



TO DESIRE A NATIONAL LANGUAGE IS TO DREAM OF A NEW CULTURE

BY VIRGILIO S. ALMARIO

TRANSLATED BY PHILLIP YERRO KIMPO

We need a scientific and intellectualized National Language. We need a new culture for liberation. But these will not materialize under the present colonial mindset and corrupted values of the educated, wealthy and powerful in our society. We must first undergo a systematic and progressive cultural education, a cultural reeducation, and with the united support of all the writers, artists, teachers, and cultural workers. This is the first big step to real and lasting Change.



TO DESIRE A NATIONAL LANGUAGE IS TO DREAM OF A NEW CULTURE

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Isinalin sa Ingles ni **Phillip Yerro Kimpo Jr.**

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Establishing an Enduring National Language

// *After you have learned to be Pinoy, you have to protect it, fight for it, against other Filipinos who think everything's wrong with our culture and find the need to apologize for it constantly."*

—Gilda Cordero-Fernando

Whenever the intellectualization or modernization of the Filipino language is discussed, we quickly grope for the problems and methods of borrowing. We just remember creation afterwards. There was a time when the energy and intellect of the disciples of language were focused more on creation. Until the Institute of the National Language (Surian ng Wikang Pambansa, SWP) was attacked by “purism” and the “Maugnaying Talasalitaang Pang-agham” project funded by the National Science Development Board (NSDB) failed along with it. Academicians turned allergic to creation, and universities gave more attention to loaning from English and the corresponding problems of respelling.

Borrowing from international languages is highly practical. Highly practical, more so, if the source language is the

privileged language of national education. The National Language is also kept up to speed with the world's advance. Problematizing the most efficient guidelines in borrowing and respelling becomes almost the only task of teachers and editors. And the said work is alleviated by the modernization carried out on the alphabet, in order to add the letters that represent the sounds absent in the Tagalog/Pilipino *abakada*.

But does this mean that Filipino is more robust now?

My article's original title¹ in Filipino reveals that the accents I used in "*pagtatátág*" ("founding") and "*matatág*" ("robust") wishes to convey something. Both can be considered to have a single root word, but there are two ways of pronouncing it. The first is slow and in noun form; the second is quick and in adjective form. But it is not the sentence's section which separates the meanings of the two. The noun "*pagtatátág*" ("founding") also differs from the noun "*pagpapatatág*" ("fortifying"). It is easy to found ("*magtátág*") an organization or corporation; it is much more difficult, however, to keep it robust ("*matatág*"). On our topic, the Filipino language, I wish to identify the difference between the "*pagtatátág*" ("founding") of Filipino as the National Language from the "*pagpapatatág*" ("fortifying") of Filipino as a national language.

In the past 80 plus years, since the declaration of the creation of a national language based on Tagalog, it has been our immense duty to establish a building of the National Language, so to speak, a national language that from Tagalog became Pilipino in 1959, and became Filipino in 1987. The Filipino language already has its own edifice within the Philippines' national culture and history. The duty that we now face is to safeguard the edifice from ruination or sudden collapse.

Let us now return to the problem I unwrapped. Does the rapid borrowing or creation help to reinforce the Filipino language?

Loaning from an international language is definitely a meaningful step toward Filipino's modernization and intellectualization. Likewise, systematic and careful creation is definitely a big advance to make Filipino efficient for everyday use and the people's education. However, and this is the point of my discussion, these activities are not enough to make Filipino robust

1 *Pagtátág ng Isang Matatág na Wikang Pambansa.*

as the National Language.

Returning to our analogy, we founded a building. It is a building with several floors, probably three floors, in keeping with the language's progress since 1937. It is a building with various angles, in keeping with the disciplines and fields of knowledge in which language is involved, and so it has angles that are sturdier than other angles. Such as the situation that the usage of Filipino in the language of literature and social science is much livelier; efforts in Filipinizing the language of science and mathematics is limited, however.

If we pursue our discussion of the analogy, borrowing and creation can be likened to refurbishing—enhancing, reinforcing, modifying the design, installing new windows, painting the old walls, using new cement, etc.—the building's angles. So it can stand up to any inspection and scrutiny. Borrowing is a significant way for it to meet the standard of a modern building in the world. Aside from undertakings for intellectualization, floors are slated to be added to the building of language. And even its current state might receive a facelift. The lobby might become a gallery of languages, and an auditorium built for large gatherings. A museum of indigenous languages might need a floor or two; likewise, one or two floors might be needed for a library, an archive, a laboratory. And of course, the branch of translators, branch of researchers, and other service branches would each need a floor or two. There is no other goal but for the building of language to reach greater heights while expanding linguistic programs and projects.

Which is why it is important to examine if the building is robust enough to serve the future additional weight and the floors, people, and equipment that it has to carry. Now, if architects were to be asked, they would say that the true basis of a building's strength lies in its foundations. The earth it was built on cannot be relied on forever—it softens, shifts with strong earthquakes, and can possibly cave in once the building adds weight. Therefore, the building that is Filipino might tilt once an angle of borrowed terms becomes too much of a load. It might sink to its first floor if the foundation is weak, and if the added floors of linguistic activities become too heavy. Which is why it is now the job of engineers to dig very deep into the earth and to deposit sufficient foundations of steel, cement, and other materials that can bear the estimated weight of the building to be constructed.

In keeping with the building-language analogy, the foundation of Filipino is its base language. What is the meaning of making Filipino robust by way of making its base language robust? How is it relevant to the problem in discussion, the intellectualization of Filipino?

Tagalog-Filipino Relationship

It is good to first look at how we can explain the difference between the base language and the national language. In our current discourse, we always need to distinguish Filipino from Tagalog in order to prove how Filipino is the national language. In such line of reasoning, Tagalog which became the basis for Filipino is a regional indigenous language. In the meantime, as what the fate of the 1935 Constitution wants to suggest, Filipino as the National Language needed to be born, developed, and formed from its base language in order to be introduced and recognized as a national language. In any case, the whole campaign, from the moment the National Language of the Philippines was called “Pilipino,” was an endeavor to fulfill the constitution’s directive. Filipino has become dissimilar from Tagalog in many ways.

In terms of architecture, we have erected a building (Filipino) from the foundation (Tagalog) we used.

But once we analyze the analogy, the building never departs or separates from the foundation. [Unless we wish to portray a *manananggal*.] Instead, the building is constructed on top of the foundation. Filipino as a national language was erected on top of its base language. In any case and in pursuance of the analogy, the durability of Filipino rests on the durability of its base language—Tagalog.

