

Neoliberal Capitalism, ASEAN Integration and Commodified Education: A Deleuzian Critique¹

RANIEL SM. REYES

UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMAS, PHILIPPINES

Abstract

This article launches a Deleuzian critical diagnosis of neoliberal capitalism, which through the ASEAN Integration Project, expounds on capitalism's effects on universities or on Philippine Higher Education. Strategists of neoliberal capitalism, whom Deleuze and Guattari call the "poor technician[s] of desire," persuade underdeveloped or developing countries to see in their resources for financial stability or education reform, a "lack" that needs immediate attention and find solution in the global call for liberalization, deregulation, and privatization. Once this psychoanalytic ploy achieves success, these countries become naive preys of neoliberal capitalism. They interpret this phenomenon as a contemporary fascism that manipulates the people to desire increased order, unity, and their own repression. To counter this system, they

¹ I dedicate this essay to all the faculty and staff who will be retrenched this coming 2016 because of the implementation of the K to 12 Program.

formulate “schizoanalysis,” a radical philosophy that seeks the evisceration of psychoanalytic capitalism. In this article I use schizoanalysis or rhizomatic thinking to diagram a Deleuzian becoming-revolutionary in the sphere of education.

Key terms *neoliberal capitalism, ASEAN integration, commodified education, schizoanalysis, becoming-revolutionary*

Our contemporary period introduces humanity into new frontiers of existence characterized by fluidity, interconnectedness, and pluralism. In this period, for example, the mobilization of economic and political aid between countries during internal and external turmoil, as well as spaces for international relations and collective policymaking, have grown. Perhaps, Thomas Friedman is correct in saying that the world is flat owing to the fact that everything is “being digitized and therefore can be shaped, manipulated and transmitted over computers, the Internet, satellites or fiber-optic cable.”²

Ideally, as the world is miniaturized by globalization through various techno-scientific advancements, ethical sensitivity and dialogue between cultures should progress, and the gap between the wealthy and the underprivileged should decrease. The diversification of our present epoch redefines our understanding of subjectivity, interpersonal exchange, and cultural production, obliterating state power structures, thus engendering the emergence of new agencies

² Thomas Friedman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2005), 187.

and entities like nongovernment organizations and transnational corporations. According to Friedman, “Traditional nation-states, governments, corporations and new organizations will have to work together with emergent networks and virtual communities and companies to gradually hammer out some new norms, new boundaries, for operating in a flat world.”³ Such radical transformations indubitably amplify human capacities that are beyond traditional valuations.

On the other hand, our time is also characterized by what Samuel Huntington and Francis Fukuyama call the “clash of civilizations”⁴ and the “end of history,”⁵ respectively. Hence, we cannot discount the fact that the aforesaid advancements have also perpetrated manifold predicaments such as increasing religious fundamentalism, territorial disputes, environmental degradation, and economic oppression.

The ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) integration is not exempt from these paradoxes. As a unifying norm created by Southeast Asian countries, it has instigated considerably successful socioeconomic developments within the region. But as the member countries continue to implement ASEAN’s neoliberalist and unitarian policies, Friedman’s “flat world” ends up being translated into a world of capitalist hegemony. I argue in this article that it is through the philosophy of schizoanalysis that the neoliberal capitalist configuration of the ASEAN Integration can be radicalized toward the creation of rhizomatic principles, affects, and relations.

³ Ibid., 239.

⁴ Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

⁵ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

Neoliberal Capitalism, ASEAN Integration and Subjugation Capitalism and the Challenge of Schizoanalysis

The bourgeoisie took the decline of the USSR in the year 1991 as an opportunity to redefine liberalism in purely economic terms. From being understood traditionally as a political theory of society, liberalism was ingenuously utilized as an economico-ideological device to gain political leverage over the feudal lords. This event spawned the phenomenon of neoliberalism—an occurrence that fuels capitalism's fortification and its increasingly forceful entrenchment in the global village.

Neoliberalism is a theory of “political economic practices proposing that human well-being can best be advanced by the maximization of entrepreneurial freedoms within an institutional framework characterized by private property rights, individual liberty, unencumbered markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices.”⁶ In the course of time, it has become hegemonic and generalized in all aspects of contemporary life in the form of neoliberal democracy.⁷ Additionally, in her essay entitled, “Capitalism Reorganized: Social Justice after Neo-Liberalism,” Albenaz Azamanova argues that neoliberal capitalism has transformed itself into a new model marked by changes in structures of the political economy and political competition that, combined, induce the deepened commodification of knowledge and labor.⁸ Its ascendancy has instigated enormous changes in various state policies,

⁶ David Harvey, “Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 610 (2007): 22.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁸ Cf. Albenaz Azamanova, “Capitalism Reorganized: Social Justice after Neo-Liberalism,” *Constellations* 17, no. 3 (2010), 391, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-8675.2010.00589.x/abstract>.

interpersonal transactions, and domestic concerns in the form of privatization of lands, monopoly of production, contractualization of labor, and worker retrenchment, which are regulated by transnational companies.

In order to provide a critical analysis of the status of the human condition under the reign of neoliberal capitalism, Gilles Deleuze formulates the concept of “societies of control” or “control society.”⁹ The radical emergence of the control society is coextensive with the enormous hegemony of neoliberal capitalism. For him, under this new mechanistic framework, the walls of various social spaces like the hospital, school, and workplace have already been shattered. Although the emergence of the control society has encouraged more pluralistic sociopolitical and economic exchanges, it has also conditioned new modes of domination via governmental or institutional edifices and interconnected networks of control.

