

## Rethinking Arts Appreciation through Jacques Ranciere's Critical Aesthetics

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is twofold. First, it attempts to elucidate the conceptual junctions between philosophical aesthetics and politics to appropriate the former in the discussion about the cultural and socio-political realities of a society. Second, it seeks to integrate, especially in the Arts and Appreciation subject, the critical and emancipatory potential of aesthetics in order to transform and make it relevant to society. Using Jacques Ranciere's critical aesthetics as hermeneutical lens, I argue in this paper that if Philosophy were to continue to make itself relevant in the Philippine setting it has to permeate into the General Core subject which every Filipino college student has to take. The Art Appreciation subject, in particular, must be infused with a reconfigured understanding of aesthetics in order to depart from the traditional Humanities subject. To avoid repeating the latter under a different name, the descriptions, aims, and contents of Art Appreciation must be recalibrated by grounding it on critical aesthetics that consequently allows it to explore its subtle connection to politics, which will, in turn, provide a fertile ground for analyses and discussions, which can potentially help diagnose and raise consciousness into the socio-cultural and political issues faced by society.

Keywords: *Critical Aesthetics, Arts Appreciation, Distribution of the Sensible, Political Aesthetics*

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## INTRODUCTION

*Quo vadis Filosofia?* As Philosophy struggles to find its rightful place in the new developments of our education system, the challenge to keep the discipline of philosophizing in the academe becomes a daunting task. However, the changes brought about by the implementation of this new academic curriculum, especially its emphasis on multi-disciplinarity, provide a window of opportunity to still make the contributions of Philosophy readily available to the revised General Education subjects, especially in the field of Arts Appreciation.

However, the inclusion of philosophical perspectives, especially in Arts Appreciation subject, seem to be confined to theories and concepts of arts that have no relevance in the public sphere. The choice of topics also on philosophical perspectives such as Plato's mimesis and Aristotle's view of art as representational appear to be just a mere addendum to complete the course outline but does not possess the critical potential to contribute to making society better for everyone. It is plaintive considering that the Arts Appreciation subject can be a powerful medium for societal transformation.

This is not, however, surprising considering the skepticism concerning the link between aesthetics and politics. One can ask incisive questions such as "what does art have to do with issues that are highly social and political in nature?" "How can art be of help when a society experiences deep political conflicts?" "What can art do to address socio-political conflicts, war, and poverty?" "Is it not ridiculous to indulge in art when perhaps what a society practically needs are just social institutions with just public policies?" The merits of art and theories of art seem to become irrelevant in the domain of politics. Aesthetics, on this ground, is not designed to explain, much less solve, political problems and conflicts.

Aesthetics, despite its seeming disconnectedness from the concrete issues that are political in nature, possess a critical potential to offer alternative insights. Such is a type of reflective understanding that emerges not from systematically applying the technical skills of analysis that prevail in the Social Sciences, but from cultivating a more open-ended level of sensibility about the political (Bleiker, 2009, 2).

Using Jacques Ranciere's critical aesthetics as hermeneutical lens, the paper argues that the Arts and Appreciation subject in college must be infused with the critical and emancipatory potential of aesthetics to transform and make it relevant to society. Philosophy can help in infusing a critical perspective into Arts Appreciation subject so that it goes beyond mere appreciation, and becomes politically and socially transformative in the process.

The paper is structured into four parts. The first part will discuss Jacques Ranciere's view on the conjunction between politics and aesthetics. The second part will dwell on the connection between art and language. The third part is the critical

application of Ranciere's views on the Arts Appreciation subject and how it fills in the normative and the critical deficit of the subject. The fourth part will offer a brief conclusion.

### **Ranciere and the Aesthetic Engagement in Politics**

It may be well to note that critical theorists and thinkers such as Jacques Ranciere attempted to bridge the gap between aesthetics and politics. Ranciere operates on a basic premise that there is an inherent aesthetic dimension in politics and the necessary junction between the two is what he called the "distribution of the sensible." He takes a step back, so to speak, and points to a rather primordial connection between the arts and politics. The distribution of the sensible, notes Ranciere, is the "system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it" (Ranciere, 2004, 12).