This is a very big problem for language experts and teachers who believe that a national language should be detached from its base language. And I wish to quickly clarify in this section that such presumption is far from the truth. First off, that was not decreed by the 1935 Constitution. Instead, many of our experts and teachers have fallen victim to the tomfoolery by the enemies of language—especially that of fanatic regionalists and aristocratic *Ingleseros*—to prove that Filipino is a “fabricated language” and cannot be realized. Such detachment of Filipino from Tagalog

cannot happen. But contradictory to their presumption, this is not permitted by “linguistic engineering”—if such a beast indeed exists in linguistics—save for a wish to replace the foundation or base language. Such moving of a house was easy in the age of the bahay-kubo. But easier said than done in the present age of condos and skyscrapers. If a building is perceived to be at risk from an earthquake, the whole building is usually demolished in order to repair its foundation.

Meanwhile, a building is not its foundation. Even if it has a first floor and lobby that are part of the foundation, the overall appearance, design, contents, and usage of the building’s floors are a kind of development that differs from its original section. This should be the essence when explaining the difference between Filipino and Tagalog. Today, Filipino possesses characteristics that already cannot be claimed by the Tagalog of Lope K. Santos during the Commonwealth, or even by the Pilipino of Jose Villa Panganiban in 1972. The reality of Tagalog as the base language and of Filipino as the National Language is contingent on this. The tight relation between Tagalog and Filipino should be examined also in this light.

Perhaps indeed, an aspect of the problem that we have raised is inspecting the foundation of the building that we have erected. Is Filipino’s base language robust? Does Tagalog have the capacity to bear Filipino’s rising and soaring floors? Would it not be consumed by any intensity 8 social and political earthquake?

Before I continue, I wish to identify one difference between a building and language. Language is not made of hard and inert rocks, steel, and cement. [Unless we believe in Gaia, and that all things imbedded in the earth are imbued with spirits and energies.] Every sound, utterance, syllable, and word has life, and the same goes for the related letters, alphabets, and systems of writing. These change with time or are changed by the changing usage of language. These are the main elements of the linguistic foundation from which the building of language sprung.

Taking off from the modification I carried out on the building-language analogy, I wish to restate the problem we are discussing. So, do the said linguistic foundations in Tagalog have the quality to sustain the development of the linguistic building of Filipino?

My quick answer, Tagalog was able to bear all the constructions and reconstructions implemented for Filipino in the past 80 years. Tagalog never impeded the progress of Filipino. The board of Chairperson Jaime C. Veyra was not wrong in recommending Tagalog as the base language to President Manuel L. Quezon in 1937. There, simply, were wrong directions, which on one hand were also the result of the narrow-minded zeal of Tagalists, and on the other, of the deceitful and divisive obstructions by the enemies of language. But despite the government's lack of a clear and long-term linguistic plan, Filipino has risen, and Tagalog never became an impediment, in any manner, to the progress and propagation of Filipino as the National Language of the Philippines.

Comprehensive Service of the Base Language

Nevertheless, this does not mean that there has been a complete and mindful usage of Tagalog as the base language. I have previously hinted at one main cause. Instead of thinking of how to make a base language helpful, some, especially the academician experts on language, have even become allergic to Tagalog. They have fallen victim to faulty linguistic presumptions and personal ambitions. No surprise, since many academicians do not really think of Filipino's welfare. If you will remember, "Filipino" is a concept engendered by the critics of "Pilipino." These critics have a sacred belief that the National Language needs to be based on all the indigenous languages of the Philippines. Which is why they will be perpetually allergic to the single base language decreed for Pilipino and even for Filipino at the present.

This belief that I mentioned is the mentality that poses as the main hindrance to the complete and mindful use of Tagalog as the base language.

So why do we fail to concentrate on the greater value in Tagalog? It does not really violate any linguistic law. The world holds many examples of national languages born from an old and indigenous language. Meanwhile, none of all the experiments creating a language from an amalgamation of languages have succeeded. Even though we will say that all modern languages today experience borrowing and linguistic appropriation. Also, no one among the academicians espousing an "amalgamated Filipino"

have provided the desired system of amalgamation. But this kind of disruption has resulted in today's confused direction in advancing the National Language. The gains needed from a base language are not attended to.

The general direction of Filipino's intellectualization is an illustration of this kind of problem.

Ever since, there have been two obstacles to reaping gains from Tagalog for Filipino's intellectualization. First, the charge that this is a "purist" measure. Recently, it even took on a new label—"nativist" and became more abhorrent in the eyes of educated post-colonialists. Second, that Tagalog is an old language and a waste of time to utilize toward Filipino's modernization. These two hindrances are not unattached. In the minds of those opposed to a national language based on an indigenous language, they are instead inseparable siblings and with a single womb. These are ghosts that the Jurassic-brained are trying to resurrect and that we cannot fully expunge, despite the great reality already displayed to us (and to them!) that Filipino is a national language that is very alive and widely propagated.

The second obstacle, however, is the one which seems to actively guide our excessive reliance on borrowing from English in order to modernize Filipino. A notion also reigns among the academicians that the Philippines' indigenous languages are old, inferior, and therefore unintellectual. Linguistics certainly did not teach them this notion; this, however, might be an impression engendered in them by an excessive admiration for American teachers and an extreme conviction in the knowledge offered by English. Which is why the present activities for Filipino's intellectualization have ended up in translations from English, and a big chunk of this is the wholesale borrowing of English terminologies and/or creating counterparts to the existing scientific/technical vocabularies in English.

This direction is almost tantamount to the loss of confidence in the capability of Filipino's base language. In truth, this merely represents the general lack of confidence in all of the Philippines' indigenous languages. It banks on a solemn faith in the blessings of English, if only it had become the Philippines' national language, and if only it were the one proclaimed by the 1935 Constitution. The practicality of total dependence on English to intellectualize

Filipino is just one level of the manifestation of worshipping the practicality of proclaiming English as the would-be national language.

I have repeatedly explained that the selection of an indigenous language to develop as the National Language was the product of the nationalist aspiration during the time of the Constitutional Convention in 1934-1935, which was the child of the emancipatory aspiration from the 1896 Revolution, and can be considered as a continuing aspiration presented in the 1987 Constitution. I have also repeatedly cautioned that this is an aspiration inadequately internalized (or outrightly shut out) by the affluent and educated, especially those who continue to profit from the old colonial structure and its facelift this 20th century. In spite of everything, and by which I mean, in spite of all obstructions made by the affluent and educated and their enemies-of-language lapdogs, Filipino was established. The problem is how to make it robust versus a possible intense, reactionary earthquake in national politics.

And which is why we need to examine Tagalog's robustness as a base language.

The Constitution of the Indigenous

Before anything else, I wish to evoke the two realities related to Tagalog and to Filipino. First, that Filipino is an indigenous language. Second, that Tagalog is one of the indigenous languages of the Philippines. The provision of the 1935 Constitution to develop a national language based on an indigenous language of the Philippines was fulfilled in this manner. These realities have a big implication on the necessary and appropriate linguistic philosophy for us to proceed with our examination.