In the age of control society and capitalist supremacy, the forces of anti-production¹⁰ consider the market as the substratum of operation, because “alliances and filiations no longer pass through people but through money.”¹¹ The prevailing relations of antiproduction alienate the personal, communal, and existential by privileging the economic (capital). In their phenomenal work *Empire*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue:

⁹ Cf. Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

¹⁰ “Anti-production” is a moment within the process of desiring-production. For Deleuze and Guattari, as desiring-production conditions its existence and reproduction, it likewise engenders its repressive state (anti-production). In other words, within the process of production itself, forces of anti-production are produced. Being an immanent force, anti-production momentarily represses the very production process that fashions its own existence (cf. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983], 335).

¹¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 264.

Capital works on the plane of immanence, through relays and networks of relationships of domination, without reliance on a transcendent center of power. It tends historically to destroy traditional boundaries, expanding across territories and enveloping always new populations within its processes. Capital functions, according to the terminology of Deleuze and Guattari, through a generalized decoding of fluxes, a massive deterritorialization, and then through conjunctions of these deterritorialized and decoded fluxes.¹²

Control society is comprised of unified constellations that assimilate all singularities in the form of global integration. It is a potent capitalist apparatus that serves as a pretext to systemic and protean subjugation. In this machinery individuals or the “multitude,” to borrow a term from Hardt and Negri, are totalized into simulated entities and docile bodies with no reverence to their existential interiorities, moral integrities, and cultural differences. The new political economy furtively crafts reified competition, capacities, and production. Because more generalized labor and production commodification achieve supremacy, the seeming proliferation of opportunities is only a ploy for increased domination. This strategy is executed to creatively numb the critical or revolutionary consciousness of the people. After estranging their consciousness, it unremittingly modifies and mutates itself in different poles or zones by even fashioning redemptive options or possibilities for them, creating a vicious cycle of domination.¹³

¹²Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 326.

¹³Hardt and Negri are plausible in observing that Empire “appears in the form of a very high techmachine: it is virtual, built to control the marginal event, and organized to dominate and when necessary intervene in the breakdowns of the system (in line with the most advanced technologies of robotic production)” (ibid., 39).

In *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari characterize one of the three adversaries of Anti-Oedipus¹⁴ as the “poor technicians of desire—psychoanalysts and semiologists of every sign and symptom—who would subjugate the multiplicity of desire to the twofold law of structure and lack.”¹⁵ According to Deleuze and Guattari, these spin doctors of desire or the public strategists of capitalism contrive that any of its principles or policies be accepted as not only important but also necessary. These capitalist specialists take it for granted that human desire is to be interpreted as a “lack” within individuals that requires clinical attention. In the global arena, economic organizations like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB) and the World Trade Organization (WTO)—the major pillars of neoliberal capitalism, persuade underdeveloped and developing countries that their deficiency in different resources like financial stability, national and international security, or the latest educational reform requires immediate attention and solution. They convince these countries that the only way to solve their predicaments is through global cooperation in the form of liberalization, deregulation, and privatization.¹⁶ Such economic policies imposed/enacted across nations/regions would of course render the capitalist hegemony

¹⁴ Michel Foucault argues in the Preface of Gilles Deleuze’s and Felix Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, that “Anti-Oedipus” is an erotic art that is informed by the concepts of multiplicities, constellations, flows, and the analysis of desire in relation to the advanced capitalist society. More importantly, Foucault characterizes the aforementioned book/concept as an ethics of nonfascist living—an aesthetic of existence that radicalizes desire to become a revolutionary force that would antagonize all arborescent manifestation of State philosophy (cf. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, xii–xiii).

¹⁵ Ibid., xii.

¹⁶ Cf. Edberto Villegas, “Liberalism, Neoliberalism and the Rise of Consumerist Education,” in *Mula Tore Patungong Palengke: Neoliberal Education in the Philippines*, ed. Bienvenido Lumbea, Ramon Guillermo, and Arnold Alamon (Quezon City: IBON Foundation, 2007), 25.

even more invincible and easily enfeeble or nullify all grand and traditional attempts to overthrow it. That is to say, when efforts of resistance remain archaic or uninformed by the rapid currents and complexities of the contemporary period, all of these would simply end up being absorbed by the oppressive system itself or merely dissipate as futile struggles.

Against neoliberal capitalism, Deleuze and Guattari formulate the concept of “schizoanalysis”. It is a philosophical response to the failure of institutionalized psychoanalysis to infuse itself with reality’s material conditions. More importantly, it is a radical device that seeks the evisceration of “psychoanalytic capitalism” or the advanced type of capitalism that ingeniously imposes neurosis and regulates the preservation of its Oedipal relation to its victims. Instead of an asymmetrical relation employed by neoliberal capitalism upon its prey, the *Anti-Oedipus* project of Deleuze and Guattari advocates a differential participation and performance between the analyst and the analysand in the manifold domains of society. According to them:

Destroy, destroy. The task of schizoanalysis goes by way of destruction—a whole scouring of the unconscious, a complete curettage. Destroy Oedipus, the illusion of the ego, the puppet of the superego, guilt, the law, castration. It is not a matter of pious destructions, such as those performed by psychoanalysis under the benevolent neutral eye of the analyst. For these are Hegel-style destructions, ways of conserving. How is it that the celebrated neutrality, and what psychoanalysis calls—dares to call—the

disappearance or the dissolution of the Oedipus complex, do not make us burst into laughter?¹⁷

