

Centennial and Millenium: Propedeutical Reflections on Philosophy and Revolution in a Philippine Setting from 1998 Onwards

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Situationer: 1998-1999

1998 was a very special year for us Filipinos at least externally. "Externally" because of the funfare and activities which we all either witnessed or watched with our television sets. Within two years of commencing a new millennium, the Filipinos were commemorating the first centennial of the Philippine Revolution, the matrix of the first time we ever declared ourselves independent from any foreign power, on June 12, 1898, at the balcony of the Aguinaldo Mansion in Kawit, Cavite. 1998 sort of reminded us that our nation was born with revolutions. It was in the face of a revolution, in the famous battle of Mactan, that we recognized ourselves-residents of various islands, as a nation with a singular goal: that of not being conquered by foreigners. In a way, we can be thankful to our colonizers for their aggressiveness brought about the aggressive in all of us, making us cognizant that we are truly a nation, one same cultural, territorial or even racial entity with desire for freedom, independence and self-rule. This is what a nation is: oneness in ideals-given the sameness or oneness in diversity in terms of culture, territory and race. The nation or state, as Hegel contends, is the focus of study of Philosophy of History.

Indeed we are a people "plagued" or, in an ironic note, "blessed" with revolutions, the last one being the famous Edsa Revolution of Feb-

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ruary 22-25, 1986, a misnomer of sorts which saw Marcos's fall from power and the rise of Corazón C. Aquino, widow of Marcos Nemesis Former Sen. Benigno S. Aquino, Jr. Many observers would agree that Aquino's brutal assassination on August 21, 1983, a case still unsolved after all these years, sparked the process of the downfall of the most repressive homegrown regime in Philippine annals. In Edsa, we were not just a nation, but a people who wanted to live together or a society. The society is the object of study of Social Philosophy. But in Edsa, we did not just live together, we did something together. This doing something or acting together of a society makes it a political entity and this is what Philosophy of Politics reflects on. Hannah Arendt once wrote that "action, the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter, corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world."¹

Some would opine that Edsa was not really a revolution, since the change expected and desired would not just be of administration but above all of value models or standards, outlook or worldview, way of life.² Corruption, nepotism, poverty, inefficiency did not end when Cory took over. One is reminded of the "Kamaganak Inc." or the so-called Presidential "relathieves." Aside from this, her inept administration was rocked by various coup attempts. To be against Cory, as a leader or in the political sense, was to be against the ratified 1987 constitution, which was meant to "revolutionize" the way we embody, better said, "con-textualize"³ our ideals as a nation compared to the Marcos 1973 constitution. To contextualize is to produce a text not in solitude, but with or "con" ("*cum*" in latin) the other. Said ideals, as contextualized within the prism of a nation, is what we may call "national experience."

¹ H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*. (Chicago-London, 1998), 7.

² Some Filipino thinkers were quite too optimistic about Edsa and precipitatedly called it the end of an era, thus affirming its revolutionary character. Cf. for example: Q. TERRENAL, "The Mightiest Impact of Proclamation No.3 (The EDSA Miracle)" in *Karunungan* (1987), 36-60.

³ Better than just being a "text", the constitution of a nation is a "partitura" or musical score in the sense that it must not only be read or interpreted (text), but it must be executed, played (musical score). Perhaps the Gadamerian notion of "spiel" or play could be helpful on this matter, H.G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*. 2nd. ed. (New York, 1998), 101-134.

The 1987 constitution was a "revolt" in this regard. I am not certain as to whether it could be classified a "revolution" because there are certain sectors who would want to "revolutionize" certain articles and it is ironic that those who "revolted" against this very constitution are now public servants whose ascent to public office is based on it. And now we are faced with another charter change. We are a country wherein democracy is a very fragile "asset." Yet we have had four constitutions in the twentieth century alone: the 1935 constitution, the 1973 constitution, the 1986 "freedom" constitution and the 1987 constitution. The destruction of the European city Intramuros, with its temples and historical buildings, once the nation's capital and cultural center, is indeed not just a historical event that happened in the final phase of the Japanese occupation of our country. It is a historical metaphor indicative that here in the Philippines everything is fragile. There is no stability. There are no firm "traditions" to speak of. Everything, even the most revered of traditions which keep the islands of our nation together amidst volatile issues such as nationalism, separatism and national growth. Democracy is the nation's most fragile asset.

Better said, the Filipinos, in general terms, are bereft of principles. We are not a principled people. We are not merely pragmatic, but unprincipled. Principles are the experiential articulation of our values. Values, in turn, are the criteriological formulation of our virtues. Virtues imply "strength" and "tendency" to do something.⁴ They are amoral in their primordial state. They acquire their morality in as much as we make choices determined by our criteriology formulated axiologically or evaluated from our values to which our consciences

⁴ "Classical fundamental ethics, radically teleological, and also moral theology attempts to lead the human person, its subject, towards the end through good human acts (and positive attitudes, and basic positive options). In his journey of life, the human person is directed by his conscience, guided by law. His movement to the ultimate end (the fundamental option, happiness, God), implicit in intermediate ends, is strengthened by virtue, frustrated by sin, and, in Christian perspective, rooted in and aided by grace. Virtue, then, is a basic ethical category, to be studied with other fundamental moral categories, such as happiness, freedom, law, conscience, love, sin and, in religious perspective, grace. Virtue, moreover, is interconnected with the other ethical categories to the point of aiding them become practically operative. Virtues dispose human beings to act according to their nature, help them develop rationally and creatively their potentialities." F. GOMEZ, "Some Notes on the Relevance of Virtue and Virtues in Ethics and Bioethics" in Idem., *Promoting Justice, Love, Life*. (Manila, 1998), 68-69.

adhere. Consciences are above all axiological consciousness in every rational person.