“Indigenous” is the central theoretical word in my two aforementioned linguistic realities. Tagalog and Filipino are not foreign languages. However, we need to quickly clarify, the indigenous is not a feature of being “pure.” There is no longer any pure language in civilized society and the Filipino indigenous language has no goal of becoming a pure language. In terms of a seed, it might have originated from some place in Asia and was carried here in ancient times by the waves or by the breeze. We

call the seed as indigenous (*katutubo*) since it took root (*tumubò*) in the land encompassed by the Philippine nation. Similar to the hundred plus languages that took root, sprouted, and blossomed in the Philippines. Moreover, it is impure, since by the time Tagalog was proclaimed as the base language, it had already gone through an extended colonial experience and had received naturalized words and traits from Spanish. This past century, the Filipino born from Tagalog likewise received naturalized words and traits from English.

From the preceding paragraph, the capacity of Tagalog and Filipino to receive foreign influences has been established. As indigenous languages, Tagalog and Filipino are not shuttered from influence. They are not rigid, in the sense that they cannot change; instead, they are **resilient**, as with the customary comparison—the bamboo—in order to yield to the storm’s lashes and to rise again. The resilience and flexibility of language is a trait possessed by the world’s vigorous languages.

Related to being indigenous, Tagalog and Filipino possess a trait or traits that are also inherent in other indigenous languages of the Philippines. In linguistics, an entire nation’s indigenous languages are regarded as a family of languages. This is the foundation of the educational concept about the ease and speed with which a Filipino citizen can learn any indigenous language. This was also employed during the linguistic proposition against retaining English as language of the national educational system. But I now wish to add this proposal: If Tagalog possesses the traits which are indigenous in all indigenous languages of the Philippines, it can be recognized that Tagalog represents the indigenous traits found in the other indigenous languages. Many studies since the American period have already validated this reality. This is exactly the justification for the practicality of choosing just one indigenous language to serve as basis of the national language.

This begs the next question: Which indigenous traits of indigenous languages are possessed by Tagalog?

The said question does not need the funding of a national research to answer. I have already mentioned that this was researched into during the American period. But the regionalist fanatics seem to turn a blind eye to this matter. I for one treat this as part of the amnesia of academicians who have become addicted to

fostering any feature of English, and so have an irrational vexation to any non-English feature.

This does not mean that anything indigenous is exceptional. But a much more nurturing revisiting of the already-examined features of our indigenous languages can possibly and finally awaken us to the constitution of the indigenous in our National Language. This further means that a nurturing examination will cast off those undeserving to live, while bringing forward the features that will result in a sturdier Filipino.

The Gutters of the Mindset

But my proposed reconstruction of the indigenous in our language is not a simple undertaking. Academicians might even sneer at this as madness. What I mean is, the said proposal needs the due departure from and the disownment of our accustomed ways of thinking. Any educated person with a low regard of Filipino, and especially of the indigenous, cannot understand the sense of appreciating the indigenous. Likewise, this cannot be fulfilled by a disciple of language who always understands and esteems the Filipino and the indigenous merely by wearing the barong tagalog and dancing the tinikling. The Filipino (both the culture and the people) first need to be emancipated from the gutter of the mindset they find themselves in. In relation, the enemy and the disciple of the National Language both have stagnant gutters of the mindset. Hence the need to also remove or unclog the gutter, or to fish the mindset out of the gutter in order to proceed with the reconstruction of the indigenous into a far sturdier well-being of the Filipino language.

Modernization through borrowing from English is artificial and constrained. It precisely contradicts the reasoning behind the development of a National Language based on an indigenous language. Or maybe the more fitting statement would be, this belittles Filipino's development in the past 80 years, while setting the boundaries of Filipino's possibilities. Excessive borrowing is mired in a gutter of the mindset, a gutter where Filipino's future is limited due to being indigenous, also a gutter where the vision of an indigenous national language is sentenced to futility.

On the other hand, challenging the said gutter does not

equate to a phobia of borrowing. Borrowing is a legitimate activity for nourishment, and even the wholesale borrowing from English is not by itself bad. What we are challenging is borrowing with the goal of weakening the Filipino language. This is the borrowing which ends in a much more entrenched addiction to the lender, and rots the indigenous dignity of the borrower. Anyone severely addicted to borrowing will lose his or her self-confidence. Furthermore, he or she loses the creative imagination, and is slumped in the permanent nook of one who is submerged in debt and enslaved.

Therefore, examining the robustness of the indigenous—whether in the base language or in the national language—has twin aspirations. On one hand, this is part of the desire to safeguard Filipino’s dignity. On the other hand, this is needed in order to invigorate the scrutiny of the past and of the Philippines’ history. Safeguarding Filipino’s dignity is a patriotic and emancipatory desire that was sown by the 1896 Revolution. It is a desire that seeks the ideal or superlative features of Filipino. Meanwhile, to unceasingly scrutinize and contemplate the past is a key method by which to further the said desire. To evaluate the robustness of the indigenous is intimately related to invigorating the scrutiny and contemplation of our past and history.

Unearthing the indigenous then began as a desire to shield against the colonial. This was the principal and emancipatory desire at the heart of the 1896 Revolution. I am of the idea that the said duty of the indigenous against the colonial remains. Nevertheless, the tasks needed to accomplish the duty of the indigenous has become very complicated, such as the situation that the machinations of Western colonialism to maintain its dominant power over a small and weak nation like the Philippines have become multifaceted. For example, foremost among the features of the indigenous that are being evaluated is its duty toward itself. It is a materialist task that politicians and businessmen look for in any element of “culture.” Is the indigenous able to place bread on the table? And again, this is a gutter of the mindset that needs to be overcome by a progressive authoring of the indigenous and of Filipino’s dignity. [I will take care of this problem when the next opportunity presents itself.] These gutters were and are produced by the national education, proliferated by textbooks, by periodicals, by the broadcast media, by codes and laws, and by the powerful

sectors of society, across various levels and shimmerings of illusion and degeneration. In this gutter we find slumped the entire history and prevailing culture of the Philippines.

The Enduring Indigenous

The reconstruction of the indigenous itself should steer clear of and arise from the gutter of its accustomed way of thinking. This is not showing off a barong tagalog despite the winter. More so that it is not laboring to bring a pair of bamboos to any celebration to perform the tinikling. Such things can be for pretense only. I have encountered many who are always in the barong tagalog but are corrupt politicians. Or veteran Tagalists, with naphthalene-smelling barong tagalogs, and whose linguistic beliefs smell the same. Crafting the indigenous needs to be more profound; more meaningful because it actively fulfills the ideological need of the nation; more invigorating to the citizens' livelihood aspirations.

In the linguistic field, the nation's ideal dignity is that of Filipino being the National Language. It is indigenous because it was based on an indigenous language. It remains indigenous in spite of the Western cultural infiltration that has transpired, and in spite of the modifications being carried out on its features this past century. Unfortunately, the extraordinary robustness of the indigenous in the Filipino language which I had described is not given the due appreciation. And why? Because up to now, the indigenous in Filipino is not properly presented as being indigenous.