Unlike the usual knowledge that Aesthetics functions *after* certain epistemic assumptions are set to work, it already is actually at work even prior to any given society's common experience. Better yet, it allows the conditions for the possibility of a common experience. In other words, it is this something in common that makes a community possible. It does not only refer to an attribute that the members of society possess in common but a collective experience that has led to the establishment of the community. Moreover, the distribution of the sensible is the system of divisions that assigns parts, supplies meanings, and defines the relationships between things in the common world. One such part belongs to art, with the larger distribution prescribing how the arts relate to other ways of doing and making. As such, the distribution of the sensible defines the nature of art, along with what it is capable of (Tanke, 2011, 75). Hence, the distribution of the sensible, which stands between Aesthetics and Politics, is that which preconditions human perception, which in turn makes things visible, audible, and available to the senses.

These grounds, however, that the members of a society share as a common heritage are not without contradictions and disparities. Even in a democratic society, certain elements are vulnerable to different modes of misrecognition. Though in principle, the "voice of the people" takes primacy over the voice of a few ruling classes, it cannot insulate itself from the logic of inclusion-exclusion. Certain members and groups always fall prey to the manipulations at work in the socio-political arena. With this as a background, Ranciere reconfigures the nature of Aesthetics, which, as mentioned above, determines how human sensibilities perceive objects and self-evident facts.



More often than not, political struggles occur when those deemed unrecognized, marginalized - the 'part which has no part' - in the society takes a legitimate action to get their voices heard and establish a sense of identity. The task of political action, therefore, is aesthetic in that it requires a reconfiguration of the conditions of sense perception so that the reigning configuration between perception and meaning is disrupted by those elements, groups, or individuals in society that demand not only to exist but indeed to be perceived (ibid. 96). The concern of the minority seeking recognition is legitimized by a more primordial assumed nature of human beings, that is, equality. Ranciere firmly believes in a radical understanding of equality among humans. This equality is not rooted in the pursuit of a consensual agreement over disputing interests but in the contest over the perceptual preconditions that make the noise coming out of one's mouth an utterance rather than a "gutterance", speech rather than noise, language rather than blabber (ibid. 102).

Hence, unlike Benjamin, Adorno (and even Lukacs), who hold the idea that art must serve the intentions of the masses, which, in hindsight, implies that art, in itself, is like an empty can, neutral and malleable, Ranciere, on the other hand, brings the discussion a few steps back by positing the idea that the inherent aesthetic nature of politics rests on the dissent of the non-recognized members of the society whose legitimate project of emancipation stems from a presupposed egalitarian distribution of the sensible.

### **Art and Language**

One of the reasons why the aforementioned Philosophers believe in the emancipatory power of Art is the operating epistemic assumption that Art communicates; and as such, it makes use of a special language to convey meaning, put forward implicit questions, and even challenge the status quo. Though it is already commonplace to find artworks that aim for social awareness, and ultimately for social emancipation, these however are not without criticisms. As mentioned in the introduction, even among practicing artists, the idea of politicizing art may destroy its creative independence when it becomes merely a tool for political propaganda.

However, can we not call an Art that which is creatively made to influence Peace and Patriotism? Can we not call an Art that which rouses courage, love, and brotherhood? Should one be always critical towards the internal and oftentimes inconspicuous intentions of the Artist in order to evaluate whether a piece can be rightly deemed as a work of art or simply propaganda disguised in a melody, prose, or a film? These questions are not new in the domain of Aesthetics and most theories arrive at a deadlock as to what should be the primary role of the Arts. My goal, however, is not to add to the heap of answers to the aforementioned questions

but to focus instead on the fundamental idea that any artistic output communicates.

There is no question that Art signifies reality. It employs a special language; better yet, Art is language. A song, painting, poem, film, and photo aim at representing something that possesses an objective reality. Many artworks seem to denote purely abstract, imaginative, and fictional characters, yet the fact remains that their basis, no matter how unnoticeable and esoteric, comes from a reality, which possesses an ontological character. Artworks that employ human verbal/written language are by all means communicative in nature. However, what about those whose medium does not make use of everyday language? This may be illustrated in non-lyrical music. This area in the Philosophy of Music has always been a point of contention among philosophers, musicologists, and theorists. However, the nature of aesthetic discussions and disagreements about music indicates that we accept that music is the bearer of meaning or sense and that it is this meaning or sense the listener comprehends when she is said to understand a musical work (Davies, 2003, 121). In other words, the meaning or sense of a certain piece of non-lyrical music lies in whatever that the listener grasps. In this vein, we can infer that whatever captures the listeners aesthetically in music is the meaning of such. In other words, the “sense” that is perceived from a particular piece of music does not owe its source from the intentions of the composer.