In the Philippines, it is easy to make choices specially at the spur of the moment. But it is difficult to keep to these choices given various external pressures. It is facile to pay lip service, but quite hard and tedious to keep on amidst the many metamorphosis in our circumstances. The erosion of values is in effect an erosion of principles. But the soil on which our principles and values stand on is in itself eroded. Thus, there is truly moral erosion in the Filipino collective.

As I have said, everything is fragile in the Philippines. Some would be more euphemistic about the matter by stating that it is not that the Filipinos are fragile, but that they want change. Change and fragility are two inseparable concepts. Filipinos, though generally known to be meek and mild, are definitely not patient. In the case of the Filipinos, change and fragility form a cumulative equation together with impatience. They are a short-term people, with a short temper, with a short memory and hence "forgiving" inspite of their propensity to personal vendetta. Thirteen years after the fall of the Marcos regime which plundered the whole country, Imelda Marcos fetes herself in a bacchanalian feast, ostenting power and influence in a scandalous manner, at the Manila Hotel with her cronies (July 2, 1999).

The Filipino fragility is, unfortunately, tantamount to capriciousness. One example is the acclaim on the part of certain non-thinking sectors of making Quezon City the capital once again instead of Manila or of the absurd and insignificant proposal in the seventies to change the name of the Philippines. Change here in the Philippines is tantamount to capriciousness which in turn is tantamount to fragility. Once again, the cumulative principle.

Everything in this country is fragile even family ties, friendships and principles based on traditional values and the virtues of the individual. And all this is done or true in the name of "power." The lust for power is what drives the people to do what they do. The lust for power is the key to all the events of Philippine History. Everyday we see examples of being unprincipled in various sectors: government, business, private sector, religious groups and even the academe which prefers sports over the academic and making themselves quick diploma mills instead of guarding the sacred academic principles geared towards academic excellence.

This, as a people, is our *talante* “the materia prima, the *thymós* or force that we posee for character building. Man has to make himself, he makes himself in life, with the material, whether he likes it or not, that he has by nature.”⁵ Being unprincipled is our *talante* or our lack of it.

Many may opine that the Ramos administration was indeed something revolutionary or twisting as compared to the time of Aquino. From these pages, this writer would like to congratulate President Ramos for really trying his best. But likewise many were somewhat disillusioned with President Ramos —the centennial⁶ president. Many sectors of society saw in Ramos the very same appetite for self perpetuation in power that Marcos manifested. Some would see Ramos’ “revolutionary” Philippines 2000 as a reformulation of Marcos’s New Society. My point is that each administration wants a revolution. Even Former Speaker José de Venecia, Ramos’s annointee, would want to carve a niche of his own. He did not want to be a Ramos clone. Neither did Ramos, Benigno Aquino’s former jailer and one of the authors of the EDSA Revolt of 1986, though he was the annointee of Corazón Aquino notwithstanding the fact that the late Ramón Mitra, a long time ally in the opposition, won in the then ruling party’s convention. In his inaugural speech, Ramos indicated this and even said “we cannot work in the dark” alluding to the power failures which characterized the final years and the dwindling times of the Aquino administration. Ramos succeeded eventually, after a while, in solving the power failure problem before which Aquino, in the final years of her term, proved ineffectual. Mrs. Aquino, for all intents and purposes, is a romanticized symbol for Filipinos in their struggle and “victory” against the tyranny of the Marcos regime. This is her greatest merit which unfortunately will always be related to the pitfalls of her administration from 1986-1992, although many people tend to forget this and still romanticize her. Even in 1999, Marcos is still an issue. But the dictator has been dead since 1989. Why invoke him? There are other issues, though some directly related to the family of the late dictator. Admirable indeed is Mrs. Aquino’s efforts to accompany the Filipino people in their struggles

⁵ J.L.L. ARANGUREN, “*Ética*” in Idem., *Obras*. (Madrid, 1965), 661.

⁶ “Centennial” refers to the centennial of the Philippine revolution. Ramos’ term ended in 1998, the year wherein the Philippines celebrated one hundred years of the revolution which led to the proclamation of Philippine independence on June 12, 1898.

even after her term, but she and all her followers should leave Marcos as he is: frozen and cold.

But we Filipinos do tend to forget and make the same mistakes again. In this sense, the Archbishop of Manila's call for a noise barrage and prayer on September 21, 1999, anniversary of the declaration of Martial Law and also of the Plaza Miranda massacre (which many Filipinos have already forgotten) was an excellent move.

We are also witnessing the upsurge of a new generation of politicians who do not want to be identified with the so called "trapos" or traditional politicians or the "trapo" way of doing politics associated with oligarchism, cronyism, corruption and desires to perpetuate oneself in power. Among those candidates in the 1998 Presidential Election we can cite the likes of Sen. Raúl Roco, former Mayor (now Secretary) Alfredo Lim and even Manuel Morató who ran so that the votes for Estrada, who was undoubtedly the most popular candidate, would be deviated from the eventual victor who was Estrada himself. In the House of Representatives, a new breed of politicians dubbed in the media as the "Spice Boys" after a British all-female musical group are banking on their youth, good looks and idealism, which naturally comes with lack of age and experience, in order to bring about a revolution, not only in the House of Representatives but also in the whole political scene and in the very *politique* of the country.

