex the Philippines had been hotly debated in US Congress and among the American public. In January 1899, the American satirical magazine, *Puck*, published a following political cartoon by Louis Dalrymple (Figure 1) that shows a classroom with Uncle Sam as the teacher.

Sitting on the front bench are four dark-skinned pupils wearing sashes on which are written, respectively, 'Philippines' (on a child who bears the likeness of Emilio Aguinaldo), 'Hawaii [*sic*]', 'Porto Rico [*sic*]', and 'Cuba'. Right behind these four children are another group of children sitting at desks, reading from books labelled with the names of US states that were annexed by the USA following the Mexican–American War. On the far right sits a pupil dressed in Indigenous American traditional dress, and that pupil is holding a book upside down. In the far-left corner is a depiction of an African American child cleaning the classroom window. Standing right outside the door is a child with a traditional Chinese pigtail. On the blackboard at the back of the classroom are the sentences:

> The consent of the governed is a good thing in theory, but very rare in fact. England has governed her colonies whether they consented or not. By not waiting for their consent she has greatly advanced the world's civilization. The US must govern its new territories with or without their consent until they can govern themselves.

The caption of this cartoon reads: 'Uncle Sam (to his new class in Civilization): Now children, you've got to learn these lessons, whether you want to or not. But just take a look at the class ahead of you. And remember that in a little while

you will feel as glad to be here as they are.' Through this cartoon, Dalrymple situated the debates about the annexation of the Philippines within the wider American context of that historical period. He also connected those debates to the persistence of the notions of Manifest Destiny and white supremacy, ideas that functioned as justifications for the US version of colonialism.

During the almost five decades of American colonial rule, one of the biggest changes that the US colonial government made was to Philippine formal education. The government replaced existing schools and set up new ones, in an educational system that was shaped both by American self-interest and the pervasive racial theories and ideologies of the time. One illustration of this was the way that the US government viewed Philippine languages. Filipinos, even until today, speak almost 200 languages. Apart from their fears that soldiers engaged in 'pacification' efforts would not understand what Filipinos were saying, proponents of US empire in the Philippines portrayed this as a sign of civilizational backwardness, an indication that the Philippines was unprepared for self-governance. Thus, partly out of a sincere belief that monolingualism was a prerequisite for civilization, but partly out of self-interest, some bureaucrats in the US educational system attempted to replace Philippine languages with English. W.C. Grimes would even say in 1928, with some exaggeration, 'The most stupendous undertaking in the school program was that of driving the mother tongue out of the mouths of millions of people by substituting for it the language of a nation whose habitat lay beyond six thousand miles of ocean' (Grimes 1928).

This is not to say that Filipinos accepted this narrative. The Filipino diplomat Sixto Lopez, in a failed attempt to get the US Congress to give up its imperial ambitions in the Philippines, sent them the following statement, which was read in Congress in 1901:

> [The] difference between the dialects of the seven provincial districts would not be a real difficulty to independent self-government. … [The] alleged antagonisms between the inhabitants of the provincial districts, or between the so-called 'tribes', have arisen, not in the minds of the Filipinos themselves, but in the minds of those who do not understand our people and who have reached conclusions in no way warranted by the facts.[1]

I begin this paper with a discussion of Philippine history not only to explain the context from which my reflections arise but also to highlight the degree to which coloniality and education were and continue to be intertwined in the post-colony,[2] using the Philippine setting as an example. Education is not neutral. Whereas in some places, formal education is seen unequivocally as something that brings liberation, in many places the oppressive, sometimes even culturally genocidal history of education is not a distant legend but a fairly recent memory.

[1] The 'Tribes' (statement by Sixto Lopez), read by the Secretary (U.S. Cong. Rec. 34 1901: 1716–17).

[2]   In this paper, I use the term 'post-colony' (with the hyphen) to refer to former colonies that have since won their independence; I use the word 'postcolony' (without the hyphen) to refer to postcolonial theory.

Moreover, today, decades after the end of formal colonial rule in the Philippines, elements of coloniality remain in the educational system. The system continues to privilege so-called international languages over local languages, Eurocentric ways of thinking and understanding the world over indigenous ones, neo-liberal approaches to trade and the exploitation of natural resources over indigenous ways of living with nature. This is not to demonize all Eurocentric practices, nor to romanticize all indigenous ones, notwithstanding Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò's (2022) recent critique. Each culture has something that other cultures can learn from. However, the history of colonialism in the Philippines is, as it has been elsewhere, a history where Western practices have been taken to be the standard that the Philippines ought to follow, and it is a history in which practices that were different from these were immediately assumed to be backward, superstitious, unenlightened: the practices were then, and have continued to be, suppressed and dismissed rather than so much as considered.