Citing an example can further elucidate this point. If one listens to Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro*, it is futile to ask about the original intentions of Mozart while composing the piece. One (even the untrained) simply has to listen to it in order to conclude that such musical opus “makes sense.” But to articulate what is being understood from a musical piece is not as easy as answering a multiple-choice question. If one were asked what he/she understood from a piano concert, cerebral answers do not always come out right, for two reasons: first, what is perceived is not something whose nature is linguistic; and second, natural language would fail in fully describing what is understood.

This phenomenon has been the subject of long discussions and disputes among philosophical pundits. The meaning of certain music is as elusive as a succession of notes. Articulating the meaning of music is like catching water by hand: one knows that it is nearly impossible, while also knowing that his hand is wet in the process. It goes the same way in music. It may be difficult to express it in detail, but one knows that “it’s there.” Nevertheless, this difficulty in expressing the listener’s understanding of certain music - hence its meaning - is not an excuse to dismiss it immediately.

Instrumental music, such as the works of the classical western composers, mostly consists of several elements, namely: sound, duration, pitch, dynamics, tone color, rhythm, melody, harmony, key, texture, form, and themes. The combination of all these elements based on a particular piece of music results in a “finished



product” or simply a complete musical output. Since these elements, taken as a single unit, are the only constituents audibly perceived in music, it is these elements, therefore, that constitute the language of non-lyrical music. In other words, music conveys a non-natural language whose meaning is not as easily noticeable and intelligible as the natural human language that has propositional functions.

Such is also true when it comes to Visual Arts. Paintings, sculptures, and installation art make use of ordinary symbols to convey complex meanings. Consider as an example, Pablo Picasso’s *Guernica*. The disturbing images of people and animals in cube-like forms are not just figments of imagination without any social relevance, for it actually depicts the reality of war, death, and violence. In fact, it has even become one of Picasso’s monumental pieces due to its powerful message regarding the devastating effects of war as experienced in the town of Guernica during the Spanish Civil war.

The “message” of visual arts may not always come in handy; nevertheless, they *send* a message. A spectator needs to have an inquisitive and discerning mind to make sense of the symbols and elements present in an artwork, and most importantly its situated-ness. This is because whatever is communicated always stands within a context, a background. It is through such “contextuality” where meaning is derived. This is why Representation – an idea that we can “represent” reality as such - cannot free itself from subjective elements involved in the Art. It will always be biased. Pure objectivity is impossible in the art world. Even photographs that claim to be purely value-neutral are always tainted with unbiased meaning. The subjective intentions of the artist and the subjective interpretation of the spectators are both indicators that photographs stand in relation to a context, either that of the photographer and that of the interpreter. When we look at a photograph we never just look at a photograph in isolation. We actually look at a complex relationship between a photograph and ourselves (Berger, 1977, 9).

### **From Arts Appreciation to Critical Aesthetics**

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) has included the Arts Appreciation subject as part of the general courses that are to be taken by college students under the New General Education Curriculum. As part of its mandate to promote and elevate the standards and quality of higher education in the country, the Commission on Higher Education has itself crafted the course description, learning outcomes, course outline, and sample time frame with contents, methodology, resources, and even the sample assessment, albeit still giving the

instructor or the professor the liberty and discretion on the contents in the mentioned areas. For the course description, CHED says,

Arts Appreciation is a three-unit course that develops students' ability to appreciate, analyze, and critique works of art. Through interdisciplinarity and multimodal approaches, this course equips students with a broad knowledge of the practical, historical, philosophical, and social relevance of the arts in order to hone student's ability to articulate their understanding of the arts. The course also develops students' competency in researching and curating art as well as conceptualizing, mounting, and evaluating arts production. The course aims to develop students' genuine appreciation for Philippine arts by providing them opportunities to explore the diversity and richness and their rootedness in Filipino culture (ched.gov.ph).

At a cursory glance, the course description veers away with the traditional presentation and appreciation of artworks, which usually dominate the contents and even the methodology in teaching arts subjects in the humanities. With the New General Education Curriculum, the Arts Appreciation subject embraces the "multimodal" approach that includes not only appreciating and analyzing works of art but also critiquing them. The inclusion of basic philosophical perspectives in the course syllabus such as "art as mimesis (Plato), art as representation (Aristotle), art for art's sake (Kant), art as an escape, and art as functional" (Ibid), seems to provide the subject with a critical perspective in analyzing and perhaps, even in criticizing artworks, which elevates the discourse in the subject.