President Estrada (the millennium president) was against the Ramos administration initiated Constitutional Change. Once in power, however, he started pushing for Constitutional Change (or "Cha Cha" as it was popularly known). Mere pragmatics? Perpetuation in power? Economic reforms? Truly there are hidden agendas which sparked that protest or pro-democracy rally of August 20, 1999 in Makati to which Estrada's stalwarts, headed by El Shaddai's Mike Velarde responded with a rally of their own, with roast calf, pork and chicken on the same date and the more spacious and historical venue of Luneta Grandstand.

Frankly, rallies can be tiring and not only in the physical sense. They, as a principle, should be considered as the last resort. Rallies are indicative that things are not going as they should be or at least it is a call or indication that things should go in a different manner in pursuit of a goal: the betterment of all. Rallies are indicative of a critical sense. A critique is above all consciousness of not having attained an ideal and is the way towards said ideal. But as I have said, as a critique,

they should be considered as the last resort. Given our scenario, we are forced to take the last resort. What's more a rally is a privilege in an open democratic set up although it may send messages outside that the society and the government has not yet "matured" or is far away from being the "best of possible worlds" as Leibniz put it. Nevertheless, rallies, noise barrages and even prayer vigils are modes of expression that call for change.

Each president desires to initiate if not consummate change. We Filipinos tend to do it this way. We like to be revolutionary even to the point of shaking the foundations on which our nation and the future of its democracy rest. We are obsessed with having our own identity which I think is a sign of latent insecurity. The end result, I am afraid, is that we might pull the rug under our very own feet. We Filipinos have this great desire to differentiate ourselves from our predecessors in order to justify our term of office. Sometimes we really tend to overdo it. Sometimes we do not do anything at all.

Revolution vs. Revolt

Are we truly revolutionary? Or is it perhaps we tend to confuse "revolution" with "revolt"? Or would it not be better to just settle the issue and affirm that Filipinos are more "reactionary" than anything else? All these fears of a new dictatorship, this somewhat exaggerated advocacy of the death penalty, the renewed consciousness of accusing child abusers and the like are reactions to our failure to effectively address the problems in the past even to the point of irrational zeal.

Earlier I have already alluded to this point. The so-called "revolution" in 1898 which led the *Caudillo* to declare independence in 1898 was not really a revolution. A revolution, to my mind, is a consummated change or shift in events brought about by a shift in perspective. I would rather deem it as a revolt. A revolt is going against the predecessor or the present state of affairs. It is a process. Said process necessarily implies progress. Progress is advancement more than anything else.⁷ I am not talking about political, economic nor technological

⁷ Limiting ourselves to the Philippine scene, the 1981 article of Prof. M. DY is truly an embarrassment for Filipino Philosophy of Development that acknowledges inspiration and challenge stimulated by the empty Marcos ideology. Cfr. "Towards a Filipino Philosophy of Development" in *Unitas* 54 (1981), 160-181.

progress in the sense, but I would rather limit myself to conceptualizing progress as those factors or set of factors that would favor or lead to the consummation of the revolt and thus bring about a true revolution.

Actually, the very first revolution as to our country's political state was on July 4, 1946. This date was the consummation of the previous revolts from foreign dominance. It was a revolutionary moment, brought about by progressive moments such as the Os-Rox mission, although many would contest that July 4, 1946 as our true date of independence from foreign power by opining that independence was truly consummated when the so called "dirty dozen" or "fearless 12" of the Philippine Senate when they junked in 1991 the proposed U.S. Bases Agreement. For many "revolutionaries" this was truly the first date of our independence from the U.S. But now we have the Visiting Forces Agreement. I was in the U.S. when this Agreement, not considered a treaty by the U.S. Senate, was being forged. It did not come out in the news in the U.S. Thus, it is not of any concern of the average American and hence, not really an issue in the U.S. But circumstances here in the Philippines have compelled us to give said agreement the importance it does not have in the U.S. What is ironic is that some of the "Fearless 12" in 1991 are the proponents of this new agreement.

It is not the purpose of this article to enter into these details. These days, starting with the 1998 commemoration until now (July, 2000), we are reliving historical events. What is historical is usually deemed to be factual. I believe that this equation is not at all precise. Not all facts are historical. There is even an era which we call pre-history and yet it is factual. What is historical is what is factual and narrative. What makes up a narrative? Well, a narrative is a selected experience. It is selected because it is relevant, important. It is a factor above all in terms of comprehension. Experience in itself is the matrix of all historical reality. It breaks or "gives" itself into various experiential moments which are actually choices for us. We choose those moments which are relevant, significant, pivotal. Part of these moments are the "revolts" which most of us precipitatedly deem as "revolutionary." Indeed it is difficult, especially if our vantage points are attached temporally and spatially to the events or facts, to distinguish what is "revolutionary" from what is merely "reactionary" or a revolt.

By the aforementioned selection process we gather the various coloured threads with which we weave the complicated and yet aes-

thetically impressive tapestry of our history. These threads are colorful because of the variety. It is only in variety that we appreciate colors. These varieties consist of politics, literature, visual arts, performing arts, social issues, religious institutions, individuals, etc. which encompass various fields: Biology, chemistry, Physics, Medicine, Pharmaceutics, Politics, Sociology, Economics, Anthropology, Psychology, Music, Sculpture, Dance, Theatre, Painting and even... Philosophy.

Philosophy as Revolutionary

In the preceding paragraph, I mentioned various disciplines which have indeed caused "revolutions" (although they started as "revolts") each in their own limited circle. But what about Philosophy, at least in the Philippine context? There can be no doubt that Philosophy has been revolutionary and has had, in its own historical course, its own revolts and revolutions.

