

Defining the Appropriate Field for Radical Intra-State Peace Studies in Filipino Philosophy

FEORILLO DEMETERIO III

*Sa loob at labas ng bayan kong sawi
kaliluha'y siyang nangyayaring hari,
kalinga't bait ay nalulugami,
ininis sa hukay ng dusa't pighati.*

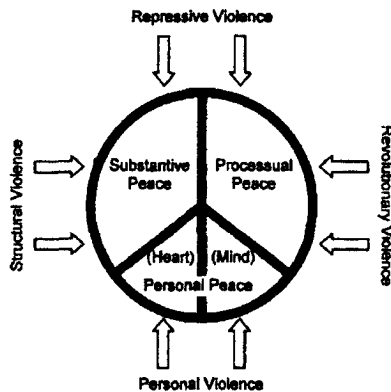
– **Francisco Baltazar,**
Mahiganting Langit

AN ANATOMY OF INTRA-STATE PEACE

When we hear the word 'peace' the immediate picture that crops up in our minds is that situation characterized by the absence of chaos, of violence, and of actual warfare. Traditional philosophy calls this the negative understanding of peace. Yet this kind of peace is no different from the submissive tranquility that accompanies a successful subjugation, and nor from the deafening stillness that reigns in a deserted necropolis. Hence, this kind of peace is not only superficial but has a tendency to favor whoever has the advantage in a given *status quo*: the exploiters and the dominators. It is from these reflections that it would appear to us that peace, as mere tranquility and stillness, is not actually a goal in itself but an effect of something deeper and profounder. Thus, the Dutch rationalist philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) stressed that "peace is not" just an "absence of war" but "is a virtue, a state of mind," "a disposition for benevolence," "confidence," "and justice." This leads us to what traditional philosophy calls the positive understanding of peace.

In the more specific context of the indigenous Filipino thought, there happens to be a conceptual tension between the two understandings of peace. Rose-Marie Salazar-Clemenena, in her 1991 and 1993 field works, documented that Filipinos associate peace (*kapayapaan*) with freedom (*kalayaan*) and justice (*katarungan*).¹ But in 1992, Virgilio Enriquez has noted that the positive connection between *kapayapaan* and *katarungan* is for the Filipino accommodative and non-confrontative.² Implying that between the negative and the positive understandings of peace the Filipino would tend to go for the negative one, with its superficiality, and its danger to perpetuate exploitation and domination, and most of all with its mechanism of sweeping the real issues and causes of chaos, violence and warfare under the rug of accommodation, non-confrontation and shallow compromises. With this self-defeating indigenous tendency, in Philippine intra-state peace studies, there is a need, then, to look deeper into the anatomical structure of peace.

Soliman Santos, in his book *Peace Advocate*, presents a conceptual scheme on the types of peace and their counter-types of violence by creatively using the international symbol for peace movement.³



¹ Quoted in Rose-Marie Salazar-Clemenena, "Psychology and a Culture of Peace: Enriching Relationships and Establishing Balance," in Allan B.I. Bernardo and Carmela D. Ortigas, Eds, *Building Peace: Essays on Psychology and the Culture of Peace* (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 2000) p. 4.

² Virgilio G. Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology: The Philippine Experience* (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1994) p. 55.

³ Soliman M. Santos, *Peace Advocate* (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 2002) p. 3.

For Santos, there are basically three types of peace: (1) substantive peace, (2) processual peace, and (3) personal peace, which can be further conceptualized as (3a) peace of the heart and (3b) peace of the mind. He defines each of these types in contradistinction with their opposing types of violence. Hence, substantive peace is taken as the freedom from structural violence, which in turn is understood as that violence "which is built into society's structure," which manifests "in unequal life chances founded on unequal power."⁴ Processual peace is taken as freedom from revolutionary violence, which in turn is understood as that violence resulting from the disturbance or overturning of the *status quo* due to an unsettled conflict. Personal peace is taken as freedom from personal violence, which in turn is understood as "the violence of the heart and mind which is often manifested as violence of the hand."⁵ In addition to the three counter-types of violence, there is a fourth one that opposes and threatens both substantive and processual peace: repressive violence. These counter-type of violence functions subtly to perpetuate the structural violence of the unjust social order. Santos explains that it is "the violence used by the state's security forces to contain the aspirations of the majority, violently crushing any sign of protest against injustice."⁶