In 1936 when the Surian ng Wikang Pambansa was mandated to develop the National Language based on an indigenous language, the Commonwealth government first caused the production of a book on grammar and a dictionary. In December 1939, abiding by the deadline set by the law, Chairperson Jaime C. de Veyra submitted to President Quezon the *Balarila ng Wikang Pambansa* by Lope K. Santos, and the *National Language-English Vocabulary*. This is the first official codification of the features of the National Language (*Wikang Pambansa*) based on Tagalog's features. The first of the two aforementioned books demonstrates Tagalog's entire construction in keeping with Spanish grammar and in a manner that presents its sovereign features as an oral and written language; and the second, the corpus of words in Tagalog which would be the

fount of enrichment toward a National Language.

The copy of *Vocabulary* was still typewritten when *Balarila* was already a printed book. But the two projects completed within two years were a surprise, if one would not think that studies of Tagalog date way back to Fray Francisco de San Jose's *arte y reglas* in 1610 and to Fray Pedro de San Buenaventura's *vocabulario* in 1613. The indigenous traits of Tagalog grammar and vocabulary, corresponding to the initial studies of Fray de San Jose and Fray de San Buenaventura, underwent changes due to the naturalization of elements from Spanish in the span of three centuries. Nevertheless, when the SWP's *balarila* and *vocabulary* are compared to the 17th century's *arte y reglas* and *vocabulario*, 20th century Tagalog still possesses the bulk of its indigenous traits from the onset of Spanish colonialism.

For example, it is said that Tagalog's genius is its affixes. It is one if not the most complicated system of affixes in the entire family of Austro-Polynesian languages. Through the appropriate use of these affixes, one can express a variety of meanings using a single word. The endurance of Tagalog's indigenous affixes can be seen in their continued application on Spanish words that have entered the indigenous languages. The usage of indigenous affixes has not been unsettled even with the importation of Spanish affixes.

In truth, several affixes listed in the *balarila* and *vocabulary* of 1939 are absent in the current circulation. Not because they have been killed off by foreign replacement affixes of Spanish or English, however. Instead, it is more of the result of the lack of support for the teaching of Filipino. The present generation has forgotten the intricacy in indigenous significations due to the absence of a proper appreciation in schools. Here, if ever, is a clear negative result of the dearth of compassion for the indigenous. Or the inadvertent vanishing of the indigenous due to our negligence.

Affixes are allegedly arduous to study? So why didn't the Tagalogs in the time of Tomas Pinpin and Balagtas gripe about this? Why have these endured through the entire era of colonialism and without any school to cultivate Tagalog? Again, the said gripe is a gutter of the mindset against the indigenous.

On the other hand, if the indigenous will be the low point

of instruction, it is perhaps more productive to start with affixes instead of useless lessons on phonemes and morphemes and mechanical drills in swapping R and D. Affixes will unlock the opportunity to connect the indigenous in Filipino with other similar or different indigenous affixes of the nation's indigenous languages. And many more opportunities such as this to unearth the indigenous will fortify the quality of Filipino as the National Language. The nurturing of Filipino begins right there in the classroom because it is indigenous and has features akin to the mother tongues of non-Tagalog students.

But does this signify a new reference, a new module, a new curriculum? It is a necessity. If we are sincere in making Filipino robust, the paradigm of intellectualization needs to be changed. We should never be frightened by the indispensable labor and sacrifice in order to be emancipated from the gutter of the accustomed way of thinking, and for the sake of our ideal dignity of Filipino. As Gilda Cordero-Fernando had already challenged us Filipinos, "After finding one's particular calling as a Filipino, one must never let go of it." Let us cut our left arms with a blade, tear up the cedula of accustomed ways of thinking, and celebrate our being Filipinos in words and in deeds.

Ferndale Homes
29 August 2020

The Education of the Mindset

// *Man is not worth more because he is a king, because his nose is aquiline and his color white, nor because he is a priest, a servant of God, nor because of the high prerogative that he enjoys upon earth, but he is worth most who is a man of proven and real value, who does good, keeps his word, is worthy and honest; he who does not oppress, nor consent to being oppressed, he who loves and cherishes his fatherland, though he be born in the wilderness and know no tongue but his own.¹²*

—Emilio Jacinto

// *I would rather have a government run like hell by Filipinos than a government run like heaven by Americans.”*

—Manuel L. Quezon (9 December 1939)

The mindset is the product of education. If this did not happen inside the classroom, it was shaped by the home, by the community, by a teacher or by a book we believe in, within an adequate period of time so as to get accustomed to. The mindset is a positive trait and a mark of the civilized and educated. But not all mindsets are products of proper education.

2

As translated by Epifanio de los Santos.

Hence our big problem of incorrect mentalities that we use and proliferate due to the assumption that we are of the right mind. I wish to contemplate this problem in relation to our problem in propagating the Filipino language.

When we look into the mindset, it is a quality that was already esteemed in the time when there was no formal education. [Even if we had not yet discovered that this was the one which elevated man from beast.] The Philippines has a tradition of listening to anyone regarded as a *matanda-sa-nayon*³—an old person treated as the people’s memory and consulted for things needing wisdom. The *matanda-sa-nayon* was probably the source of our proverbs which have become the laws of life, uttered in appropriate situations, and believed by all.

The *matanda-sa-nayon* was replaced by formal education. Teachers and books in schools became the fount of knowledge. Meanwhile, a product of formal schooling—an educated person—became the standard of the mindset. In our national history, this became the cause of an excessive adulation of education. On the other hand, it became the root of a deprecating treatment of the Indio as a pathetic being who is inherently stupid and too feeble-minded to be able to think. The second one probably happened first. The missionaries’ duty to save the subjects from the darkness of ignorance was the justifying premise for colonialism. As saviors, the missionaries brought with them the torch of knowledge. But not everyone could benefit from the light they delivered. Classrooms were limited and those who could study were limited. The people were denied education in such manner, the same people who were demeaned as being undeserving of education since they were inherently deficient to become educated. In any case, the extreme desire of the poor to go to school is the product of the said discrimination from the period of colonialism. This is the psychology behind the present adulation of education as a singular if not the single key to success. On the other hand, this has resulted in reverence for anyone with a diploma that is a wellspring of knowledge. It is an objective condition being exploited by many of the educated in order to truly succeed—to get rich, to hold political power, and to win in one’s career and business. On the other hand, it has become baggage for anyone impoverished and unschooled, and has caused undesirable behaviors and values. For example, the

3 Literally, “the old one in the countryside.”

superstitious-like claiming of even a shred of knowledge and the conviction in its being universal truth.

These happenings are the ones which debase the mindset as a stagnant canal, seemingly turning it into a sewer of stench and muck, and a grave enemy of progress.