In the Philippines our scientists, politicians (whether honest or otherwise), economists, even artists have truly "revolutionized" our lives. Some have even entered the international scene inspite of the poor "publicity power" of the Filipinos which the Americans, English, Germans, French, Japanese among others possess. Nowadays, publicity has to be equated with knowledge: both in knowing and in being known. This, in my opinion, constitutes contemporary Sociology of Knowledge.

Going back to my question: Has Philosophy been truly revolutionary for us Filipinos? Of course, we cannot deny that among the so called Filipino Philosophers there have been revolts and revolutions: there were revolts against the so called dominant Thomism of the University of Santo Tomás, founded in 1611 and the oldest university in Asia, some students no longer sit at the feet of their masters and have started to fly on their own, new trends are arriving although not really emerging from our own indigenous efforts, etc.⁸

It is impossible for us to imagine our country without the likes of Lapu-Lapu, José Rizal, Andrés Bonifacio, Emilio Aguinaldo, Manuel Quezon, Sergio Osmeña, Manuel Roxas, Ramón Magsaysay, Ferdinand Marcos, Corazón Aquino, Fidel Ramos nor without Gregorio Aglipay, Gomburza, Jorge Barlin, Felix Manalo... Cardinal Sin, José Ma. Sison,

⁸ Cfr. E.S. QUITO, *The State of Philosophy in the Philippines* (Manila 1983)

Conrado Balweg, or even the phenomenon that is Bro. Mike Velarde whose followers blindly follow his every word and move —although of course, some were against the Constitutional change proposed by Joseph Estrada in 1999. Nor would we be able to appreciate the beauty of being Filipino without Juan Luna, Felix Resurrección Hidalgo, Fernando Amorsolo, Napoloen Abueva, Leandro Locsin, Francisca Aquino, Lucrecia Urtula, Francisco Balagtas, Manuel Bernabé, José Garcia Villa, Nick Joaquin, Amado Hernández, Nicanor Abelardo, Francisco Santiago, Antonio Molina, Jovita Fuentes, Lucio San Pedro, Lucrecia Kasilag, José Maceda, Andrea Veneración, Cecille Licad, Nora Aunor, Vilma Santos, Sharon Cuneta, Fernando Poe, Jr., Dolphy and in his own right, the President himself Joseph Ejercito Estrada formerly a Box Office King and, probably, the most popular President since Magsaysay. The list is endless and other names could be added. Some of us would even prefer to “dream” of a Philippines without some of these people and wish that they never became historical realities. If they were not historical realities, the Philippine reality would be merely utopic.

But all these mentioned people were all “rebels” then each in their own way and have brought about revolutions in their fields of interest. But we have to admit that they have changed our way of being and seeing ourselves as Filipinos. They are already in the annals of our history because they became significant. Their life and work are relevant, significant, pivotal, vital. In order to enter history, one must create a significant experience that is worth the while narrating over and over again even with the necessary revisions. Revisions are the consequences of ever, changing times and paradigms which together form what we may call “historical perspective.”

And what about the Philosophers (there are many in our country who do not necessarily philosophize, but teach philosophy)? Are there any who could find a place in our national annals? I do not doubt that there are some who could easily fit in our country’s philosophical annals —usually the annals of “exclusive” and “excluding” organizations. But why has not Philosophy entered into our national narrative as a significant experience? Perhaps the only time that Philosophy entered into national significance was through a fictional character by the name of Pilosopong Tasyo in Rizal’s *Noli Me Tangere*. However, is Philosophy doomed to hide itself behind fiction and fictitious characters? Or worse, is Philosophy condemned to be something fictitious for our coun-

try?⁹ Philosophy, in the Philippine scene, calls for “strong” and “committed” thought bereft of the european fashionable “pensiero debole”. But, unfortunately, a “pensiero debole,” pragmatically unprincipled and compromising, would make waves in this set up.

In a still developing country such as ours (inspite of its noble pretensions and ambitions to growl like a Tiger especially in the good old days of the Ramos administration), Philosophy is not one of our priorities. Our priorities are rather technical, empirical and economic in nature. I am thankful that we still have a relatively big “room” for the arts, for the humanities. Thus, neither on the so-called academic nor grassroots level (especially in the academic level) do we find revolutionaries in the national sense or in the national level.¹⁰ As to the grassroots level, in fact, we have to change some of our “philosophical” or “psychical” notions or attitudes towards life such as laziness, indifference, crab mentality, etc. And we could through some of our attitudes and values which we loosely deem as “philosophical”, since they reveal our psyche, could revolutionize the world. I am referring to *pakikisama* (smooth interpersonal relations), hospitality, *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude), *bayanihan* (civic mindedness), *pakikipagkaibigan* (the art of friendship), etc.

Inspite of all this, I am proud to say that in the national level Philosophy has been present in all revolutions although in the implicit sense. They are made explicit although exactly as Philosophy in the academic sense, but rather in the practical sense. Some call these explicitations their “Philosophy,” others would call it their beliefs. Man is basically a believer, although not necessarily of God. Spoken like a secularized man! We should redefine his rationality in terms of being a believer. It is useless, futile, self-destructive to be fundamentally skeptical. For each enterprise man undertakes, there is an underlying belief: the belief to be able to attain something. To contrast these underlying beliefs to mere ideas or things that just pop up in our mind, Ortega wrote that these beliefs are not ideas that we have, but they are what

⁹ For pragmatic purposes, I am taking the word “fiction” in this paragraph in the conventional sense, i.e., that which is not objectively true or that which is imaginary which should not be the case. Since this is not the place for philosophizing about fiction, I would just like to recommend the reading of this excellent monograph: P. LAMARQUE and S. HAUGOM OLSEN, *Truth, Fiction and Literature*. (Oxford, 1994).