An advocate or scholar of peace might now wonder which among these three types of peace, or which among these four counter-types of violence, should be the primary locus of analysis. In a period of post-Durkheimian social theorizing, when society is thought of to be structured prior to the individual, and in a period of post-Marxist analysis, when the infrastructure is thought to be a determinant of the superstructure, it would be very difficult to ignore the pervasive significance of the binary substantive peace/structural violence. Edmundo Garcia, in his essay *Resolution of Internal Armed Conflict in the Philippines*, the operation of this same binary.

In the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, structural violence in most instances is the main obstacle to

⁴ Santos, p. 5.

⁵ Santos, p. 6.

⁶ Santos, p. 6.

peace. Violence is inflicted on the majority of the people who are voiceless and poor. When people articulate their grievances and protest against the established order, they often confront state violence. When people respond with counter-violence to defend their lives and dignity, internal armed conflict then becomes the prevalent form of resolving profound political and economic differences in society. This leads to the spiral of violence...⁷

From this theoretically upper-hand perspective it would appear that it is structural violence that pervasively threatens the three types of peace, for without it there will be no oppression, no conflicts and revolutions, and the suffering and anarchy in the personal level would be greatly alleviated. The more fashionable and flashy idea of conflict resolution may only prevent or manage revolutionary violence and instate a very shaky processual peace. For this procedure does not necessarily address the infrastructural causes of chaos, violence and warfare. The same is true when we go stoop down to the level of counseling, rehabilitation and individual or group processing to address the problem of personal violence and instate personal peace. Yet by enforcing peace without confronting the real matters causing personal violence would be no different from making a suffering patient dependent on painkillers without necessarily treating his or her ailment. If an advocate or scholar is indeed interested on attainable and lasting peace, then he or she could not avoid confronting and analyzing the binary substantive peace/structural violence.

THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF INTRA-STATE CHAOS, VIOLENCE AND WARFARE

The American philosopher Mortimer Jerome Adler (1902-2001), in his book *How to Think about War and Peace*, idealistically wrote:

⁷ Edmundo Garcia, "Resolution of Internal Armed Conflict in the Philippines: The Quest for a Just and Lasting Peace in the Period of Democratic Transition," in Edmundo Garcia & Carolina Hernandez, Eds., *Waging Peace in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo Center for Social Policy and Public Affairs & UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies, 1989) p. 30.

The word 'peace' in addition to its negative meaning as an absence of the violence of actual warfare, has a positive meaning. Civil peace is enjoyed by a people who can settle all their conflicts and disputes by means of the instrumentalities of government and law, and so they do not have to resort to the violence of actual warfare.

But a keen reading would reveal that Adler presumed too much that all societies are peopled with individuals who are enlightened and strong enough to defend their own interests, and that government instrumentalities and laws are free enough from class-based distortions. Perhaps he had too much of the American myth of highly motivated and rugged individuals, as well as of the meta-narrative of their grand democratic government for the people. The glaring problem that he missed is what would happen to civil or positive peace if in a given society it is the government itself, together with its instrumentalities and laws, or that it is society itself as whole, which turns out to be internally festering with structural and repressive violence? But beyond Adler's lofty idealism is actually a challenge for the local advocates and scholars of peace to look into the Philippine society and ascertain whether we have the same democratically empowered people or the almost utopian democracy that he all assumed to be given facts of life. But our rawest gut feelings would immediately tell us that our society is in diametrical opposition with the Adlerian ideal. These things would ultimately drag us to the question: what are the manifestations and machination of structural and repressive violence in Philippine society that hindered our people's common aspiration for lasting peace?