Under schizoanalysis, “lack” is interpreted as a bastion of affirmative forces beyond conventional valuations, “the song of castration, the lack-of-being-that-is-life; yes it is through castration/that we gain access/to Deeeeesire.”¹⁸ This event opens desire or desiring machines to the possibilities of becoming-revolutionary. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari argue that desire is revolutionary, “desire does not depend on lack, it’s not a lack of something, and it doesn’t refer to any Law. Desire produces.”¹⁹ In sociopolitical parlance, schizoanalysis is an action-theoretic critique against State power and capitalism’s deployment of its veiled subjugation of people’s bodies and repression of their desires. Deleuze and Guattari ask, “How does one introduce desire into thought . . . into action? How can and must desire deploy its forces within the political domain and grow more intense in the process of overturning the established order?”²⁰

Schizoanalysis seeks to liberate desire from the zone of totalization operating within the existing political representations of the capitalist system. Deleuze and Guattari believe that upon desire’s subjection to schizoanalysis, desire can become a radical politics that can instigate individuals to device variegated constellations and to become dynamic conduits of forces, rather than acquiescing to their own repressions.

¹⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 311.

¹⁸ Ibid., 312.

¹⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953–1974* (New York:Semiotext(e) Foreign Agents Series, 2004), 233.

²⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, xii.

The ASEAN Integration Project

As I argued earlier, when countries allow themselves to be manipulated by organizational technicians of desires like the IMF and WTO, they are considered as productive players in the world economy and epitomes of progress. The ASEAN integration project is the most recent expression of this neoliberal rubric in the Southeast Asian region.

In the year 1967 the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was formed by countries Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, and Thailand. As a regional organization, it aims to preserve peace and foster socioeconomic and cultural cooperation among the member countries. According to the *IBON International Policy Brief* document entitled, “ASEAN Community 2015: Integration for Whom?,” the underlying political and economic impetus that informs the ASEAN project is the prevention of the spread of Communism from China and other neighboring countries.²¹

Even though the member countries of the ASEAN are geographically adjacent to each other, the formative years of the organization was beleaguered by skepticism and different challenges especially in relation to divergences in economic status, low levels of integration, and continuous dependence on foreign direct investments from highly industrialized countries. Moreover, the region had been hounded by other socio-political issues such as the ostensibly irreconcilable coexistence of national sovereignty and

²¹ IBON International, “ASEAN Community 2015: Integration for Whom?,” IBON International Policy Brief in April 2015, 1, <http://iboninternational.org/resources/15/04/21/asean-community-2015-integration-whom>. Most of my explanation of the ASEAN phenomenon comes from this document.

regional cooperation, as well as between authoritarian societies, multiculturalism, and differences in human rights valuation.²²

These quandaries resulted in the formulation of the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) in 1992. AFTA transformed ASEAN into a “hub of free trade agreement (FTA) networks in East Asia, thus, taking the ‘driver’s seat’ in economic integration in the region.”²³ Furthermore, the ASEAN community maximizes the geo-economic potentials of the region. Western transnational corporations have extended and relocated their procurement, production, and sale processes across ASEAN countries by virtue of the cheap labor and rich natural resources that can be found in Southeast Asia and China.²⁴ With the advancement of information technology, the ASEAN region likewise assumed the position of being the center for outsourcing services such as the business process outsourcing (BPO) industry. At present, the *ASEAN Community 2015* seeks to assert its significance as a regional organization in the midst of global and regional economic contingencies in order to encourage more foreign investors by using its integrated market as leverage, as well as to guarantee its major role in shaping the different sectors of the whole region.

Three pillars serve as the backbone of the ASEAN Community: “(1) Political and security Community (APSC), (2) Economic Community (AEC), and (3) Socio-cultural community (ASCC).”²⁵ The first pillar is geared toward the promotion of order, stability, and democracy within the region especially in relation to matters

²² Cf. Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the World* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2004).

²³ IBON International, “ASEAN Community 2015: Integration for Whom?,” 2.

²⁴ Ibid., 2. The financial crisis during 1997 until 1998 really disabled the ASEAN community.

²⁵ Ibid., 3

concerning defense, law, and transnational crimes. The second seeks to facilitate the ASEAN members' economic integration, which includes the aspects of free trade, investment, and finance. The third focuses on the construction of a people-centric and socially responsible community involving the sectors of education, science and technology, as well as social welfare and development. However, the AEC overrides the others since it is directly related to the overall commitment of the ASEAN to deepen and broaden economic integration.

The AEC, as a very significant pillar of the ASEAN, further envisions the realization of four fundamental goals that are only achievable by virtue of "the liberalization of trade in goods, services, and investments: (a) a single market and production base, (b) a highly competitive region, (c) a region of equitable economic development, and (d) a region fully integrated into the global economy."²⁶ By virtue of this neoliberal capitalist pursuit, the ASEAN creates a single market and production base that would regulate the movement of goods, skilled labor, and professionals. The ASEAN further reinforces the homogenization of its member countries, which are characterized by different cultures, political systems, and others. Despite these professed goals, however, a unified voice is in fact impossible for the ASEAN community, considering that in its draft the ASEAN's charter did not include national consultations and the voices of people at the grassroots. Therefore, undemocratic tendencies and practices constantly hound regional integration.

²⁶ Ibid., 5.