However, a closer look at the topics, contents and methodology of the syllabus crafted by CHED reveals that the critical perspective in the subject that must be emphasized to elevate higher learning in college is just facile, and not given greater significance. The bulk of the contents in the Arts Appreciation subject is still dominated by topics such as the various periods and movements in art history, which has 32 individual topics alone in this area, such as Egyptian, Greek, and Roman. Chinese arts, and movements such as Mannerism, Baroque, Neo-classicism, Impressionism, and Post-Impressionism, Cubism, among others. The section on Instrumental Music has also occupied a lengthy discussion, dividing it into categories. For instance, under Baroque, there are seven individual musicians as part of the topics, such as Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ludwig Van Beethoven, and Franz Schubert. The Romantic section of Instrumental Music in the syllabus has an even greater number of individual musicians at 14, including notable names, such as Frederic Chopin and Richard Wagner. The Modern section has also individual discussions on each musician of



that period. Aside from Instrumental Music, the section on Artists and Artisans is also relatively long with an emphasis on Production Process and Medium Techniques, and the other topics under it such as on Managers, Curators, Buyers, and Collectors, and Arts Dealers. Compare this to the areas on philosophical perspectives, which was mentioned under the methodology section, has only five topics, and which is just a mere presentation of concepts and ideas, rather than as a tool for critical evaluation. The section on philosophical perspectives appears to be an accessory rather than an integral and essential part of the subject matter.

Furthermore, some of the essential components of the Learning Outcomes of Arts Appreciation as a subject matter are not achieved, especially if one takes into account the topics and methodologies mentioned. For instance, under the “Skills” heading of the Learning Outcomes, Arts Appreciation subject, CHED says, must “analyze and appraise works of art based on aesthetic value, historical context, tradition, and social relevance”, and “utilize art for self-expression and for promoting advocacies ([ched.gov.ph](http://ched.gov.ph)).” Under the Values heading of the Learning Outcome of the subject, CHED says, Arts Appreciation subject must “Deepen their sensitivity to self, community, and society (Ibid).” But if one considers the topics and methodologies of the subject, and its critical deficit, despite the inclusion of philosophical perspectives, the “analyze and appraise works of art based on social relevance” is not achieved because there is no corresponding topic and tools in the syllabus that would help achieve it. The lengthy discussion of western musicians, periods, and movements could not certainly address that goal. The sensitivity especially in the societal level under the Values heading fails as well since first, there is no topic even in the syllabus that dwells on Philippine or Filipino work of arts, and second, the topics have no direct relevance in the Philippine setting since the context is western. There is no section devoted, to at least applying, the philosophical perspectives in the Philippine setting as well. Not to say that the topics mentioned under philosophical perspectives are not enough to help promote social and societal relevance of arts, much more for advocacies. It needs a discussion on critical aesthetics in order to emphasize the social and political dimensions of art.

Jacques Ranciere’s concept of the *distribution of the sensible*, I argue, possesses a critical potential as an entry point towards a discussion on aesthetic education, especially on the critical deficit of the Arts Appreciation subject. First, on broad strokes, education, for Ranciere, is never simply a transmission of knowledge, information, or skills from a “master” to a “student” but an art of driving the student’s will. Drawing from the tenets of radical equality, he posits that education must be geared towards emancipation and that even an ignorant person can teach something to someone provided that certain conditions are present, namely, reason and will. In his book *The Ignorant Schoolmaster Five Lessons of Intellectual Emancipation*, he shows that the usual method behind



almost all forms of the educational system is that of *Explication*. What all conscientious professors believe, he notes, is that “the important business of the master is to transmit his knowledge to his students to bring them, by degrees, to his level of expertise” (Ranciere, 2007, 3). However, if one were to look closely at the effects of this method, it promotes a certain type of *Stultification*, whereby a student – after being immersed in this kind of pedagogy for several years – understands that understanding can happen only through explication. There is stultification whenever one intelligence is subordinated to the other (ibid. 13). In effect, this intellectual stultification perpetuates the practice of submission, rather than emancipation.