This was true not only in the Philippines but also in other parts of the world. Against this historical backdrop, this article aims to think through the meaning of the phrase that has become something of a rallying cry in higher education institutions in the Global North, the call to 'decolonize the curriculum'. In the first part of this article, I respond to that phrase by situating the task of decolonizing the curriculum within the larger projects of decolonial justice. In the second part of the article, I consider the role that might be played by philosophers of education and practitioners inclined towards educational theory in the task of decolonizing the curriculum, using one of my own research projects as an example.

THE PROBLEM WITH THE PHRASE 'DECOLONIZING THE CURRICULUM'

Even as the phrase 'decolonizing the curriculum' has become ubiquitous in recent years, its use needs to be examined and challenged. The 'softest' way of interpreting this phrase might be to see decolonization merely as the task of diversifying curricular content. What is insufficient about this interpretation is that it separates the task from the much more robust and radical political and epistemic project that is expressed in the verb 'decolonize'.

To explain the meaning of the word 'decolonize', I begin by saying that decoloniality and the project of decolonization must be seen, first and foremost, as a project motivated by a desire for justice. My understanding of the term draws from the work of the Latin American tradition. Latin American decolonial thought emerged in the 1990s after the fall of communism in Europe. Inspired but also dissatisfied by the work of postcolonial theorists working at Western universities, these Latin American thinkers, led at the time by Anibal Quijano, began to think about present-day asymmetries of global power (Escobar 2007). They sought to explain why, despite the formal end of political colonization in many parts of the world, global asymmetries of power remained between states and between peoples. To do this, they drew from world systems theory, and began to interpret the history of

modernization through the lens of the history of European empire, going as far back as when Spain and Portugal divided the world between themselves in the late 15th century. Thus, in their analysis, the present-day asymmetries of the world were created over the past 500 years as a result of empire and colonization. As Walter Mignolo put it, 'There is no modernity without coloniality' (Mignolo 2011: 3); coloniality and modernity are 'two sides of the same coin' (Mignolo 2007a: 464). In their view, the so-called modernization of the world could not be extracted or separated from the history of colonialism. The entire process of modernization was made possible because of empire, in terms not only of the extraction of resources from the colonies but also of the epistemic suppression of the plurality of ways of thinking that existed around the world.

Based on this reading of history, Quijano distinguished between *colonization* and *coloniality* (Quijano 2007). Colonization is related to territory and sovereignty; it is the process by which foreign invaders occupy territory resided on by another people, with the purpose of extracting its natural resources and, in the process, often subjugating and dominating the people who reside there. In the mid-20th century, there was a wave of political decolonization, through which several former colonies fought for their independence. Nonetheless, the notion of colonization is still relevant today. Colonization persists in settler colonial states, where indigenous peoples often continue to battle for different forms of sovereignty. It also persists in postcolonial states (ex-colonies) in two ways. It persists through forms of internal colonization that take place within these borders. But the concept also remains relevant because of new forms of dependency created between post-colonial states and former colonizers.

Quijano (2007) used the word 'coloniality' to refer to the continuing legacies of asymmetrical power that continue even after formal colonization has ended. He described the world as being overlaid by what Mignolo (2007b) termed the 'colonial matrix of power'. In this global matrix of power, because of the history of colonialism, certain states and peoples are at the centre of power, and others are at the periphery. This asymmetry is maintained and perpetuated through different forms of coloniality.

One example is the coloniality of knowledge (Mignolo 2007b), and I use language as an example to illustrate this. *Kung bigla akong magpasyang magsulat sa sarili kong wika, hindi ninyo ako maiintindihan at malamang, hindi magpapatuloy ang karamihan sa inyo sa pagbasa nitong papel.* If I were to write the rest of this article in my mother tongue, most of you would not understand me, and most of you would not continue reading. The fact that I wrote this article in English, that English allows me a platform that can reach as wide an audience as this, reflects the dominance of English that has developed out of colonial history. Compared to English, my mother tongue, Tagalog, is at the periphery. To be sure, it may be more useful than English in certain contexts but overall, from a global perspective, English is more powerful than Tagalog.