The ASEAN's positive accomplishments throughout the years, most especially its enduring effort to alleviate poverty and achieve inclusive sustainable growth within the region, are indisputably commendable. But as long as it continuously adheres to the neoliberal paradigm of development, perennial problems of its member countries would recur incessantly or be exacerbated.²⁷

The AEC's totalization of labor and human capital is noticeably reflected in the present condition of Philippine education. Although the ASEAN aspires to be compared to the European Union, the ASEAN must not be oblivious to the idea that some of its member states are still captives, in one way or another, by their colonial past, thereby making independence a crucial issue. Despite its understated Western and unitarian configurations, many of the ASEAN member countries are previous colonies and are still socioeconomic dependents of big powers like the US and Japan. In contrast, the member-countries of the EU are able to muster their politico-economic resources in order to establish a better collective position *contra* the economic supremacy of the US and Japan.²⁸ The EU, consisting of twenty-eight nation states, has its own institutions, policy agenda, and a certain level of autonomy from its component nations, in the same manner that the member nations can amend existing policies without jeopardizing its sovereignty.²⁹

²⁷ Cf. Sonny Africa, "U.S. Imperialism in Southeast Asia and ASEAN," *Institute for Political Economy Journal* (December 2006), http://politicaleconomy.info/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=13&Itemid=26.

²⁸ IBON International Policy Brief, "ASEAN Community 2015: Integration for Whom?," 6.

²⁹ Andrew Geddes, *The European Union and British Politics* (Hampshire: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2004), 56.

Commodification of Education and the Filipino Mind

Neoliberal capitalism's creative and efficient permeation in the various aspects of contemporary life allows it to be equated with socioeconomic growth. In the eyes of the economist Edberto Villegas, the binary opposites of "strong and weak states" were exaggerated by capitalist-funded institutions and initiatives to maneuver universities, especially those of the Third World, to the economic programs of the transnational corporations, which would translate to further market expansion.³⁰

As argued earlier, the IMF, WB, and WTO have popularized the global call for liberalization, deregulation, and privatization as advantageous especially to countries struggling for comprehensive development and competitiveness in the international arena. Upon the approval of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) in 1995, transnational corporations discovered that the education sector could serve as an enduringly profitable enterprise.³¹ The global platform for rationalized privatization and deregulation diminished government subsidies particularly to public higher education.³²

The university has been infiltrated by neoliberal capitalism. Transnational corporations' enormous resources enable them to effortlessly fund researches and create scholarship foundations geared toward the further solidification of these corporations. These

³⁰ Cf. Villegas, "Liberalism, Neoliberalism and the Rise of Consumerist Education," 23.

³¹ Ibid., 25. In the said article Villegas accentuates that the transnational corporations under the tutelage of the GATS have engendered enormous financial havoc to Asia, Russia and Latin America from 1997 to 2007 by virtue of its global retail system.

³² The World Bank is very agile in supporting the project of the Global Alliance for Transnational Education (GATE) in pressuring governments to push for the privatization of state universities or to increase the tuition fees which would slowly liberate governments from educational subsidies.

economic interests are aestheticized by the façade of academic infrastructure of promotion and faculty development. And disturbingly, many university officials are incognizant of this ploy even as they remain impoverished chess pawns of neoliberal capitalism.

For Deleuze, the death of modern social spaces (hospitals, workplaces, schools, and others) in the era of the control society gives birth to a “new boss” called the corporation.³³ All social institutions are no longer deemed as independent social apparatuses because they converge at a nebulous seat of control—the corporation. In his words, “Just as businesses are replacing factories, *school* is being replaced by *continuing education* and exams by continuous assessment. It’s the surest way of turning education into a business.”³⁴ In fact, the emergence of the corporation does not simply supersede the government as the arbiter of power and control. Rather, the current scenario depicts the merging of the corporation and the government until one becomes indistinguishable from the other.

From previously being a site for social critique and emancipatory instruction, the university has dramatically metamorphosed into a subsector of the economy. Its structure is systemically permeated by the principle of capital, and services are conditioned by purely commodified causes. For example, many of the Philippine universities are already partly or wholly owned by the big corporations, for instance, the National University by Henry Sy, and, most recently, the University of Nueva Caceres by the Ayala group. Likewise, curricula of universities and vocational courses are

³³ Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 174.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 178.

corporatized to cater to the needs of the market and to produce docile rank-and-file laborers. The arts, humanities, and social science courses are merged or phased out because these can foster creative and critical thinking or dissent against the status quo. In turn, STEM-related courses are prioritized and increased. Since scientific researches in the academe can benefit corporations like those involving high-breed crops that would utilize fertilizers and resources produced by capitalist firms, there exists an exaggerated promotion of the natural sciences and an attendant neglect of the former disciplines.³⁵ In the eyes of Villegas, the privileging of the sciences is the reason more funding is extended to schools needed by TNCs: schools of engineering in Third World universities supply the workers for global corporations. So-called techno-parks are built in campuses—as is the case with the University of the Philippines—where private firms would have first access to good graduates and could sell their products to school authorities.³⁶

A component of the ASEAN integration is the Commission on Higher Education's implementation of the Memorandum Order no. 20, known as the "K to 12" Educational Program. This program is mandated through the Republic Act 10533 (The Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013) enacted on 15 May 2013. In the newly formulated and enhanced educational program, a student is required to undergo kindergarten, six years of elementary education, four years of junior high school, and two years of senior high school. In the academic year 2016–2017, the nationwide implementation of the K to 12 Program will begin with the institution of the Grade 11 curriculum.