The discrimination proliferated by colonialism against the Indio and the uneducated was a focus of the Katipunan's ideology. Meaning, reviving the dignity of the Scion of the Nation was part (and rightly so) of the liberation movement against Spanish colonialism. And so Jacinto's sermon finished with the teaching that Filipinos should free themselves from the demeaning view of foreigners which, sadly, has also become how Filipinos regard themselves. The dignity of a person, Jacinto put forth, lies not in race, not in social stature, and above all, lies not in education. Even those whom he described as being "born in the wilderness and know[s] no tongue but his own"—in short, even if a person is uneducated—he or she can become much more of a person if he or she values honor, never oppresses a fellow person, and loves the nation.

As can be expected, the humanitarian standards established by the Katipunan were a radical revolution against colonial values. Unfortunately, the glorious episode of the KKK and the 1896 Revolution was brief. Even the sacrifices of multitudes of Katipuneros were not enough in the struggles to retrieve the people, and more so the rich and educated, from the sewer of colonial values. In response to the deficiencies of Spanish colonialism, the Americans rolled out a national educational system. But to use it as an instrument of tyranny and against the KKK's emancipatory aspiration. Which is why in spite of the widespread public education system, (or perhaps precisely due to the success of national public education?) the stench and muck of the sewer of the mindset has become even more saturating and has become an obstacle to the many progressive goals of the same national public education.

Revised Colonial Values

For example, the separation of Church and State was part of the democratic and republican aspiration of the government ordained by the 1935 Constitution. In its heart was the goal to break the people free from the immoderate christianized belief,

the same kind of religiosity that was criticized by Rizal and Plaridel. On the other hand, the schools are diligent in sowing modern thinking which is scientific. Nevertheless, it seems that the kind of religiosity being dissected is merely being translated into scientific adjectives, an occurrence that propagates what can be regarded as “scientism” both on the sides of the educated and the uneducated. The transformative principles of schools are twisted into an altered form of colonial values. An antiquated mentality is mistaken as being scientific, or is presented as being scientific. Like the return of the death penalty or the burning of trash. The faux scientific scrutiny is exploited in order to delay or divert the search for truth, such as the anti-corruption investigations in government agencies.

Distorting the scientific is often the act of the educated and powerful themselves. But even though they sense the deception, the people are unable to defy. Why? Because of the prevailing colonial values and especially because of the effects of the bad mindset. The said bad mindset has two sharp snares. On one hand, the ordinary person should afford respect and tread carefully, for the educated and powerful are much more knowledgeable. In the end, he might be the one to get in trouble. On the other hand, despite the law’s guarantee the ordinary citizen has no real right to take part in major and national issues. He should learn to put himself in the right place for ordinary people.

Even the poor’s language and manner of speaking are affected by the customary mentality. We often regard the language of the everyday Filipino as being naturally implicit and suggestive. He or she avoids confrontation. But this might also be the result of feeling inferior. He or she fears to express hurtful albeit justifiable words because the other is superior. Listen and the poor are much more blatant and frank to their fellow poor. Perhaps this is also due to being unversed on what they want to convey. And in turn, this often becomes the cause of flowery, verbose, and roundabout statements by liars and fabulists. They wish to conceal or keep secret their stupidity through flattery. And here lies the more dangerous: Long-winded statements have become a vice because of the assumption that this is the mark of expertise in language and in the mindset.

[It is amusing that the vice of convoluting senseless words is also becoming a virtue of “superb” politicians and the educated.]

The manifestation of the bad mindset was really not always as despicable as this. I have already stated in the beginning that there is a true and admirable mindset. Besides, this behavior is certainly needed in society. Nevertheless, a greater focus should be cast on other bad mindsets in order for us to arise from the sewer of colonial values and to propagate the diligence and care of the scientific mentality.

When There is an Ill Effect

What is the classification of the bad mindset? Hard to ascertain. Like any inference and assumption, it cannot be classified as being bad as long as concrete bad effects have not surfaced. Which is why scientific analysis always counsels total care and diligence in scrutinizing any projected object, activity, and idea. Good if the project already has a history, or there has been a previous experience, which can serve as reference. But if there is none, even the preliminary acceptance and consensus should be guided by experiment, in order to avoid or stop the bad effects. This is the fundamental design in scientific thinking.

Of course, we should take into consideration the traps of bad thinking. There are projects which are great at first, but fails in the long run, especially those which are great for limited application but prove ineffective for general or national use. There also those which have good intentions but have bad manifestations. But what I wish to focus more on are the already ongoing and prevailing beliefs and policies applying to the Filipino language, the beliefs and policies which have no scientific basis but are prodded more by colonial values. This is the bad mindset that then obstructed the linguistic provision of the 1935 Constitution and continues to obstruct the realization of Filipino as the official language of communication and national education.

The largest barrier against Filipino as the language of education was laid down by Resolution No. 73-7 of the National Board of Education on 7 August 1973. This is what was called the Bilingual Policy in Education. At first glance and according to the explanation of American linguists then, this was a good way to make students more efficient in two languages: the indigenous Filipino as the national language, and the foreign English as the global language. But examining the implementing guidelines

released by the Department of Education and Culture on 19 June 1974 reveals the machination to suppress Filipino in the field of education. All the present woes about the sad state of Filipino in all levels of teaching can be traced back to the Bilingual Policy in Education.

The Bilingual Policy is an example of a project presented as being beneficial for the education of Filipino children and not detrimental to the Filipino language. But it appears that its effects have been adverse on the Filipino language and very much possibly have been damaging to the education of Filipino children after its imposition in 1974. [Enemies of the National Language will be glad to read my words.] The policy halted the momentum of the then-imminent adoption of Pilipino as the language of education, alongside the clampdown on activism through the declaration of Martial Law in 1972. [The National Language became collateral damage in the politics of activism.] Nevertheless, even if my evaluation is correct, I will not fully blame this crime on the officials and personnel of the National Board of Education and the advisers who formulated the bilingual policy in 1973. It is probable that they merely obeyed their educational convictions. If this is what had happened, the greater blame should be placed on the gutter of the bad mindset which prevailed and caused a policy that never underwent scientific investigation.

What study was conducted before the Bilingual Policy's imposition? Was there even a one-year academic experiment to prove the presumed truth that it was relevant to the education of the Philippines?

I remember that the National Language underwent a long period of preparation—experiments using it in teaching, by-level development of books, field work in the regions, seminars for teachers—from 1939 up to 1959 when Secretary

Jose E. Romero declared it deserving to be labeled “Pilipino.” This was needed in relation to the celebration of National Language Week, J.E. Romero stated, “in order that the youth of the land may better realize the importance of a common medium of communication for a closer understanding among our people.”

In 1960, the results of an assessment of the effects of using Pilipino and English as languages of instruction for Grades III, IV,

and V that was carried out in five non-Tagalog provinces in the academic year 1956-1957 were also released. It emerged that Pilipino proved more effective than English in the teaching of reading, language, arithmetic, and social studies across all levels. Nevertheless, the motive that leaned for a bilingual policy could already be detected in this study. The report of Director Benigno Aldana said, "The experimental group used Pilipino as a medium of instruction in all subjects, except in health and science, music and art, fundamental handwork, elementary agriculture, industrial arts, home economics, and physical education, while the control group used English as a medium of instruction in all subjects." How can the assessment be comprehensive if Pilipino was not used in all subjects as with the treatment for English?