¹⁰ E.S. QUITO, *The State of Philosophy*, o.c., 9.

we are.¹¹ They constitute our very "being." They are the basis of what we are and what we do. Our reality consists of doing, executing our reality.¹² If we believe that we can do something, then our existence has purpose. It is no longer mere "existence," but life. Experience is the actualization of *existence* and its constant transformation into *life*.

Others would call the same thing "ideology." This term is in itself equivocal. It has nothing to do with Ortega's notion of "idea" as contrasted with "beliefs." An Ideology is a belief or idea that is converted or translated into action with the aim of achieving something. It starts off on a critical note, i.e., it aims to attain something. To criticize is not to downplay, destroy, but rather to strive, to contribute to the aspiration, to lead towards an idea which at the instant of criticizing has not yet been attained. This however presupposes certain conditions, presuppositions or transcendental notions of what is the idea that has to be attained. Later on, an ideology must check itself. It must continually be self-critical, i.e., it must not have an "innocent" attitude or that it must constantly make a criteriological evaluation of what it has reached so far based on the pre-established criteria or condition. This is the basis of a valid assessment in determining whether a revolt has been consummated into a revolution.

Some General Directions

Thus, in the national scene and in the revolutionary sense, Philosophy was there, but was not really there as the Deconstructionists would put it. But how could we make Philosophy truly and effectively present?

The only feasible solution that I can think of at this time is publicity. After all, we live in an age of nets, especially the internet wherein everything is at the grasp of our fingers. Just press the key and the whole world is before you. The professional Philosophers must first publicize themselves as an intellectual group just like the artists. Said group cannot afford to be elitist. It must be in touch with the pulse of the people. It must constantly blend with the people in order to speak

¹¹ J. ORTEGA y GASSET, "Ideas y Creencias" in *Obras Completas V* (Madrid, 1987), 384.

¹² J. ORTEGA y GASSÉ, *Qué es Conocimiento?* (Madrid, 1984), 114 ss.

of their concerns and address said concerns. But this publicity should be coupled with consistency, seriousness, dedication, sense, sound judgment, intelligence... all the qualities that are demanded by society of Philosophy. Society does have the inalienable right to make demands out of their citizens and the Philosophers are members of this society at least since Plato's *Republic*. It may be too much to demand answers from the Philosopher. He must accompany his fellow citizens in looking for answers. I think that the philosopher is above all companion more than anything else. Companionship in the spirit of solidarity makes the best kind of pedagogy. A companion breaks down the walls or barriers that hinder authentic dialogue. The perfection of companionship can only be friendship. After all, a philosopher, as the Greeks put it, is a friend of wisdom (*filosofia-filein* means love or friendship and *sofia* means wisdom). True wisdom can only be found in the company of others, better said in the company of friends, in an ambiance of friendship.

Philosophers must make their fellow Filipinos understand their national reality and not just national identity although this is the very starting point in order to appreciate reality. In other words, the role of the Philosopher just like that of the artist, economist, scientist and even the politician should be pedagogical. But the pedagogy of the Philosopher is different from the rest in the sense that it is fundamental, i.e., that it must seek to establish the foundations of all pedagogy, of all comprehension, of all understanding. Philosophy has the role in establishing above all that the life of a nation or the very nation itself is a reality. Because it is a reality, it is experientiable. But it must be experienced as something real, something that is really there palpable, incriminating, inevitable, inescapable, vital, important. It is life, the radicality of life, the radical reality, the reality that is really real.

By doing so, Philosophy paves the way for a realist grasp of the national situation, the national experience and how this is broken down into the experience of each and everyone, in inevitable and open dialogue, that constitutes the nation. Only a realist grasp of the situation could assure a realist solution.

We could say that Philosophy must formulate and present pedagogically models of comprehending reality. This trend started with Hegel with his *Phenomenology of Spirit* wherein the *Geist* or Spirit in search of Absolute Knowledge was his great metaphor of reality. With-

out Hegel, as it is universally acknowledged, there would not be a Karl Marx whose ideas greatly revolutionized the world.

Within the backdrop of history, science, particularly empirical science, has provided us with models not really in viewing reality as such, but rather in viewing it in the sense of making things easier for us. Science, in other words, viewed reality as something that would be conquerable in order for us to bear with it or live with it easier. It is in this sense that I opine that Science has evolved as Technology. "Techne" (*Tekne*), in the original sense of the word, is technique, facility or making things easier.

But Philosophy as such, especially in its most Metaphysical instance, is previous or more fundamental than Technology. It must provide us with the paradigms or models not just to understand but to conceptualize, prefabricate the modes that we concretize in technology or in science as technology. Rightly so, Philosophy is the mother of all sciences not just because it is that which lays the foundation of paradigm building to be later on applied in technology, but because it is the matrix of the explicitation of certain knowledge. Science is *Episteme* or certain knowledge as opposed to *Doxa* or uncertain knowledge which we usually translate as *Opinion*. Philosophy must provide us with a strong sense of certainty. Though the tides of time for a nation's life is always uncertain, there should be a fundamental certainty: experientiality, i.e., reality in as much as it is real. The nation is a constant experience, better said, a constant convergence of experiential moments into a singular experience that necessarily and inevitably affects those who comprise it.

Because of this, Philosophy possesses a fundamental credibility that would be the criteriological factor¹³ in bestowing credibility in the various sectors in the life of the nation. Simply said, Philosophy must play an ethical role in the life of a nation. In a country such as ours, revolts that must be consummated should proceed from a strong moral base. Ethics is action, but Philosophy must give it a moral base, a qualitative base.¹⁴ Morality is qualitative because it is experiential,

¹³ Cfr. M. OFILADA MINA, "La credibilidad como base de un discurso de teodicea en un mundo secularizado" in *Philippiniana Sacra* 32 (1997), 223-246. This article has been my point of departure in terms of the notion of credibility.