³⁵ Villegas, "Liberalism, Neoliberalism and the Rise of Consumerist Education," 24.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

The goal of the K to 12 Program is to develop a holistic twenty-first-century Filipino who can respond to the challenges of the global village. Its adherents resemble what Deleuze and Guattari call the poor technicians of desire who diagnose the country's educational problems in terms of a "lack"—a symptom that must be remedied immediately. They proclaim the narrative that our educational system is lagging behind other ASEAN nations, which is why the K to 12 Program is an urgent necessity. According to them, the ten-year educational cycle is insufficient by virtue of its congested curriculum and deficit in the fundamental skills and maturity for employment that it provides its high school graduates. The additional two years of the secondary education are said to prepare students for vocational jobs such as food processing, dressmaking, welding, and the like. Just recently CHED Commissioner, Dr. Patricia Licuanan, admitted that not all students should go to the tertiary level: "We don't think that every student should go to college. There are very good programs in the technical and vocational areas or in the area of middle-level skills, and you get jobs when you finish these programs. That option of going into technical-vocational and middle-level jobs is attractive, but in our culture, we have that notion that everyone should get a college diploma. I don't think that's necessary."³⁷ However, although this technico-vocational scheme is promptly rewarding and economically promising especially for poor Filipinos, it could vitiate or decimate genuine educational reform, comprehensive curriculum instruction, and critical pedagogy and prepare students to become mere technocrats or servants-in-the-making.

³⁷ John Paolo Bencito, "CHED: College not for Everyone," <http://www.manilastandardtoday.com>.

In the domain of faculty development, the threat of massive retrenchment and displacement, starting school year 2016–2017, awaits the nonpermanent teachers and staff in higher education. In fact, as early as 2014, various colleges and universities, like the University of Santo Tomas, Adamson University, and St. Scholastica's College, have already informed their faculty about this matter.³⁸ According to Rene Tadle, former vice president for external affairs of UST and one of the active officers of the Council of Teachers and Staff of Colleges and Universities, around 15,000 faculty members and 11,000 personnel will be affected either by retrenchment, redundancy, or early retirement next year.³⁹

Meanwhile, Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Labor Relations Officer Atty. Benjo Benavidez said no school is allowed to remove employees in lieu of anticipatory loss as it would be in violation of Article 283 of the Labor Code.⁴⁰ Additionally, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Department of Education (DEPED), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and the DOLE are proposing the allocation of a P29-billion fund as a stabilization aid for those faculty members and staff who will be affected.⁴¹ From another sector, the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) urges school authorities to likewise value the law of charity, and not the labor law

³⁸ "Thousands of Professors Expected to Lose Jobs with K-12 Implementation," *GMA News Online*, June 13, 2014, <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/365460/news/nation/thousands-of-professors-expected-to-lose-jobs-with-k-12-implementation>.

³⁹ Jee Y. Geronimo, "College Professors Fear Massive Retrenchment Due to K to 12," *Rappler*, June 12, 2014, <http://www.rappler.com/nation/60428-college-professors-fear-massive-retrenchment-k12>.

⁴⁰ In San Beda College, an estimated 30 percent of the faculty will be affected. In Miriam College, an early separation program was already implemented last May 2015.

⁴¹ *The Varsitarian*, "P29B Fund for Schools, Teachers Affected by K to 12 Proposed," June 25, 2014, http://varsitarian.net/news/20140625/p29b_fund_for_schools_teachers_affected_by_k_to_12_proposed.

alone. Unfortunately, despite this transitional fund promise of CHED, DEPED, TESDA, and DOLE, and CBCP's magnanimous call for charity, as of the moment, all of these things remain as abstract realities. In UST, for example, all contractual and fixed-term faculty have become docile receivers of the reverberating news of their retrenchment this coming 2016. While some colleges have already started ranking their permanent faculty to distinguish those who will remain in the tertiary level from those who will teach in the senior high school, the contractually employed teachers become mere collateral damage of the issue.⁴²

Furthermore, the internal landscape of the university has become severely transformed into a prototypical corporate workplace. Interpersonal relations are reduced to thing-like relations. For instance, there is a growing obsession among faculty members regarding international publications. *Prima facie*, there is nothing intrinsically wrong with this practice. What makes it problematic is that some people even pay fees charged by journal bodies in order for their articles to be published. Sadly, this practice is performed merely for the sake of rank promotions or out of purely economic reasons. The desire to be read by the local academic community, the goal to push the frontiers of knowledge, and to create the building blocks of qualitative societal change are besieged by the capitalist project of commodifying the research culture and, perhaps, the whole educational system.

⁴² Of course, I understand that this will always be a university prerogative, especially since the Collective bargaining Agreement (CBA) between the UST Union and Administration primarily protects the tenured or permanent faculty. But I hope that Philippine schools would not just neglect those faculty members with doctoral degrees, prolific research outputs, excellent evaluations, and those who teach by their blood.

Becoming-Revolutionary in Education: Rhizomatic Thinking and Critical Pedagogy

Schizoanalysis starts with the struggles, breakdowns, and breakthroughs of the schizo, and not with the neurosis and castration of the naive patient in the psychoanalyst's couch.⁴³ By virtue of this complex task, schizoanalysis immanently traverses all the terrains of society which are already Oedipalized, such as the family, the school, and individuals. This radical philosophy seeks to penetrate these segmentarized zones and proximities to look for the unscathed deterritorialized constellations of desire or the "flows that have not been reduced to the Oedipal codes and neuroticized territorialities, the desiring-machines that escape such codes as lines of escape leading elsewhere."⁴⁴

Education is a perennial handmaiden of the state. In other words, it has always been a mouthpiece of the state's Oedipalized power. On the other hand, the entire *Anti-Oedipus* project is anti-State. It is primarily against the societal domination and psychic repression of the arboreal or hierarchical frontiers of State philosophy.⁴⁵ For Deleuze and Guattari, schizoanalysis is an antagonism against all expressions of reductive psychoanalytic and political analyses that remain hostages of totality and unity, and a movement toward the emancipation of the multiplicity of desire from its Oedipal