There were other assessments carried out before Martial Law was declared. Every now and then the Department of Education also releases reports on the literacy level and the increase in the literacy level in Pilipino is always compared to that in English. But what was the more contemptible plan of the Bilingual Policy in 1973?

First, the instruction in Pilipino and English as subjects in elementary and high school were made to appear equal. But the repression of Pilipino began when it was employed as language of instruction for "social studies/social science, character education, work education, health education and physical education." Pilipino's effectiveness was imprisoned within the said fields. Meanwhile, it was not made clear where to employ English. It was merely stated that for the first year of implementation (1977-1978), "English shall remain as medium of instruction for all other courses." Meaning, all subjects that were not taught in Pilipino would be taught in English. Meaning further, all subjects in science and math would be taught in English. That is not all. At the end of the implementing order it was stated: "Tertiary institutions (collegiate and graduate levels) are given discretion to develop their own schedules of implementation, provided that by the schoolyear 1984, all graduates of tertiary curricula should be able to pass examinations in English and/or Pilipino for the practice of their professions."

This implementation of the Bilingual Policy caused the real impediment to the then-ongoing propagation and progress of the National Language as medium of education. But what was the

basis of the decree to not employ the National Language in the teaching of science and math? The policy's adherents had a single answer: The National Language was not yet efficient as a language of science and math. What is the scientific basis of such belief? Has there been a language in the world that was born fully capable to express scientific knowledge?

Politics in Language

Let me narrate the political environment of language before the Bilingual Policy's declaration. The first event was the charge of Congressman Inocencio Ferrer of Negros on 8 February 1963 against the constitutionality of Pilipino as national language. Allegedly, it was just a "puristic Tagalog." It was of course exacerbated by pro-English journalists and legislators who spread the "*salipawpaw*" and "*salumpuwit*" falsehoods. This belittling built up into a widespread assault against the "purism" of Pilipino and the concept of amalgamated "Filipino" of Geruncio Lacuesta in 1964. It so happened that the project "Maugnaying Pilipino" was also born in 1964 among the ranks of scientists in the Unesco National Commission and National Science Development Board (NSDB). In the span of more than four years, professors across the scientific disciplines collaborated to collate a scientific vocabulary, which was finalized and presented to the public in 1969.

While the charge of I. Ferrer was being heard and many were getting entangled in the dispute of "purism," the activist movement abruptly exploded in the second half of the 60s. English was the first language of the demonstrations' leaders; they recognized after some time, however, the greater force of speaking in the "language of the masses." Unions multiplied, laborers and students went in droves to the avenues, and the rallies at Plaza Miranda and in front of the US Embassy were filled to the brim. Activism had already spread across the entire archipelago when Martial Law was declared.

I. Ferrer lost in the Supreme Court in 1970. But the charge of "purism" against Pilipino had already intensified, the justification for "Filipino" had attracted the academician enemies of the Surian ng Wikang Pambansa. The Constitutional Convention in 1971 and the ratified 1973 Constitution proved this. The Surian's energy was sapped by its defense of Pilipino, and its efforts to prove that

it was not purist. Because of this, the Surian ditched the completed “Maugnaying Talasalitaang Pang-agham” before it could be disseminated. It remained an experiment in scientific education at the Gregorio Araneta University Foundation, where its initiator, Engineer Gonsalo del Rosario, was teaching.

While Martial Law was “silencing” the activists’ Leftist subversion, and the New Society was promising the “revolution from the center,” the Department of Education also imposed the Bilingual Policy’s dissemination starting from the academic year 1974-1975. Was the Bilingual Policy part of the New Society’s coveted political revolution? Very possible. It was enough for the American linguists, who were ardent proponents of bilingual education’s worth, to spread that the National Language was the language of activism in order for the americanist military and the board of advisers in Malacañang to become allergic to Pilipino.

But the National Language was not killed overtly. It was first tarnished via the make-believe “purism,” denigrated in the constitutional convention, before being given a new name. This was successful politics in order to confuse even the zealous supporters of the National Language. Then the coup de grâce was delivered—a deceiving “mercy” for something they really wanted to murder—the Bilingual Policy. As I have already examined, it was ostensibly an equal treatment of Pilipino and English. Subjects in school were seemingly split into equal halves of instruction in Pilipino and instruction in English. [Remember the fable of the turtle and monkey splitting the banana!] Once this division is related to the mudslinging against Pilipino and against the Surian, the entire campaign versus “purism” is revealed as being a planned and coordinated project to stifle the National Language.

I will reiterate the rationale for the restriction in teaching science and math in Pilipino: The National Language was not yet efficient as a language of science and math. And I will reiterate my probing question: What is the scientific basis of such belief? Has there been a language in the world that was born fully capable to express scientific knowledge?

New Acts, Old Behaviors

My aforesaid story about the political environment of the Bilingual Policy is not stoked by any conspiracy theory. While very possible, as I answered earlier, I am not fully convinced to merely enclose it in such a presumption. All the more do we appear pitiful under the manipulation of those who hold power in global politics and their accomplices in power in national politics. As if we were really defenseless. But come to think of it, no military violence has taken place. Also, there was not even a note verbale from the White House to carry this out. Which is why I have a greater wish to recollect here an old mindset that only metamorphoses to a more seductive but more destructive form.

The only and scientific basis of the presumption that the National Language is not efficient as a language of science and math is the old gutter of colonial values: The Indio is ignorant and incapable of thinking. Scientific thinking is a higher faculty of the civilized and modern man. Like the Europeans. But several centuries passed before Europeans attained the level of scientific thinking that produced the present civilization. The language of science in English, therefore, is a product of science's long development in Europe and the United States. Per the enduring and prevailing colonial mentality, our language needs to undergo a similar period of development. Although we might fail even after ten centuries. Why? Because the said mindset is accompanied by the past's bigoted notion that the Indio has no inherent scientific capability.

If we revisit our history, the said derogatory gutter of the mindset was the primary obstacle against Secularization in the 19th century. This was what Padre Jose Burgos endeavored to answer in 1864 in his *Manifiesto que a la noble nación española dirigen los leales filipinos en defensa de los honra y fidelidad gravemente vulneradas por el periodico "La verdad" de Madrid* (A Manifesto Addressed by the Faithful Filipinos to the Honorable Spanish Nation in Defense of their Dignity and Loyalty which were Severely Abused by the Newspaper *La Verdad* of Madrid). He stressed in the *Manifiesto*, "All our supposed ascendancies (because Burgos was a Spanish mestizo) over the Negros (and the Indios) do not lie in any innate superiority of intellect, but are due only to education."