In the Philippine society, the infrastructure of chronic chaos, violence and intra-state warfare can be historically dated back to the Spanish colonial "politics of exclusion" and "practice of economic exploitation."⁸ When the Spaniards left, their template of a glaringly unequal governance and socio-economics remained in place, making the successive governments either unconscious or simply unable to address the plight of the majority of the Filipinos who wallowed in poverty and dispossession while power and wealth were practically in the hands of the few privileged elite. This structural inequality

⁸ Garcia, p. 27.

can be more vividly pictured with the estimate that more than 40% of Philippine wealth and power is under the control of less than 10% of the Filipinos. The operation of the colonial politics of exclusion and practice of economic exploitation persisted into the present time through the institutions of feudalism, bureaucrat capitalism and imperialism. The isolation of these three historic institutions as the conduit of exclusion and exploitation may sound like the tired clichés of fiery activists, yet a thorough understanding of each of their processes would in fact reveal their very real sinister potencies.

Feudalism, as a medieval European politico-economic configuration, can be basically understood as a system of administration, jurisdiction and land tenure founded on the relationship between a landlord and a tenant within which land is granted in exchange for homage, military service and other duties. A crude copy of this configuration was established by the Spaniards as they ladled out land-based power to the few native elites and newly arrived aristocratic Spaniards in exchange for pacifying, Christianizing and governing the natives. When colonial subjugation changed hands from Spanish to American, the feudal order remained substantially intact, if not fortified with the Torrens title. F. Sionil Jose, in his novel *My Brother, My Executioner*, a fictive account of a landlord who happened to have a half-brother who is a *Hukbalahap* commander, makes his protagonist reminisce:

He knew the story by rote, as his own people in Sipnget had told him – how the Americans came with their transits and their measuring rods, how the Spaniards worked with the Americans and how with no more than scraps of paper they made binding and permanent the bondage of those who had from the beginning felled the trees, cut the grass, killed the snakes, and dammed the creeks, so that this inhospitable land could be made gracious and fecund.⁹

But aside from originally historical moment of injustice during the colonizers' appropriation of land-based wealth and their distribution to a privileged few, what is so wrong with feudalism that makes it a favorite point of attack by both the frenzied activists

⁹ F. Sionil Jose, *My Brother, My Executioner* (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1988) p. 14.

and speculative academics? There seems to be something inherently wrong with the feudal system that hinders economic development and consequently pins so many people into the bondage of poverty. At a deeper analysis, feudalism turns out to have an inherent lethargy in terms of its inputs to production, and profligacy in terms of its output. When compared to capitalism where wealth is churned out through continuous capital accumulation and technological innovation, feudalism does not bother about further capitalization and innovation. It is a very complacent enterprise where the landlords can be totally absent during the production period and merely collect the cream of his land during harvest seasons. Ricardo Ferrer, in his essay *The Structural Causes of Underdevelopment in the Philippines*, explains this lethargy to the fact that feudal wealth is primarily based on "space" in its geographic connotation," unlike capitalist wealth which is primarily based on fluid capital that enables output to be plowed back as input.¹⁰ Because of its negligible thrust for growth and expansion through capitalization and technological innovation, feudalism drags the whole economy downwards. Furthermore, without the need to convert accumulated wealth into capital, wealth is then dissipated in ostentatious profligacy by the privileged few while the rest of the economy remained undeveloped. Ferrer describes the system as "anti-thetical to growth."¹¹ Moreover, the nightmare of feudalism does not end here, this system together with its ostentatious profligacy and degenerate ethos, had spread over into the domains of politics, religion, values and the Filipino culture at large. The matter is aggravated with the realization that the hope for finally blasting the Philippine feudal order is nil. Historically, in Europe, the clutches of the feudal lords was eroded, transformed and superseded by the rising influence of the bourgeoisie. Unfortunately, this historical process has no changes of repeating itself for our benefit because, as the famous expatriate cultural critic E. San Juan argues, Philippine bourgeoisie "is either non-existent, inchoate, or

¹⁰ Ricardo D. Ferrer, "The Structural Causes of Underdevelopment in the Philippines," in Lilia Quindoza Santiago, Ed., *Synthesis: Before and Beyond February 1986: The Edgar Jopson Memorial Lectures* (Quezon City: The Interdisciplinary Forum of the University of the Philippines, 1986) p. 11.