⁴³ Cf. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, xii.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ For Deleuze and Guattari, "state philosophy" refers to representationalist or identitarian thinking that serves as the foundation of Western metaphysics since the time of Plato. According to them, state philosophy "reposes on a double identity: of the thinking subject, and of the concepts it creates and to which it lends its own presumed attributes of sameness and constancy. The subject, its concepts, and the objects in the world to which the concepts are applied have a shared, internal essence: the self-resemblance at the basis of identity" (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, xi).

incarceration.⁴⁶ More importantly, *Anti-Oedipus* is a political art that problematizes how people's desire cunningly manipulated by the state can be radicalized to foster revolutionary action. In this article the school is deemed the site of schizoanalytic struggle.

Schizoanalytic education resembles Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy of the rhizome. They principally conceptualize the rhizome to refer to the non-arboreal connections and proximities existing between diverse and similar things, forces, and people. According to them, the rhizome "operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots. Unlike the graphic arts, drawing or photography, unlike tracings, the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectible, reversible, modifiable and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight."⁴⁷ This multiplicity of relations is not reduced to anthropomorphic entities alone, but involves an assemblage of all life-forces, of anything and anybody like art, politics, ecology and nature, and others, in a non-hierarchical or non-bureaucratic manner. In the educational context, the rhizome can refer to the fluid relation between the school and indigenous community; the teacher, table, curriculum, and the student; the lecturer, university, and globalization; and the contractual faculty, K to 12 Program, and the ASEAN Integration.

Rhizomatic education's learning process is incomparable to a tablet of ideas that is assimilated through memorization and contemplative thinking that is easily forgotten as soon as the students leave the classroom. In fact, learning can be rhizomatic

⁴⁶ Ibid., xx.

⁴⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 21.

when it is not segmented and standardized. It involves variegated *aufhebung*, to use a Hegelian terminology, in its lengthy process of becoming. Learning is a loving struggle with life—a becoming-other, -animal, -woman, -imperceptible.⁴⁸ From the viewpoint of the learner, rhizomatic education adopts the idea that not all learners are offspring of similar cultural contexts. Therefore, teachers and academic officials must understand that students (especially in an archipelago like the Philippines), have varying concerns, limitations, and horizons. Despite my general reservations about the K to 12 Educational Program, its proposed vernacular pedagogical methodology is pregnant with this rhizomatic potentiality. According to the plan, the Mother Tongue-based Multi-Lingual Education (MTB-MLE) will be utilized from kindergarten until the third grade. Mother tongue languages used as media of instruction, such as Tagalog, Kapampangan, Waray, and Chabacano, will help young students comprehend the lessons better because of their cultural rootedness. When the Tagalog or English language becomes a *one-size-fits-all* medium of instruction in the whole country, a Talaandig student from Bukidnon, for example, would surely have a grueling experience comprehending the lessons, since neither of the two languages is a cultural equivalent of his/her ethnic life-world. Imposing such an educational practice is tantamount to continentalizing the Philippine archipelago. In contrast, the MTB-MLE scheme aims to instill a democratized knowledge and regard

⁴⁸ In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari define rhizomatic becoming as “becoming-animal is only one becoming among others. A kind of order or apparent progression can be established for the segments of becoming in which we find ourselves; becoming-woman, becoming-child; becoming-animal, -vegetable, or -mineral; becomings-molecular of all kinds, becomings-particles” (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 272). In the same book, they argue that rhizome connotes becoming-imperceptible, “on the plane of consistency, which is nevertheless precisely where the imperceptible is seen and heard. It is the Planomenon, or the Rhizosphere” (Ibid., 252).

between indigenous awareness and nationalism to the Filipino students. Nevertheless, the fact remains that this rhizomatic potential is a constituent of the totalizing neoliberal orientation of the K to 12 Program and the ASEAN integration that serves as its impetus and backdrop. For this reason, we must always be on guard against its representationalist propensity as well as its tendency to be creatively co-opted by neoliberal capitalism, if we are to preserve/realize the emancipatory potential of rhizomatic practices.

At this point, it is essential to delineate that rhizomatic philosophy is not merely concerned with perpetual transfiguration, polysemy, and fluidity. In *Empire*, Hardt and Negri explain:

Difference, hybridity, and mobility are not liberatory in themselves, but neither are truth, purity and stasis. The real revolutionary practice refers to the level of production. Truth will not make us free, but taking control of the production of truth will. Mobility and hybridity are not liberatory, but taking control of the production of mobility and stasis, purities and mixture is. The real truth commissions of Empire will be constituent assemblies of the multitude, social factories for the production of truth.⁴⁹

Rhizome as multiplicity or rhizomatic education is likewise concerned with the production of new knowledge and perspectives created when tensions or reconciliations arise between initially dissenting opinions (traditional, innovative, and radical) between the teachers, students, officials, parents, and the community. The social

⁴⁹ Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 156.