¹⁴ In methodologically distinguishing "Ethics" and "Morals" inspite of having

i.e., it is the experience of what is deemed moral, favorable, good, justifiable which must be converted into *Ethos* or *Mores*. In our country, as far as I see it, true revolutions must part from a firm moral base. Not just an ethical base, which is pure action or fulfillment, but moral in the "traditional" sense: upright, firm, realist and therefore justifiable.¹⁵

It is the role of Philosophy to provide the basis of the justification. This basis could be deemed as epistemological, because it provides knowledge, better said, certain knowledge. But this task should not end in the epistemological level. Said certain knowledge should be taken as a moral knowledge or basis. Knowledge, in as much as it is moral, opens itself up to *Ethos*, to the level of praxis and must reach the highest experiential level which we could deem as metaphysical, if not mystical which is already pure experientiability of that which is deemed as Supreme Reality, whether it be Personal (Theism, Deism), Axiological (Materialism, Capitalism) or just an ontological (or non-ontological such as Nirvana) state.

Philosophy, in order to be truly revolutionary, must be Epistemological, Ethical and Metaphysical or Mystical. These are the three stages of Philosophy in its quest for consummation of a revolt and above all in its quest for itself, since it is a self-mediating process. We only learn philosophy by philosophizing!

Towards Creativity

And all this starts from a revolt. Now a revolt is necessarily reactionary, but need not be antithetical or opposed. In a dialectical scheme it must be antithetical, better said, alienating. I am in favor of a more dialogical scheme, rather than a dialectical set up. I believe in dialogue: meeting, exchange, encountering, mutual enrichment, convergence of experiences. The consummation of dialogue is, at the outset, the consummation of a revolution.

A revolt need not be antithetical, but it must be creative. Because of its reactionary character, it cannot be original if taken in the

the same etymological origins as to meaning in the sense that in the original greek and latin sense they mean the same thing, I have been partially inspired by A. CORTINA, *Etica sin Moral*. (Madrid, 1990).

¹⁵ One has to agree that justification can be either: a) theodiceal or b) moral or both at the same time given the same circumstance.

sense of creating *ex nihilo*. Only a God could create, *in sensu stricto*. A revolt is a creative impulse. "Better than originality, I would say 'creativity'. For us men, this activity is never *ex nihilo*. It is always an appropriation of something. It is taking possession of something that comes to us above all through the environment even without pinpointing the exact reference. This happens in the majority of cases. As we appropriate something, as we take possession of something, even though it may be somebody else's ideas, let us recreate it from within going out to confront reality from a recreated standpoint and thus we recreate reality."¹⁶

What we could not recreate would be reality as something real, but we could recreate it in as much as we experience it as something real. We are faced with the reality of a nation besieged by division, radical individuality, a culture of corruption and of lack of discipline. It is not just a question of beat them or join them, but by being able to grasp it as it is: a reality that is real. This is the starting point of the moral regeneration that is needed. Perhaps what we need is a *New Politique* to regenerate, to revive our nation which can be likened to the Pasig River, the main artery of the city of Manila, which our ecological indifference has caused us to kill. I think that our national regeneration could be analogous to the slow moving *Piso para sa Pasig* (A Peso for the Pasig) programme or even to the *Erap para sa mahirap* (Erap or Joseph Estrada for the poor). Many, out of valid disappointment, would rebaptize Erap as *Hirap* (poor or suffering). This *New Politique* must be vitalist, experiential, realist.¹⁷ And, if I may add, critical though in these times critiques are not welcome.

Everything here in the Philippines is too personal, too volatile, too capricious. We are, in other words, too attached. Memories, ironically, are also short. Lessons, inspite of all attachments, are not learned. I am not only referring to the Marcoses and their return to glory and glamour in the Philippines together with their cronies. There are people elected into power to serve under this 1987 constitution who have previously taken arms and have gone against this very constitution under

¹⁶ M. OFILADA MINA, "The Philosophical Past Revisited From and Beyond Ortega" in *Unitas* 70 (1997), 72.

¹⁷ Cfr. J. ORTEGA y GASSET, "Vieja y Nueva Política" in *Obras Completas I*. (Madrid, 1987). 265-307.

which they are serving and the government mandated to serve and defend said 1987 constitution then.

The *New Politique* must start as a revival, a recreated and creative reappropriation of what is good in the Filipino or what's left of it given the axiological shifts due to hard times and due to the innate ass licking capacity of the Filipino wherein values are sacrificed. This is an antithetical and yet dialogal revolt to the present state. It does not intend to annihilate, but rather reform; not to destroy, but to give new life; not to impose, but to teach notwithstanding the might of a ruler with an iron fist. This is the role of Philosophy in revolutionizing in our country.

For professional philosophers—who are in effect professional thinkers¹⁸—or those in academe, it must start with how we train our students who are the future of our country. We must always have credibility and translate this credibility as an outward manifestation of our desire to accompany them in their struggles to attain our national ideals. Philosophy could no longer afford to be elitist. It could no longer afford the inviolable and arrogant wall between student and professor. The professor is above all a fellow student, a facilitator of learning whose role is fulfilled to perfection when he becomes a companion, a friend without sacrificing his pedagogical authority which must only consist in the right to demand the best out of his students. Only by bringing out the best of the constituents could a revolution be consummated.