The coloniality of knowledge, however, has an effect not just on the language that people feel compelled to learn and speak; it also has an effect on people's personal

lived experiences, or what Nelson Maldonado calls the 'coloniality of being' (Maldonado-Torres 2007). To return to the example of language: if I did not speak English or another so-called global language, it would be more likely that I would be at the global periphery, less able to fight for my interests, less able to have my voice heard even in debates and discussions that concern me, more likely to be subjected to dominance and domination. On the other hand, if I had been raised to speak English and not Tagalog, I would become increasingly alienated from other Filipinos, from my ethnic community, and from the worldviews expressed by my mother tongue, the experiences captured uniquely by the Tagalog vocabulary. I might say even that I would be alienated from myself.

Apart from the coloniality of knowledge and the coloniality of being, the Latin American thinkers have also written about other manifestations of coloniality, in systems of race, gender, relationships with nature, and so forth. In all these domains, the vision of the decoloniality movement is of a world where this imbalance between the centre and the periphery ends, or rather where there is no longer a centre and a periphery but a relationship of balance, parity, and equity among all peoples. I see this as a vision that, if it is to happen at all, will take not a few years, nor even a few decades, but a few hundred years of struggle and change—given the entrenchment of coloniality not only in our global systems but also in our ways of thinking and being. As colossal as the task is, it is a task that must be undertaken, and the path towards this vision is precisely what is expressed in the verb 'to decolonize'.

In some places, the task of formal political decolonization is still ongoing. In settler colonial states, for example, indigenous communities continue to fight for their rights to their land. But alongside this political task there is also an epistemic task (Grosfoguel 2007): the need to address the power asymmetries of coloniality by decolonizing knowledge, decolonizing ways of being, and so forth. Another way to think of this is that it is a task with both global and highly local dimensions, a task that implicates broad power structures with great influence on world affairs but also small communities. Because it is (I think) a centuries-long project, every single smaller step,—the Rhodes Must Fall movement, the creation of indigenous schools in remote places, the fight for historical reparations, the recording and conservation of indigenous knowledge—all of these can be understood as baby steps not even in a marathon but in a centuries-long, transgenerational trek.

To return, then, to the problem with the phrase 'decolonizing the curriculum', the problem with the phrase is that it runs the risk of becoming disengaged from this larger vision. It runs the risk of creating the illusion that once we start including more indigenous authors in our classrooms, we have won the war. However, insofar as we see these small battles as part of this larger vision, it does make sense to speak of decolonizing the curriculum (or rather, decolonizing curricula, because there are of course, many curricula that need decolonizing). Doing so requires understanding that the task of decoloniality cannot end at changing the curriculum. If decoloniality aims at justice for people, it must also entail decolonizing the structure of the school, our teaching practices, our learning practices, the world outside the school, and how we view our students.

Paul Standish (2010) has suggested that one of the possible approaches of philosophy of education is the work of conceptual clarification. How might a philosopher of education or a practitioner interested in philosophy of education undertake this work specifically in relation to the task of decolonizing the curriculum? To answer this question, in the next section, I reflect on my own experience of attempting a decolonial project, in which I aimed to reimagine the teaching of national identity in post-colonial contexts, with a focus on the Philippine setting. Drawing from this experience, I propose that the role of the philosopher of education might be to engage, first of all, in two specific forms of conceptual clarification, which I call *historical critique* and *conceptual retrieval*. I then propose that, following this, a further role of the philosopher of education might be to *creatively reimagine* these fundamental ideas in educational practice.

DECOLONIZING THE TEACHING OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

In a typical Philippine school, the school day often begins with a flag ceremony. Pupils and teachers stand at attention, singing the national anthem while the Philippine flag is raised on a flagpole. Through practices such as this, as well as more explicit curricular content, Filipinos are taught throughout their stay at school about being a Filipino, part of a strategy to instil a sense of patriotism. These practices, as you may guess, were introduced during the American colonial period when Filipinos were instructed to salute the American flag.