spaces occupied by this assemblage resemble what Hardt and Negri describe as the constituent assemblies of the multitude—the geopolitical factories of truth. Take the case when teachers concretize, examine, and criticize their lectures, let's say on the theory of justice, in relation to the various societal spaces and events outside the school. A rhizomatic approach would analyze manifold power-relations that influence the behavior of each individual from the teaching and learning standpoints.⁵⁰ Jane Grellier, in the article, “Rhizomatic Mapping: Spaces for Learning in Higher Education,” suggests that rhizomatic analysis has the capacity to “disrupt power structures, to include the voices of the previously unheard and to open analyses in messy, incomplete ways”.⁵¹ One of the radical possibilities of these two aforementioned scenarios is that the teacher might be able to rupture the state's regulative hand over school practices like curriculum construction, the teaching pedagogy, and the treatment of teachers, and expose the capitalistic configurations that hinder students from cultivating their critical thinking and revolutionary impulse. This realization would prompt them to device novel and alternative strategies of teaching and learning. They must devise innovative technologies to democratize and radicalize education in the country. The “Kariton Classroom” of Efren Peñaflorida, and the tireless initiatives of nongovernmental organizations like the Child Hope Philippines, the alternative education provided by RockEd Philippines, and the Synergeia are

⁵⁰ Cf. Loraine McKay et al., “Becoming an Inclusive Educator: Applying Deleuze & Guattari to Teacher Education,” *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 39, no. 3 (2014): 181, <http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2014v39n3.10>.

⁵¹ Jane Grellier, “Rhizomatic Mapping: Spaces for Learning in Higher Education,” *Higher Education Research and Development* 32, no. 1, (2013): 83, in <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2012.750280>>.

some remarkable instances of educational innovation. The late Department of Local and Interior Government (DILG) Secretary Jesse M. Robredo was one of the primary mentors of Synergeia, an assemblage of individuals and organizations working to improve the quality of basic education in a nonconventional way. Like a rhizome, he daringly revolutionized the arborescent education system by introducing a ‘bottom-up, transparent and participatory’ philosophy.⁵²

In the aspect of the curriculum, rhizomatic education does not operate based on the predetermined *telos* fashioned and imposed by education authorities upon the academic community. A pre-configured educational landscape is actualized when the ASEAN integration experts think that the curriculum must be designed to meet the needs of the market industry—that the students must be educated and trained as technocrats or future laborers. But a rhizomatic education is not an activity that is patterned from a given model or based on the preconfigured interests of some privileged entity, be it an individual or a corporation. For Deleuze and Guattari,

The various forms of education or ‘normalization’ imposed upon an individual consist in making him/her change points of subjectification, always moving towards a higher, nobler one in closer conformity with

⁵² Jesse Robredo radicalized the mindset, processes and values in the way public education is delivered in the Philippines. “He emphasized the importance of measuring performance so that schools and public officials can be accountable to the people. He ‘Reinvented Local School Boards,’ expanded their functions, and broadened their membership. He believed that people should be consulted on how budget should be spent. He exacted efficiency and honesty in public spending. He held school summits shocking parents on the poor learning performance of children. At the same time, he challenged them to work with him in providing them with the best education” (“Jesse Robredo’s Governance in Education,” *Synergeia*, August 16, 2014, <http://www.synergeia.org.ph/>).

the supposed ideal. Then from the point of subjectification issues a subject of enunciation, as a function of a mental reality determined by that point. Then from the subject of enunciation issues a subject of the statement, in other words, a subject bound to statements in conformity with a dominant reality.⁵³

This claim finds its more concrete voice in David Cormier's article entitled, "Rhizomatic Education: Community as Curriculum," where he argues that "this community acts as the curriculum, spontaneously shaping, constructing, and reconstructing itself and the subject of its learning in the same way that the rhizome responds to changing environmental conditions."⁵⁴ As the community becomes the curriculum, a rhizomatic curriculum is created and negotiated in a live manner by all the individuals involved in the learning process.⁵⁵ The hierarchical relation between the authorities and the teachers and students are ruptured to give way to an assemblage of factors, thereby making the community itself the curriculum. And as the curriculum is being configured by a collectivity whose parts are in constant entwining, it undergoes incessant transformations and adjustments according to different cultural, environmental, and geographic conditions. If we were to extend this rhizomatic potential in the arena of research, then it would become more collaborative, interdisciplinary and intercultural, which is only possible with the help of the protean channels of mass media and technology.

⁵³ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 21.

⁵⁴ Dave Cormier, "Rhizomatic Education: Community as Curriculum," in *Innovate: Journal of Online Education* 4, no. 5 (June/July 2008), <http://davecormier.com/edb/2008/06/03/rhizomatic-education-community-as-curriculum>.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Still on the curriculum, I commend the inclusion of the liberal arts or the humanities, education, social sciences (HESS) strand in the K to 12 Program. Subjects such as “Trends, Networks, and Critical Thinking in the 21st Century,” “Philippine Politics and Governance” and “Community Engagement, Solidarity, and Citizenship,” give us emancipatory hope against the imperializing tentacles of neoliberal capitalism, because these subject courses contain the existential and differential seeds of a possible comprehensive diagnosis and radicalization of neoliberal-capitalist education.⁵⁶ In other words, immanent in the K to 12 Program are qualitative and revolutionary potentialities that can engender its perpetual self-criticism and resistance against the very system that constructs it.

Conclusion

We must be reminded that Marx’s critique of alienated labor does not espouse the utter eradication of labor, since it is in this very process that we transform ourselves and the world. He simply suggests the abolition of labor that dehumanizes us. Analogously, we must look at the ASEAN this way. We must democratically and dynamically work for an ASEAN that considers individual debilities that are not merely offspring of poverty in education, healthcare, and employment. It must learn to acknowledge that other members are victims of colonization, of an imperialist structure that converts them into objects of various modes of oppression by powerful countries. In other words, the ASEAN must affirm difference.