Challenges

1998, to my mind, was not the centenary of the Philippine Revolution and I say this as we awake to this new millennium filled with fears and anxieties as 1999 was just like 1998, a bad economic year. I would rather view it as the centenary of the Philippine revolt, because this revolt still goes on. It is no longer against a foreign power, but rather against how we have allowed ourselves to be dominated by indifference, corruption, lack of discipline, lethargy, crab mentality, etc.

¹⁸ This leads me to ask is philosophizing or thinking a profession or a vocation? By being professional thinkers do we run the risk of being mercenaries instead of being truly responsive to that calling or vocation? To be professional is fine, but in the Philippines we run the risk of being mercenaries instead of sticking to the ethical barriers of our profession.

But the greatest challenge lies in our national creativity in order for us to regenerate a new Philippines. We are still a young politically independent nation. We still have to mature starting with the political dimension wherein election fraud, wasted "bakya" (mass appeal) votes, political bribery, election violence and even capricious changes in structure which only seem to adequate itself to personal agendas, etc. would be things of a past worth forgetting. The maturity point of our nation, just like Hegel's *Geist* in its long and arduous journey, would constitute the true revolutionary moment for all of us Filipinos. Only a philosophical or reflective generation could assure us of this true revolutionary moment for our country.

Philosophy must play a role in this continuous revolt. It must accompany the nation in the way towards its consummation in a genuine revolution. However, it must find the ways by which it could enter the mainstream in the life of the nation. Perhaps the pedagogy of companionship, to which I have alluded vaguely and generically in this piece, could be the starting point.

Perhaps we Filipinos are only good in revolts, in mass rallies in expressing strong sentiments in certain points of our lives. But in the long run, in the *longue durée* where it really matters, we are a flop. Thus, we are incapable of revolutions. In effect, we are bereft of "political maturity." In a country wherein everything is attached to personalities, we are far from political maturity. Poverty is only a feature, but not a determinant factor in political maturity. For example, it would be inconceivable to have a jury system because the jurors could easily be bribed or swayed. Notwithstanding poverty, a man or a nation with "political maturity" holds on to principles inspite of pressures, offers and the like. Hence, our judicial powers lie in magistrates whom we presume to have the intellectual preparation and whom we pray to have that conscience and maturity needed for the swift and correct application of justice, understood above all, as fairness.¹⁹ Another classic example, would be the everyday cases of bribery, in the face of which people do not lose face, even they are supposed to but instead they just lose their principles; and even vote buying wherein many have won elections because of vote buying and cheating (popularly called as "dagdag bawas" or adding votes to oneself and subtracting the votes

¹⁹ Cfr. J. RAWLS, *A Theory of Justice*. (Cambridge, Mass., 1971).

from another candidate). But above all, we tend to forget those who perished in the horrendous dark night of Martial Law and their families who still suffer the consequences. We have even tried, in the name of settlement and "reconciliation," to offer a price so that all those atrocities would be totally forgotten and erased from our collective memory. Or do we have one?

To be comfortable, that is our aim. To be comfortable may mean exiling our principles and laying aside our cries for justice. That is what power is all about.

Power

Was the February 1986 EDSA event a revolution? Or its very sobriquet "People Power" and emphasis must be given to the last word. I am inclined to say it was a show of force, though in general terms nonviolent. EDSA has given us new symbols in certain personalities. It has given Catholics a new place of worship and to aesthetically minded Filipinos new monuments. It has given us Filipinos in general new leaders, a new system. But has it given us new issues in this new century? Has it given us the necessary issues that we must confront at the turn of the century? Or are we stuck with the same personalities, who are the same rallying points instead of the issues? Are we stuck with a romanticized version of a martyr's death and the story of how the weak and the good triumphed over the mighty and corrupt tyrant? Or do circumstances force us to stick to certain personalities converted to living legends and symbols and the same romanticized stories?

The greatest obstacle in this country for true revolutions —and when I say "true" I mean "needed"— is precisely, power. Everything here in the Philippines: all motives, acts, decisions and the like, especially in the socio-political realm can be reduced or traced to power. Power is above all excessive attachment. It is the great and formidable obstacle in the maturing process which requires detachment.

Man, because he wants to satisfy his needs, overcome his loneliness and thus desires to live with others, is a social being. But man, in as much as he wants to live with others or lives actually with them and wants to accomplish things with the people he lives, is a political being.

Power in the case of the Philippines calls for a surrendering of principles. It is not that power is intrinsically evil, but it does become

evil when it is not founded on authority. This is true for all sectors of Philippine society in as much as these sectors are the results of people wanting to do things together and at the same time want to do things together.

In this country, power is equated with popularity and with clinging to the one whose office has not yet expired or is the one in power even to the point of having them stand as sponsors in weddings and baptisms—all part of the Philippine psyche. It is curious that the “former powerfuls” who were sponsors in their day are hardly, and I am speaking in general terms and admit that there may be exceptions, at all invited nowadays to stand as sponsors. Of course, we cannot deny that the priority in the choice of making sponsors are given to the “incumbent powerfuls” rather than to those whose sun has already set in the socio-political arena. We all want to be part of the “in” crowd and this is a great socio-political factor in this nation.

Here in the Philippines, power is separable from authority even reaching the undesirable extreme wherein, in many cases, authority is totally absent in those who exercise power. In other words, those in power are bereft of authority. In a country wherein many voters lack conscience and formation, things such as power, prestige, popularity are blinding.

Authority comes with study, intellectual preparation, moral growth or growth of character. Ortega assigns authority to the intellectual elite. We must go a little further in affirming that aside from having intellectual preparation, the true elite or the genuinely authoritative class, who must take over the reins of government, must have ethical or moral backing, i.e., they must have a well developed and matured character not afraid to stick on to principles amidst turmoils and who has the sagacity to determine the broadness of principles when the occasion calls for it.