¹¹ Ferrer, p. 12.

deformed.”¹² Feudalism originated in violence, but the magnitude of this initial violence is nothing compared to the stream of structural violence it spewed out coupled with the crushing violence of hopelessness.

If feudalism is an anti-thesis to economic development, as its power spills from the confines of land-based production into the sphere of a half-hearted commerce and industrialization, another antithetical institution emerges. Bureaucrat capitalism, the second conduit of the colonial politics of exclusion and exploitation, is a direct product of a collusion of the privileged few in commercial and industrial sectors and the government. Ferrer defines this mutant institution as a mechanism where “a state instrument is used for the creation and reproduction of feudal private property especially in the industrial sector.”¹³ Crony capitalism is the paragon of bureaucrat capitalism and both do not only aggravate further and sacramentalize the unjust concentration wealth and power on the privileged few, but also warp the fabric of free competition which is a necessary backdrop of any authentic capitalist development.

Imperialism, the third conduit of the colonial politics of exclusion and exploitation, springs from the will to power of stronger nations to expand and maintain their sphere of control and influence by subjugating weaker nations. In this sense, imperialism is synonymous with colonialism. But after the colony’s political liberation, imperialism takes a subtler form as it sinks its spindles of power into the economic and cultural aspects of the former colony. In this sense, imperialism is synonymous with economic and cultural neo-colonialism that panders on the highly developed colonial aesthetics and tastes of the natives. Imperialism becomes double-edged sword, on one side it can fatally bleed our economy with the flight of payments for our insatiable need and desire for imported products, on the other side it mows down our country’s chances to industrialize. Imperialism can effectively stunt our industrial development because it was successful in constructing us as a mere provider of raw materials and an extension of the imperial market, ultimately making our economy a pathetically dependent one. The double-

¹² E. San Juan, “Towards a Permanent Cultural Revolution,” in *Writing and National Liberation: Essays on Critical Practice* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1991) p. 124-125.

¹³ Ferrer, p. 12.

edged menace of imperialism does not end at these points, because it can rather easily fuse with the collusive forces of bureaucrat capitalism to give birth to an even more monstrously deformed capitalism.

The combined effects of these three grotesque structural deformations is the continuance of the colonial politics of exclusion and exploitation that produce and reproduce our scandalously unequal distribution of wealth and power. An idealist advocate or scholar of peace could only dream of a drastic redistributive measures as the utopian pathway to lasting peace. Joseph Lim, for instance in his essay *Our Economic Crisis: A Historical Perspective*, points out that "land reform in the rural areas and the much needed rise in the real wages in the urban areas – will develop dynamic rural and urban markets and spur production in both areas."¹⁴ But the tired demand for authentic land reform and humane wages is just a utopian sigh, for in a congress peopled by feudal lords, bureaucrat capitalists and their cohorts who would be there to facilitate legislative measures that would run contrary to the interests of the elite class? Furthermore, with the imperialist move of creating our country into cheap source of labor, who would be there to legislate humane wages? With all these hideous self-replicating deformities, side by side with the hopelessly powerless or non-existent bourgeoisie and middle class that are incapable of initiating transformations, the remaining card for lasting peace would be the historically excluded and exploited class. "The democratic task within the framework of revolutionary rupture," San Juan explains, "what Althusser conceived of as the convergence of all the contradictions in society, can only be genuinely carried out by a bloc of popular forces led by the organized working people."¹⁵

I now define *radical intra-state peace studies* as the theory and praxis of critiquing and counter-critiquing these hideous self-replicating structural deformities that serve as the infrastructure of our intra-state chaos, violence and warfare.