As a legacy of colonialism, it is no surprise that colonial ideas remain embedded in the concept of national identity as it is taught in the Philippines. To illustrate this, allow me first to describe how Filipinos themselves identify their own sense of group belonging. When two Filipinos meet for the first time, one of the first questions they ask each other is '*Saan ka sa atin*?' or, where in the Philippines are you from? This is really a way of asking, which ethnolinguistic group in the Philippines do you belong to? Based on the census questionnaire in the Philippines, Filipinos identify themselves as belonging to more than 170 ethnolinguistic groups. However, during the period of colonization, this rich ethnolinguistic plurality was dismissed by the colonial governments and replaced by racialized taxonomies. In his 1899–1900 annual report, for example, US Commissioner of Education William T. Harris included an essay titled 'Intellectual Attainments and Education of the Filipinos', unattributed in the original report but attributed elsewhere to R. L. Packard (1901). This essay claimed to synthesize 'impartial' European and Filipino scholarship about Philippine 'natives' by dividing the Philippine population into three categories. The first was 'the Christianized or civilized peoples … who alone are now designated by the term 'Filipinos', and who form the majority of the population'; Packard described this group as 'mixed race', descended from a first migration of the 'Malay' race but also from other races on account of the settlement of traders from China and Japan and of Mexicans and Peruvians who had served in the army in the Philippines. A second group was 'the Mohammedans [Muslims] of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago', described as

having descended from a different Malay invasion. The third group were described as 'the wild mountain tribes' (pp. 1,596–7).

These three racialized groups were given different educational systems. The Christian peoples whom the Americans called 'Filipinos' were given a curriculum similar to the American one. The Moro Province, the province that was created in the part of the Philippines where most of the Muslim population lived, had a similar curriculum but with more emphasis on vocational and industrial training. The so-called 'pagan tribes' were given a curriculum focused on industrial work and agriculture. This racialization, in other words, was not merely a tripartite categorization, but a tripartite hierarchy patterned after the social and racial hierarchies in the USA of the time, involving white Americans, Americans of African descent, and Indigenous Americans. Since the period of political decolonization, a lot of work in the Philippines has gone into reclaiming pre-colonial self-identities as seen in the present census. However, the hierarchies created during the American colonial period have persisted in Philippine policy in various ways. For example, eighty years ago, the Philippines chose an indigenous language, Tagalog, to be a national language of the Philippines alongside English; however, only in the past ten years have schools been officially allowed to teach pupils in their mother tongues (despite the ubiquity of the unofficial practice). For too long, the presumption had been accepted—a holdover from the American colonial era—that allowing children to learn in their mother tongues would somehow fracture the state.

Given the legacy of coloniality that remains embedded in presumptions about national identity, the question that motivated my project was, what would it look like if we were to rethink the teaching of national identity, looking at the notion of identity from our own perspective, that is, a post-colonial perspective? Embarking on this decolonial project required three moves: a historical critique, a conceptual retrieval, and a creative reimagination. I give a brief account of each of these moves below.

Historical critique

I use the phrase 'historical critique' to refer to a form of conceptual clarification that critically examines the different ways a concept has been used historically in public discourse to perpetuate unjust structures and relationships of coloniality and domination.

Historical accounts of the history of the teaching of national identity often use seminal works based on the European experience, such as Eugen Weber's classic work *Peasants into Frenchmen* (1976), as points of reference to describe the connections between education, national identity, and modernity. Decolonizing this account required an examination of the connections between education, national identity, and modernity in the colonized world. In my work, I focused on the Philippine experience; I conducted documentary research, mostly on documents from the government record (congressional debates, official reports of the department of education, etc.), and built on the published and unpublished work of other

researchers to stitch together such an account. This work showed that the American decision to colonize the inhabitants of the Philippines was justified on the basis of the supposed 'savagery' of the latter, a notion that was developed among intellectual circles under the influence of the dominant social evolutionary theory of the early 20th century. The idea of the 'nation' was crucial to this theory, which posited a linear scale of development from tribal fragmentation towards national unity (Go 2000; Kramer 2006). In other words, in the Philippines, the concept of national identity was a main justification for colonial domination.

I propose that a historical continuity can be drawn between the dominance of the idea of the nation-state at the turn of the 20th century, and the fashionableness of cosmopolitanism a hundred years later, which led to a new way that the concept of national identity was used to perpetuate coloniality. As indicated above, at the turn of the 20th century, the so-called 'tribal fragmentation' of the colonized world was labelled 'savage' and 'uncivilized' by academics in the Global North. In the middle of the 20th century, anti-colonial movements in the colonized world deployed those same ideas of national identity in their own struggles for independence and for their right to self-determination to be internationally recognized. However, by the end of the 20th century, such discourses of national unity, which had mobilized these struggles for sovereignty, were in turn labelled by Global North scholars as 'backward' and 'violent'; these scholars called instead for the replacement of nationalist discourses by their more idyllic vision of 'cosmopolitanism'. Such accounts of cosmopolitanism, however, said little about the role that nationalism had played in the Global South in the struggle for independence and self-determination. Their accounts of their visions of peaceful multicultural exchange were similarly silent about the way that Global North encounters with foreign cultures in the Global South had often been accompanied by violent acts of coercion and domination.