Authority lays foundations and gives a solid basis for future projects, whereas power tends to corrupt and corrode even itself.

***Paideia* (Learning)**

The ideal would be that men and women of authority be given power. *Vox populi vox Dei* does not necessarily work in the Philippine setting. The majority may give someone power, but not authority. The

former comes from mandate, while the latter comes from *paideia* especially in terms of character. It is in the *Paideia* wherein the *vox Dei* is truly heard. Fortunately or unfortunately, in a so-called democratic setting, like here in the Philippines, the *vox Dei* is heard in the *vox populi*. But the adage of *vox populi vox Dei* will remain utopic unless the *populus* undergo *paideia*. In this light, philosophy could provide the needed *paideia*. Philosophy in its effectiveness is *paideia*.²⁰ But there is also a need for a *paideia* among the very philosophers themselves or those who call themselves philosophers here in the Philippines. Most of them lack the very basic *paideia* needed in their profession to be effectual pedagogues and researchers in their own field. If they cannot break ground in their own respective academic realm, what more in an expanded camp such as politics? Deplorable isn't it? What's more what is needed is a strong *paideia*. Effectively, what the Philippines need is a strong, firm, just, benevolent, principled and unselfish leader or Pied Piper to lead us from the rivers of our own self-destruction and onwards to greener pastures. But this seems to be utopic.

Paideia does not seek to explain everything, but to make the people capable and well armed to face the challenges that arise and that threaten their very identity and dignity and the principles which emanate from them. As a great philosopher once wrote: "Philosophy destroys its usefulness when it indulges in brilliant feats of explaining away. It is then trespassing with the wrong equipment upon the field of particular sciences. Its ultimate appeal is to the general consciousness of what in practice we experience."²¹ *Paideia*, in its methodology, must seek to present a model of comprehension and the rest would take care of itself hopefully.

Here in our country, we are experiencing what Ortega calls *Revolt of the Masses*, the title of his undoubtedly most famous book.

²⁰ Cfr. W. JAEGER, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*. Vols. 1-111. (Oxford-New York, 1986). In this essay, I am not referring to the Greek way of *Paideia* in the strict sense of the word. I am citing Jaeger's work in order to refer the readers to a serious study on how Philosophy and Culture mutually influence one another in a particular setting, of course, *Paideia* is used in this article in the broad sense of the word and also in its original sense as "formation", "education" and process of acquiring culture. The Germans would call it "bildung" or "kultur."

²¹ A.N. WHITEHEAD, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*. (New York, 1957), 29.

Perhaps only if the masses revolt against themselves could we see the start of a genuine revolution.

But then again, everything must start with the individual, with the *Paideia* of the individual. Even the institutions whose *raison d'être* is *Paideia* has power in its agenda instead of forming men and women of authority, giving them authority, helping them feel the sense of authority and its authentic roots which is hard work on self-formation and cultivation of man's highest ideals.

The end of such institutions must above all be the conscience formation of the individual which, coupled with intellectual and cultural formation, prepares him for the arduous task of helping others who live together do things together. These are principled individuals and not just merely virtuous individuals. Principles are the assimilation, articulation and qualification of virtues which spring in the depths of the individual due to *Paideia*. Said virtues, which spring from *paideia*, are faced, methodologically confronted with what we may call values or the objective and objectifying counterparts of the virtues and the determinants of the directions of said virtues.²² Hopefully, such individuals have already been born in Philippine shores. Such individuals form the elite without necessarily being elitist. This is what we hope for as we leave the celebration centennial of the Philippine revolution and enter the new millennium, with great expectations and dreams, hoping that the true revolution would commence soon. (Many would contend that the new millenium starts in 2001).

Paideia is effectively virtue. To be learned is to be virtuous, to be manly (*vir* = man), to be a man in the fullest sense of the word. Manhood is measured by fidelity to principles against all odds. This is virtue in action. This is learning in its most sublime form.

To end, let us quote the poet in exile, who hoped for a different kind of revolution, but whose premature death sparked the bloody revolution. Ironically, he, who after clearing his total being of the contradictions of the two sides of the issues immortalized in his two novels and who refused to bless any separatist and bloody revolution, was executed because he was accused of being the mastermind of

²² Cfr. A. MACINTYRE, *After Virtue*. 2nd ed. Indiana, 1984); P. KREEFT, *Back to Virtue*. (San Francisco, 1986).

said revolution, which eventually led to the end of Spanish rule in our country:

*Ya no sois como antes, llenas de fuego y vida
brindando mil coronas a la inmortalidad;
algo serias os hallo; mas vuestra faz querida
si ya no es tan risueña, si está descolorida,
en cambio lleva el sello de la fidelidad.*

*Me ofrecéis, ¡oh ilusiones! la copa del consuelo,
y mis jóvenes años a depertar venís:
gracias a ti, tormenta; gracias, vientos del cielo,
que a buena hora supisteis cortar mi incierto vuelo,
para abatirme al suelo de mi natal país.*

You are no longer like before, full of fire and life,
offering a thousand crowns to immortality;
I find you somewhat serious. Though your beloved faces
are no longer as merry, and somehow pale,
they, however, bear the seal of fidelity.

You offer me, oh illusions, the cup of consolation
and you have come to reawake my youth.
Thanks to you, Oh storm! Thanks to you, Oh gales of heaven!
For at the right time you cut short my uncertain flight
to hurl me down to the bosom of the land of my birth.
(J. Rizal, *Mi retiro*). □