In keeping with Burgos's belief regarding the equality of human rights, men (the Negro and the Indio) are only left trailing in the advance of civilization because aside from being abused they are denied proper education. Now, once we incorporate this into the linguistic issue at hand, it means that an indigenous National Language is not an inherently backward language. That it possesses all the potentialities to become a language of science. And this will be realized once an indigenous language is given the right opportunity to progress.

The opportunity that was already at hand was the one prevented by the Bilingual Policy. A direct victim of the said crime was the "Maugnaying Talasalitaang Pang-agham." Meaning, the "Maugnaying Pilipino" needed to be slain because it was a project opposed to the colonial values of our educated and affluent. The Bilingual Policy proposed that a language of the ignorant can never be a language of science. The Bilingual Policy is simply a new form and function of the intertwined colonial values and unscientific mindset, aged yet seemingly deathless.

The Scientific Path of Thorns

Was the "Maugnaying Pilipino" good? If we base the answer on what took place during the period of 1963-1987, it was bad. More so if we read only the side of academicians proponents of "Filipino." The "Maugnaying Pilipino" became the primary evidence with regard to Pilipino's narrow-minded and "purist" direction. On the other hand, such a fierce reception to the "Maugnaying Pilipino" makes sense once we appraise that it had a meaningful aspiration toward the National Language's progress.

It is actually a farce to remember that the "Maugnaying Pilipino," a legitimate experiment in the development of a scientific language, was blocked, only to have the Bilingual Policy proclaim later that the National Language has no capacity to become a language for the instruction of science. Why did we accept this lunacy?

I do not wish for the resurrection of the "Maugnaying Pilipino." I do not have the aptitude to memorize "*ulnungan*," "*sipnayan*," "*aghimuin*," and a book of 7,500 neologisms created by G. del Rosario et al. But I wish to remember its fundamental

premise, which I think is a significant proposed map to develop a scientific language. [Lacuesta and his academician cohorts closed their minds to this, and probably, this was never even read and ruminated upon by the many teachers who stood witness then to the National Language.] At the heart of the “Maugnaying Pilipino” lies the research that Tagalog and other indigenous languages have ancient words that possess scientific knowledge. [If you were I. Ferrer or G. Lacuesta, this study is so terrible and contradictory to our prevalent mindset!] In any case it is very good, the “Maugnaying Pilipino” instructs, to sow this indigenous vocabulary into the fundamental levels of education in order to make scientific matters easier to teach and more comprehensible. [Because it has already been proven effective, the said educative method will further upset the educated who want the Filipino people to stay uneducated!]

Which is why the “Maugnaying Pilipino” listed 200 words, which possessed basic meanings in social science, environmental science, and applied science. It was even split into 100/100 in order to be gradually introduced to the first levels. It was not to be memorized, but was to be presented through games, poems, songs, dialogues, picture tools, etc. in order to make the dissemination enjoyable for children. The “Maugnaying Pilipino” had other great proposals to accelerate scientific education. Anyone who has taken teaching methodologies would know what I have mentioned.

But who compiled the 200 key words of the “Maugnaying Pilipino”? Here was a product of linguistic research, collected by experts in science, but was never utilized by Philippine education. Which is why up to now, “*larang*,” “*lawas*,” “*típi*,” “*hátag*,” and “*rabáw*” seem like sci-fi even to the ranks of teachers. It is because these scientific words do not appear in their tattered textbooks as well as in their shoddy dictionaries.

I wish to identify in this portion a deeper and harsher effect of the traditional and bad mindset. The old colonial values are not only incubated in the awareness of the enemies of language. They are also entrenched in the consciousness of the advocates of language. It is hard to admit, but the many teachers of Filipino are themselves the proof of the widespread colonial values that hinder the progress of the Filipino language. Look, brethren, at ourselves. Do we ask in seminars what had already been asked since 1937 and when the *Balarila* was being introduced in teaching. For example, why does “*ibá-ibá*” have a hyphen but “*ibá’t ibá*” does not? Why

does “*inter-aksiyon*” have a hyphen while the original “*interaccion*” does not? What is the difference between “*gámit*” and “*gamít*”? Meaning, brethren, that Filipino is not advancing because we do not sincerely ponder the studies on our language. And because of our lack of concern, we become concrete proof that the Filipino language is indeed the language of the ignorant. How, therefore, can the advocates of language mired in the gutter of the bad mindset become partners in promoting the scientific mentality?

The bad mindset has many reasons and reasonings. Like in the case of teachers. Teachers only have small salaries, and new books are costly. The Principal is assigning many tasks and there is no more time to prepare new lessons. Need to think of a business instead of reading. Dr. Smart will get angry if I ask. This last line of reasoning is a severe mindset. It has long been an illness of the ignorant and those who believe they should always look up to the educated. But it is also a delicate illness of the educated who overly loves education, hence the fear to contradict the fellow educated even if it is justified.

But the scientific mentality teaches us to be exploratory. That the first lesson is never to be content with your learnings. The world would not have been proven round if Magellan was happy with Columbus’s discovery of the Americas. Up to now, there is a need to distinguish “virus” from “microbe.”

The 200 key words of the “Maugnaying Pilipino” could have been the foundation to develop a scientific mentality. If we had already mulled over it back in 1969, we would already know the technical meaning of “*bilis*” (speed) which is different from “*túlin*” (velocity). We would already be debating the difference between “*hintô*” and “*tígil*.” And probably, we would be pondering which among “*panggagáya*,” “*pagtutúlad*,” “*pagwawángis*,” “*pagwawangí*,” “*pagpapáris*,” “*pagpapára*,” “*paghahambíng*,” “*paghahalintúlad*,” “*pagkokompará*,” “*pagtatapát*,” “*pagtutumbás*,” “*pag-aagápáy*,” etc. can be best matched with “*simile*.” So we can also ascertain, if ever, which among those I listed can be good equivalents to “*comparison*,” “*analogy*,” “*metaphor*,” “*equation*,” “*parallelism*.”

The scientific behavior of thinking is careful and certain in its wording. And we do not need to borrow or to create in fulfilling this task. The Tagalog base of the Filipino language has a copious vocabulary. It is a native treasure that we are not using, having

been accustomed to loaning from Spanish and English. [Because it has been our behavior to loan instead of putting our innate selves to good use? Because education has made us to believe that in ourselves we have nothing to be proud of? Because it is difficult to nurture the self? Or why the need to invent if the imported is available? This was Manuel L. Quezon's message when he inscribed on stone, so to speak, that he preferred a hellish Filipino situation over a heavenly American situation. To be independent is hard. But to be free is better over the comfort merely given by foreigners. I can hear now the philosophizing of the colonial mentality: "See, we have gone to the dogs because we kicked out the Americans!" Did the Americans really leave? Or are we being fried in a hell being created for us by the Americans? So we would curse our independence.