¹⁴ Joseph Y. Lim, "Our Economic Crisis: A Historical Perspective," in Lilia Quindoza Santiago, Ed., *Synthesis: Before and Beyond February 1986: The Edgar Jopson Memorial Lectures* (Quezon City: The Interdisciplinary Forum of the University of the Philippines, 1986) p. 24.

¹⁵ San Juan, p. 25.

THE ENORMOUS TASK OF FILIPINO PHILOSOPHY

With our society being undermined by a structural violence and repressive violence spawned by the colonial politics of exclusion and exploitation, it would be immoral for Filipino philosophy to assume the role of a spectator. Filipino philosophy has the ethical burden of spearheading the inter-disciplinary project of the theory and praxis of critique and counter-critique. But the enormity and monstrosity of the deformities we are facing can be daunting especially if we consider the pathetic status of Filipino philosophy with its characteristic tendency of shirking away from the political, the social, the historical, and the economic. Indeed, Filipino philosophy can be easily pictured as a philosophy that is dispassionate, cold, and devoid of libido; a philosophy that is lulled by some plenitude of innocuous things, such as the lofty tenets of scholasticism and humanism, the endless mazes of language and logical reasoning, and the exoticism of oriental thought. We have to raise the very important question: is Filipino philosophy ready to thrust itself into the maelstrom radical intra-state peace studies, understood as the theory and praxis of critique and counter-critique, and does it have a solid tradition where it can bank on in its struggle for lasting peace? This paper is actually about identifying a solid tradition in Filipino philosophy where radical intra-state peace studies may stand ready to undertake its daunting task, and this paper assumes that there is one such tradition that has been forgotten and, therefore, has to be retrieved.

Filipino philosophy has a number of separate traditions. Romualdo Abulad, in his 1988 essay *Contemporary Filipino Philosophy*, identifies at least three clear traditions: 1) scholasticism, 2) the influx of western philosophical theories, and 3) Filipino philosophy as interpretation of Filipino identity and world-view. Fernando Nakpil-Zialcita, in a much earlier 1971 essay *Mga Anyo ng Pilosopiyang Pilipino*, identifies at least two clear traditions: 1) Filipino philosophy as interpretation of Filipino identity and world-view, and 2) Filipino philosophy as critique of the Philippine social and economic structures. In my paper entitled *Thought and Socio-Politics: an Account of the Late Twentieth Century Filipino Philosophy*, I problematized the difference between Abulad and Nakpil-Zialcita's classification and posted the question, why is it that in 1971 Nakpil-Zialcita talked about a Filipino philosophy as

a critique of the Philippine social and economic structures, while in 1988 Abulad is silent about this tradition of Filipino philosophy? By historically reconstructing the socio-politics of the period, by analyzing the bibliography of Philippine philosophical writings, and by interviewing our few imminent senior philosophy professors, I attempted to prove that in the late 1960s and the early 1970s there was indeed an emerging trend of Filipino philosophy as critique of the Philippine social and political structures, but the declaration of the Martial Law in 1972 had effectively derailed its growth. Today, whenever Filipino scholars and students talk about the trends of Filipino philosophy, they tend to talk about local pockets centered on the leading institutions of philosophy: namely, scholastic philosophy at the *University of Santo Tomas*; existential/continental philosophy at the *Ateneo de Manila University*; and logical positivism/linguistic philosophy at the *University of the Philippines*. Added to these localized trends is another one that cuts across these leading institutions and flourishes even outside them, which is that trend that deals with the Filipino worldview. Filipino scholars and students would tend to miss the subtle undercurrent of critical Filipino philosophy, which to a very large extent remained barely noticed, barely discussed, and almost forgotten. There are, then, four clear traditions in Filipino philosophy and these are: 1) scholasticism, 2) the influx of western philosophical theories, 3) Filipino philosophy as interpretation of Filipino identity and world-view, and 4) Filipino philosophy as critique of the Philippine social and economic structures.