⁵⁶ However, the critical propensities of these subjects would simply vanish when they are taught by incompetent and one-dimensional teachers. This is a sad reality in the humanities life-world.

Specifically, the economic pillar of the ASEAN Community must not override the other pillars. Each pillar must maintain a democratized relation to the others. If the overarching goal of the ASEAN Integration's educational scheme really aspires for the holistic or revolutionary transformation of the entire region, then the scheme must assume the form of a cultural revolution. Revolutionizing the ASEAN involves the differential mutation of its people, their ways of life and creative potentialities. Even though it was written during the sixties, Renato Constantino's observation still reverberates in our present time:

It is a fallacy to think that educational goals should be the same everywhere and that therefore what goes into the making of a well-educated American is the same as what should go into the making of a well-educated Filipino. This would be true only if the two societies were at the same political, cultural and economic level and had the same political, cultural and economic goals. But what happened in this country? Not only do we imitate Western education, we have patterned our education after the most technologically advanced western nations. The gap between the two societies is very large. In fact, the two are entirely different societies with different goals.⁵⁷

Let me be clear that I am neither antiprogress nor antiglobalization. What I reject are the totalizing aspects of the ASEAN Integration and its estrangement of the Filipino mind.

⁵⁷ Renato Constantino, "The Miseducation of the Filipino," <http://nonlinearhistorynut.files.wordpress.com/2010/02/miseducation-of-a-filipino.pdf>, 8.

Philippine education must epitomize Deleuze's philosophy of becoming-revolutionary. This educational philosophy espouses incessant self-critique and transformation. It does not repudiate innovation, unlike the "political ascetics, the sad militants, the terrorists of theory . . . who would preserve the pure order of politics and political discourse."⁵⁸ Similarly, I am not arguing that we must refrain from imagining higher causes for our educational system and from instigating changes to alleviate the poverty of education in the Philippines. Of course, *being global* is not tantamount to *being an embodiment of progress*. My point is that instead of blindly and rapidly railroading ourselves into the educational paradigm offered or imposed upon us by western neoliberalism and the ASEAN, we must first address the basic issues confronting our educational system. As CHED Commissioner Cynthia Bautista has said in an interview with *Rappler*: "In a landscape where other ASEAN countries already have big dreams for their higher education sector—Malaysia, for example, wants to become an education hub in the region . . . the Philippines has to first focus on implementing reforms that are long overdue."⁵⁹ Unless these problems are solved and are comprehended profoundly, then all the efforts and resources that we will utilize would only be fruitless initiatives or end up compounding the existing injustices and instabilities besetting our educational system. More importantly, Western neoliberal societies would increasingly tarnish our integrity and perceive us as nothing but suppliers of cheap labor and natural resources.

⁵⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, xli.

⁵⁹ Jee Geronimo, "School Rankings in ASEAN: A 'perception game' for Ph," *Rappler*, July 19, 2015, <http://www.rappler.com/world/specials/southeast-asia/98408-school-rankings-asean-perception-game-philippines>.

Despite my immanent critique of neoliberal capitalism, the ASEAN Integration, and commodified education, I am neither against the desire of Philippine universities to catch up with the universities of Singapore and Malaysia nor to the K to 12 Program in its entirety.⁶⁰ I am not categorically against the goals of ASEAN Integration project. What I am against is the manipulation and estrangement of the Filipino minds and bodies, its underlying neoliberal-capitalist principle that despises difference and benevolent relations, as well as the totalizing process of its implementation.

Deleuzian education is neither purely nationalist nor globalized, but is “always in the middle, between things.”⁶¹ Education of this kind is a creative hybrid of our nationalist and indigenous cultures and the global sphere.⁶² It likewise upholds a parallelism between the humanities and the sciences and between reflection, sounds, images, affects, text, and calculation. It seeks to produce not only skilled Filipino laborers, but high-spirited and critical individuals who would not succumb to the neoliberal capitalist machine and would immanently diagnose the system.

Likewise, we need an education characterized by kaleidoscopic perspectives, with no fixed positions or underlying unitarian structures, but only assemblages of affects and forces. As argued earlier, the structural and totalitarian hierarchy existing in all relations is what schizoanalysis tries to eradicate. For instance,

⁶⁰ Although I am only a fixed-term or contractual faculty at present in the University of Santo Tomas (which means that my teaching stint will end in 2016), I do not utterly oppose the goal of Philippine universities to imagine higher causes.

⁶¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 24.

⁶² From the perspective of the eighteenth-century philosopher Edmund Burke, antagonism against neoliberal capitalist violence in the ASEAN region can be based on culture, tradition, and religion. For him, the more people are detached from their life-world and estranged by intemperate individualism, the more they become docile prey to capitalist manipulation.

although the K to 12 Educational Program was meticulously deliberated by the DepEd and CHED intellectuals, it cannot be denied that it was configured in conformity to the demands of neoliberal capitalism. Schizoanalyzing this overbearing process would then obliterate any form of hierarchical relations between the school authorities and the society. It would cultivate a space where even the students, teachers, staff, parents, and communities of different ethnicities would play active roles in the planning, implementation, and continuous reformulation of the said program.

Although schizoanalytic or rhizomatic education is characterized by difference, hybridity, and dynamism, its revolutionary goal is to fashion a collective antagonism against the identitarian power relations not only in the educational sector, but also in the society at large. Specifically, it seeks to promote a novel kind of human relations which harnesses the individuals' most radical and fundamental experiences of alienation or oppression toward revolutionary action.⁶³

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⁶³Ibid., x.

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