Foregrounding colonialism when thinking about the history of the concept of national identity has implications for citizenship education. Educational theorists have followed the lead of Global North political philosophers in their discussions about which dispositions are appropriate to teach in the classroom, and in the past twenty years, such discussions have led to a general sense that the teaching of national identity is, at worst, harmful and morally impermissible, and, at best, tolerable only when regulated by the values of liberal democracy. A more global account of the history of the concept of national identity challenges the presumptions underlying these positions, showing how the notion of national identity has been a tool for justice; it has been the very conceptual tool strategically deployed by populations in the Global South to claim parity with the populations in the Global North, whether in past struggles for self-determination or in present-day climate change negotiations (Ourbak and Magnan 2018).

In my project, then, the task of historical critique has unsettled the foundational presumptions underlying dominant positions regarding the teaching of national identity. This has opened up the possibility of retrieving post-colonial understandings of the key concepts of the issue, to which I turn next.

Conceptual retrieval

Whereas historical critique unveils the way that a concept perpetuates colonial relationships and structures of domination, conceptual retrieval reconfigures the same concept within an anti-colonial framework, in an approach that has similarities with Haslanger's (2012) ameliorative approach to conceptual analysis in relation to race and gender (Novaes 2020).

The conceptual retrieval I undertook in my work, which has been published elsewhere (Azada-Palacios 2022), addressed the task of understanding how national identity has been conceptualized from a post-colonial perspective. To do this, I drew from Homi Bhabha's analysis of postcolonial identity (Bhabha 2004). Through an analysis of various literary works from the colonized world, Bhabha gives an account of how colonizers' treatment of colonized subjects has engendered within the latter negative feelings about their own identity: if not ambivalence, then an explicit desire to be someone else, what he calls a 'splitting'. Such a description provides a stark contrast from the notion of identity in the West, the Cartesian image of the 'undivided, self-controlling, self-consciousness' (Easthope 1998: 342).

Foregrounding this negative experience of identity challenges a commonplace presumption that underlies much of the Global North literature about the teaching of national identity: the idea that identifying with a nation is tantamount to being partial towards that nation. In the post-colony, identification with a nation is sometimes accompanied by ambivalence, if not outright shame about one's national identity. Taking political scientists Huddy and Ponte's (2019) conceptual distinctions between national identity, national pride, and national chauvinism has allowed me to consider the possibility of teaching national identity (a sense of belonging to a nation) in a way that does not necessarily lead to national pride (a positive evaluation of national institutions and symbols) or national chauvinism (a sense of superiority and dominance of one nation over others).

Such a conceptual retrieval, therefore, has allowed for a different meaning of the phrase 'teaching national identity' to emerge. To teach national identity does not necessarily mean to teach patriotism or nationalism. In the post-colonial context, to teach national identity may mean to carve out a space in which post-colonial pupils can name and come to terms with the ambivalence surrounding their sense of national belonging.

Creative reimagination

While I use the phrase 'conceptual retrieval' to refer to the reconfiguration of a concept within an anti-colonial framework, I use the phrase 'creative reimagination' to refer to the educational philosopher's task of considering how this reconfigured concept can be deployed to cultivate educational practices with a stronger orientation towards justice. In this sense, creative reimagination also involves coming up with concrete proposals for educational practice, such as, in my case, a pedagogical proposal.

Within my own decolonial project, my access to a diverse range of academic literature allowed me to imagine how national identity could be taught differently. It is important to note here that while the diversification of curricula has been a

condition that has given me access to this academic literature, it has been merely a condition for creative reimagination and not tantamount to the decolonial act itself.