Emancipation, in this context, should not be hastily construed under the lens of Marxism, though it may become a contributory factor for the possibility of the latter. Emancipation, or better yet intellectual emancipation happens when “‘ignorant’ people will be recognized as perfectly qualified schoolmasters” (Citton, 2010, 27). This goes to say that emancipation is the antithesis of the explicative order and the hierarchical structure it engenders. It is a condition whereby people, whose voices are often muted in the public sphere, become empowered to assert matters on equal footing with the other social groups. It may sound absurd that a person deemed “ignorant” is capable of teaching something to another fellow ignorant, much less saying something significant regarding political matters. But Ranciere’s message reminds us of the fact that the label “ignorance” is a matter of convention forged by social categorizations. In concrete terms, the ignorant ones are usually embodied in the image of delinquent, out-of-school problematic individuals. Our very system of education creates class distinctions thereby separating the educated and the non-educated, the learned and the ignorant, the master and the slave. This goes to say that the act of transmitting knowledge through explication tends to generate and perpetuate a structure of inequality between the explainer and the explainees, and such structure of inequality is reinforced each time the educator reasserts his superiority by performing as a knowledge-provider (ibid. 28). Juxtaposed with Aesthetics, the aforementioned ideas will shed a different light to the nature of Arts, Artists, and Art educators. Departing from the old, pre-modernist understanding of the Art, Ranciere argues,

the artist’s emancipatory lesson, opposed on every count to the professor’s stultifying lesson, is this: each one of us is an artist to the extent that he carries out a double process: he is not content to be a mere journeyman but wants to make all work a means of expression, and he is not content to feel something but tries to impart it to others. The artist needs equality as the explicator needs inequality. And he, therefore, designs the model of a reasonable society where the very thing that is outside of reason – matter, linguistic signs – is traversed

by reasonable will: that of telling the story and making others feel how we are similar to them (Ranciere, 2007, 70-71).

The task of articulating or expressing thoughts, sounds, and images from the grassroots level – that is, the unheard of, unrecognized, and unappreciated - unhampered by any elitist artistic normative standards is of prime importance. In matters pertaining to painting, for instance, Ranciere argues that Art – or art education for that matter - is not an endeavor to make great painters; it's a matter of making emancipated men: people capable of saying, “me too, I'm a painter”...which means: “me too, I have a soul, I have feelings to communicate to my fellowmen” (Ranciere, 2007, 67).

What Ranciere can bring in the discourse in Arts Appreciation in relation to social relevance, advocacy, and contribution to society, which are sorely lacking in the course design of the Arts Appreciation subject, is to provide the voice to those who are voiceless, muted, and powerless in the public sphere, such as in the case of the marginalized. Those who are in the margins have the right to be heard in the public sphere, despite their lack of education and influence, on what matters to them, especially on how they can overcome their difficult circumstances. Art should not just be appreciating the glossy colors, the artistic mediums, and designs, but must also bring out the social and political issues confronting society. Art should reveal the human condition and the various factors that hinder people from living a decent and dignified life. Art should truthfully show what is happening in society, and not just be used to sell for capitalist gains. If Arts Appreciation as a subject is serious in attaining social relevance, advocacy, and contribution to society then it must integrate a discussion on critical aesthetics, where art is seen as a critical medium to examine society and the status quo.

In the Philippines, unfortunately, when one is asked about the Arts what easily comes to mind perhaps are things like exhibits, galleries, entertainment shows, band concerts, internet viral videos, cosplays, anime cartoons, flash mobs, rap battles, fashion shows, movies and the like. Filipinos seem to have a better knowledge of the “manifestations” of Arts, but a lesser understanding of the nature, implications, historical context, and most importantly, social function of Arts. It seems that nowadays Arts is hastily understood as a type of creative activity done separately from the other non-creative ones. This activity employs a different set of skills, which cannot be found in everybody but only among few individuals with quite developed and refined artistic taste and practical know-how to turn ordinary things into something unique, if not weird. Though everybody has a voice and capable of singing, only the few who can hit the correct notes, with two or three-octave vocal range, and who can perform vibratos naturally are separated from the many; and of course, consequently exalted as an artist. The Arts have been collectively understood as a human enterprise that has a very minimal



import, if nothing at all, to the socio-political life in a given society. In other words, Arts have been pushed to the sidelines and are deemed useless in relation to matters pertaining to politics, democracy and nation-building.