It is by retrieving the forgotten tradition of Filipino philosophy as critique of the Philippine social and economic structures, that Filipino philosophy can have an appropriate and solid tradition of its daunting task of radical intra-state peace studies. Scholasticism could not provide an appropriate tradition because scholasticism in first place emerged prior to the Durkheimian discovery of society and the Marxist formulation of structural analysis. The influx of western philosophical theories could also not provide an appropriate tradition, because it is not even a single tradition in itself but a collection of some purposeless expounding of one foreign philosophy after another. This tradition of Filipino philosophy is too preoccupied with orthodoxy of interpretations and could easily get lost in the radical peace studies' need for orthopraxis. Lastly,

Filipino philosophy as interpretation of Filipino identity and world-view could also not provide an appropriate tradition because of its descriptive ethnographic concerns which is different from the diagnostic and prescriptive concerns of radical peace studies. Hence, by identifying Filipino philosophy as critique of the Philippine social and economic structures as the appropriate tradition for radical intra-state peace studies, the Herculean task of critiquing and counter-critiquing the enormous and monstrous structural deformities of the Philippine society would no longer be a daunting task. Filipino philosophy has a solid tradition where it can bank on in its struggle for lasting peace.

A PRELIMINARY PROGRAM OF ACTION

The European nations established their new socio-economic orders through the painful bloodletting of a revolution. Are Filipinos prepared to purchase lasting peace with the price of violence? It seems that we have been disenchanted with revolution. Jose, in his novel *Ben Singkol*, makes his protagonist speculate:

Then, the bombshell from the same serious, dark-skinned young man. "Sir, do you think a revolution could be the answer?" I sat back. I did not expect the question. I must bide for time. "Just what do you mean by revolution?" Came the quick reply. "I will define it in the manner that it has always been defined. With bloodshed, like the revolution against Spain, the revolution in China, in Cuba." "And much earlier," I said, "the French revolution, the Russian revolution." They were nodding. "The price is too heavy," I said. "If you can have change without all that violence... Not that I do not think it is necessary. I live through World War II, and I hope you will never know what war is like. And violence."¹⁶

Perhaps it is our experience of syncopated revolutions – our revolution against Spain that was muddled by the Americans, our revolution against America that was cruelly crushed even by our own people, our fabulous EDSA revolution that was travestied by the same elite and privileged few – that make us all shudder at the

¹⁶ F. Sionil Jose, *Ben Singkol* (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House, 2001) p. 189.

thought of another revolution. What is left for us is a democratic transformation of our society through critique and counter-critique. There are some concrete pathways for Filipino philosophy to spearhead the project of democratically attaining lasting peace.

One concrete move for Filipino philosophy is to dedicate its commitment to critique our deformed social structure. If we have time to indulge with the eternal verities of Aristotlean logic and scholastic ethics, and the aestheticism and exoticism of the philosophy of the human person, it is a scandal if we cannot find time to examine the very same society we are living in. Radical criticism will strip the present social order with its mystification, prestige and symbolic power and subsequently expose its purely economic and corporate existence, making us all see the real causes of structural violence.

Another concrete move for Filipino philosophy is to soul search the identities of its professors. San Juan places his hopes for democratic transformation on the excluded and exploited class. Unfortunately, this class has lost its organic intellectuals as many of our professors abandoned them to masquerade around as members of the higher classes. The truth is Filipino professors belong to same excluded and exploited class and should be the organic intellectuals of this class. A portion of the task of propagating counter-hegemony belongs to Filipino philosophy professors.

Filipino philosophy remained silent during the Spanish subjugation, it remained silent during the American subjugation, and it again remained silent during the Marcos regime. People may understand, owing to its relative youth and the extremely compromising circumstances of those times, Filipino philosophy's sins of the past. But it will be unforgivable if Filipino philosophy will remain silent again in the face of our hideous infrastructure of intra-state chaos, violence and warfare. Lasting peace can be purchased not with the price of violence, but with the price of committed intellectual struggle of critique and counter-critique, and Filipino philosophy has a moral burden of facilitating the dawning of this attainable and lasting peace. □

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