To reimagine national identity creatively, I have found Bhabha's concept of hybridity to be useful. Bhabha uses this concept both as an analytical tool—to describe how colonized populations have appropriated and transformed elements of the culture of the colonized—and also as a slogan for an ongoing political project. Bhabha advocates that post-colonial populations continue to cultivate hybridity, that is, continue to create new hybrid texts, cultural artefacts, and practices, for the purpose of resisting essentialist notions of culture such as those advanced by both imperialist and nationalist discourses. This insight from Bhabha has allowed me to reimagine national identity itself, and I developed a heuristic for evaluating the way it is presented. Whereas national identity is commonly understood to be fixed, I argued that national identity is, on the contrary, malleable and should be presented as such to pupils (Azada-Palacios 2022).

Arriving at a different conceptualization of national identity has allowed me, in turn, to imagine how the malleability of national identity might be taught and cultivated in the classroom. National identity is commonly understood to be taught through the presentation to pupils of a fixed national narrative or a fixed set of values that pupils are meant to imbibe. Especially when framed as a mechanism for social cohesion, it is often presented as an ideal that ought not to be undermined, either by teachers themselves or their pupils (see, for example, Maylor 2016). Consciously aiming to foster the malleability of national identity, however, requires a different pedagogical approach. It requires helping pupils to understand the historical contingency of all past portrayals of the nation and the contentiousness of the very idea—that is, of what a nation is. Acknowledging this contentiousness presupposes a more dialogical approach to teaching: it creates the space to recognize and possibly critically examine alternative understandings that teachers and pupils themselves may hold about this identity, and it admits that political or institutional constructions of national identity are sometimes met with resistance (cf. Maylor 2016). Finally, fostering the malleability of national identity requires helping pupils to recognize the role that they, as future citizens, will have in continuing to shape that identity, through cultural expression or political action.

In light of this, I have surveyed the Philippine curriculum to identify specific topics that could serve as opportunities for children to discuss national identity in this way: for example, the social science discussion on who counts as 'Filipino', the history lessons about the Philippine revolution against Spain, or the identification of different ethnolinguistic groups across the country. I have identified alternative texts (e.g. anti-colonial poetry and fiction, nationalist essays, the documents of the revolutionary government) not merely as entries in a more 'diverse' reading list but specifically as stimuli for classroom debates about the principles that children consider important in the Philippine context (Azada-Palacios 2022).

One possible objection to my pedagogical proposal may take the form of the worry that such anti-essentialism can lead to a form of relativism that can be co-opted for unjust ends (for a similar debate in Philippine historiography, see

Curaming 2016). In the Philippine context, such a worry may be heightened in the face of present-day politically motivated disinformation, which includes the organized dissemination of propagandist myths to manipulate public discourse (see Ong and Cabañes 2018). Such valid concerns emphasize that decolonial tasks undertaken in relation to educational systems occur within wider political contexts: the decolonial tasks of the educational philosopher, therefore, cannot be disconnected from the broader societal tasks of fostering justice, which include the exercise and cultivation of justice-oriented political judgement. As with Boaventura de Sousa Santos' 'pragmatics of social emancipation' (Santos 2014: 190), justice itself serves as the principle against which such harmful tendencies can be checked.

THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHER AND THE EDUCATOR AS DECOLONIAL AGENTS

As the above example of the flag ceremony shows, Philippine educational approaches to the issue of national identity often mimic colonial-era practices and are underpinned by colonial-era ways of thinking. This is also true for the way that other topics are taught in the post-colony. In addition, because empires sought to cultivate citizens who would be useful to their efforts at colonial expansion, colonial-era ways of thinking underlie educational approaches in the colonial metropoles as well. In the UK, for example, this is particularly evident in approaches to school geography or the curricular content of school history.

My aims in this article were to clarify what the task of decoloniality is in relation to the curriculum, and to consider how philosophers of education might participate in this task, through a reflection on the teaching of national identity in the Philippines. I have argued that by engaging in a historically informed approach that foregrounds colonialism, philosophers of education can challenge patterns of domination perpetuated by practices and ideas that continue to be underpinned by coloniality. This can clear the way for them to think of different, more justice-oriented educational approaches. Considering my own past attempt at decolonizing the teaching of national identity, I have identified this work of the educational philosopher to be three-fold: historical critique, conceptual retrieval, and creative reimagination.

However, as with other attempts to 'decolonize the curriculum', such efforts will remain merely academic—in the negative sense of the word—if they are disengaged from the longer-term goal of political and epistemological justice. Such tasks must, therefore, ultimately influence practice by leading to proposals that can hopefully alter or even transform the classroom.

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