Such is the problem that, I think, needs to be addressed through the recalibration of the Arts Appreciation subject. It's a good thing to note, however, that the Commission on Higher Education recognizes several intellectual competencies that are expected to be developed through the GE subjects, viz. "critical, analytical and creative thinking and multiple forms of expressionism and civic capacities demanded of membership in the community, country, and the world" (see GPH's Official Gazette). But again, the contents and methodology have to be revised in order to accentuate the critical and analytical aspect of art in relation to the community and society.

Arts Appreciation, I argue, is connected to Philosophy, not just as an academic discipline but also as a way of thinking, and a way of living. In particular, *Art Appreciation* is not only so much about "appreciating" art, or of finding conceptual tools to analyze and criticize Art. If the subject were to create an impact in a student's life, it has to take an emancipating role of guiding a student to redeem Art – and along with it himself/herself as the artist - from the banality of academic compliance. Rebecca Torres and Lydia Goingo (2012), in their position paper on the New General Curriculum, put it aptly when they assert and recommend that the New Curriculum should be "guided by the philosophy of liberal education", in "developing among students the ability to: apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings; conscientiously appreciate and respond to ethical issues; recognize and give value to various cultures, and actively contribute to society as socially responsible citizens."

To achieve this goal, one cannot simply argue on the basis of the so-called teacher factor. The subject has to be recalibrated to render itself useful to the learner. Concretely, this means redefining its goals, rearticulating the content, and enhancing its methodology. As Gadamer aptly puts it, "the work of art has its true being in the fact that it becomes an experience that changes the person who experiences it" (Gadamer, 2006, 103). The Arts Appreciation subject must go beyond appreciating beauty in its many dimensions but should also teach students the value of being responsible citizens concerned with what is going in society. Arts should enter into the realm of the political and the social to be transformative.

One way of concretely recalibrating the subject using Ranciere's critical aesthetics is to use Filipino work of arts, which is not included in the course design of Arts Appreciation, to raise awareness on various social issues that need to be addressed. In the Philippines, we have many artists who are brilliant and concerned with what is going on in society. Their songs, poems, paintings, and movies reveal the deep-seated issues in our country. For instance, Lino Brocka films have sociocultural themes that depict the struggles of ordinary Filipinos on

various issues as revealed in the movies such as “Tinimbang ka Ngunit Kulang”, “Bayan ko”, and “Manila in the Claws of Neon”. The realism in these movies can help open the minds and hearts of Filipinos to contribute to making their lives better. These movies, unlike the usual Hollywood movies, are not primarily aimed at raising profit, but in raising awareness, and in truthfully revealing what is going on in Philippine society. Lino Brocka films promote an advocacy to help the marginalized overcome oppression and unjust structures in society, without endorsing the radical communist ideology, but merely to bring social and political issues into the public sphere. Pacita Abad’s paintings are also worth including, especially that it depicts violence against women, sex exploitation, and the difficult plight of OFW women in the hands of abusive employers. Arts Appreciation as a subject will be socially and culturally relevant if it explores Filipino works of arts that have political and social message ingrained in their masterpieces rather than dwell simply on Western concepts, artistic techniques, and works of arts that are simply copied by Filipinos and have no relevance and impact in the lives of ordinary Filipinos.

### CONCLUSION

There is a need to emphasize, more than anything else, the contiguity of Art to Life and Society. This does not mean, however, that we aim to produce radical but penniless writers, critical but impoverished visual artists, or obscure musicians. Nor does it aim at producing the next generation of Daniel Padilla, Vice Ganda, or Anne Curtis. These extremes, I think, should be avoided. In today’s highly technological and oftentimes indifferent world, the importance to explore the different contextual possibilities of “redistributing the sensible”, that is, ways by which muted voices are recognized, listened to, and appreciated, is very much called for. To say that through *Art Appreciation* we can achieve this is a preposterous claim, but the subject can provide an avenue for its birth. As most of the teachers can observe, the students already have enough exposure to the realities of life in society; they do not need to be reminded of the evils of corruption, violence, impunity, greediness, and the like. What must be done, on the other hand, is to create an avenue to look at them from different vantage points, process them, and make informed value judgments about them.

The Philosophy departments and their respective members of the faculty in the country should not simply take a wait-and-see attitude. It should, on the contrary, seize every opportunity to collaborate with the other disciplines, promote critical and analytical thinking, uphold intellectual integrity and most importantly, lead young minds to value their existence, in itself and in relation to the society at large.



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