Indigenous words, especially those which are synonymous with each other, simply need to be dwelled on, used in a definite manner, in order for these to take on technical and scientific meanings. In this manner, even if we borrow, the borrowing is a conscious step and a product of necessity; not merely because the borrowing is more comfortable than the unrestricted discovery of our own language's riches. Further keep in mind: Language is a complete and autonomous system in expressing thoughts and emotions. This system, once we have studied it and internalized its use in any reflection and research, will be the source of our scientific liberation from the stench of the gutter of colonial values and the bad mindset.

On the other hand, the failure of the "Maugnaying Pilipino" also teaches us today that the path to develop a scientific language is more than one. It cannot be accomplished wholesale and entirely through creation, such as the efforts for the vocabulary constructed by the "Maugnaying Pilipino." The 7,500 scientific terms can indeed cause indigestion. Scientific disciplines have varying natures, and there have been varying levels of language construction in the present, and so there is a need for varying methods and systems of developing their respective scientific languages. For example, the social sciences, especially philosophy and psychology which desire to create a "Filipino philosophy" or "Filipino psychology" will rely more on the blessings of our indigenous languages. But chemistry might borrow more from global formulas and terminologies. Biology might have a vocabulary that mixes the indigenous and the

borrowed, and the mixture method will depend on the consensus of scientists of the fields within the discipline.

There is no single formula for all of science. But what is more important is for the government and the academe to focus on its direction and corresponding programs in the soonest possible time. The past 25 years were squandered. We did not fulfill this linguistic need because we were lulled to slumber by the bad and colonial mindset that is, yes, Filipino is indeed the language of the ignorant and that Filipinos indeed do not have an indigenous scientific language. To desire a scientific National Language is to desire freedom from the sewer of the colonial and the bad mindset.

Ferndale Homes
31 August 2020

Desiring A New Culture

“*(L)ove your country after God and your honor, and more than you love yourself, because your country is the only Paradise that God has given you in this life, the only patrimony of your race, the only inheritance from your ancestors, and the only future of your descendants; because of your country, you have life, love and interests, happiness, honor, and God.”*

—Apolinario Mabini

We are so enamored with slogans. Given any project or task that we wish to confront, or we wish for others to confront, we prioritize discussing, debating, fighting over, wasting no small amount of sweat, spit, and time in creating a phrase or short sentence in order to present our objective’s significance and originality. This is clear in our efforts to save ourselves from the ferocity of COVID-19. Slogans arrived even before a systematic national plan to combat the pandemic. For example, the following appeal is on TV:

*Kortesíya na
Disiplina pa.*

What is the said couplet trying to say? Why is courtesy needed to augment discipline? Isn’t showing courtesy just a part of disciplined behavior? How does one become a disciplined person? How can social courtesy be measured? Once we look into the said slogan’s language, why are the two requested behaviors in Spanish?

Do our ancient and indigenous customs lack the equivalent for these two? Or do we wish to feature a code of *cortesía* from the Spanish? What is the meaning of discipline in the lives of the Filipino? Is this equivalent to military discipline?

Which now brings to mind one of the main appeals when Martial Law was declared in 1972:

*Sa ikauunlad ng bayan
Disiplina ang kailangan.*⁴

It was of course hurriedly satirized by activists for human rights (aside from the true cadres of the National Democratic Front). A famous comedian then was Ariel Ureta, and he stated on TV:

*Sa ikauunlad ng bayan
Bisikleta ang kailangan.*⁵

For me, Ureta was then satirizing the change that I wish to propose for our accustomed reliance on the slogan. The criticism on the intrinsic weakness in any slogan lies at the heart of Ureta's comedy. It is always exposed to humorous alteration. For example, because transportation was being restricted, it was actually appropriate to suggest the use of bicycles. And "bicycle" can then be replaced with "pandesal" for the hungry, by "free vaccine" for health, by "free books" for education, and by "free irrigation" for agriculture, etc. depending on the social sector intended to be served.

But word was that Ureta was seized. Was that the meaning of "discipline" in order to advance the nation under Martial Law? To be docile and obedient? That questions, or more so, defiance, are prohibited? And for you to fear the consequence of any display of insolence? Which is why the big victim of such "discipline" is an innate liberty of man— "humor"—especially the wit in paradoxes and ironies, which colonialism threatened for three centuries. Given that experience, does the "discipline" desired by the new slogan against COVID-19 possess that military characteristic?

4 "For the progress of the nation / Discipline is essential."

5 "For the progress of the nation / Bicycles are essential."

Taking off from this kind of inquiry, I will reiterate that the “courtesy” in the said slogan loses its meaning. It will not surprise me if this kind of government becomes more predisposed to an administration by officials of the armed forces. It is because they supposedly have more discipline than the private politicians and businessmen who have corrupt tendencies. It will also not surprise me if the lockdown will bring out the pervasiveness of the police and the PNP. It is because the people supposedly will only obey with a gun (and a tank’s cannon) pointed at them.

However, what does “lockdown” really mean? Does this always need a checkpoint, barricade, and military sentry? Are the people really insubordinate: Exceedingly individualist, exploitative, or obeying only their own whims?

Aside from my belief that placing the people under the said trial is uninspired and stemming from sociologists who merely refer to the words of American and European experts—who are critical against democracy and human rights—the negative trial of the people becomes an instrument to justify the implementation of “military discipline” in all government activities. And this cannot also be alleviated by the calls of “fascist” or “dictator” against our administration. These are also mere slogans. These are just riposte labelings, which are the duty of the political opposition. If the opposition wins in the next national elections, their slogan has won. Notwithstanding such occurrence, this does not equate to a solution to the matter that I have been investigating.

For me, we will be saved from the tendency to rely on slogans or “sloganism” once we focus our attention more on the persistent and diligent planning of measures that takes into consideration the self-controlled formation of proper goals for the knowledge, skills, and values that we aim to propagate; that lays out general programs and supporting activities to put the goals into action; that directs the long-term and short-term for every kind of activity and program; that classifies the quantity and quality of knowledge, skills, and values that we aim to sow and spread, not just to create for these an appropriate classification and standard, but in order to also correctly measure the level of need for every knowledge, skill, and value as well as their relation to each other; and that identifies the role of every person, organization, and institution involved in every aspect of every activity; and earmarks the corresponding

supervision and verdict on the entire plan at designated times.

[How lengthy! And convoluted!]

I am not suggesting anything new. Everything I said in the previous paragraph is being carried out in schools, from DepEd to the classrooms. And more so that this system is part of what is called as the “development plan” of NEDA.

So why is our life a failure after more than 80 years? There are many serious causes. First, those holding office, as well as the entire bureaucracy, are often unworthy to implement national plans. We know this. Second, the system of government is incompatible with the Filipinos’ behavior and temperament. We also know this. This was then the slogan of the NDF and now the slogan of the new Federalists. Third, the national plan is not in order. Do we know this?

Any newly sworn in official voices the third aforementioned cause. So as to continue blaming the previous official for all the causes of the continued national disorder; or so as to force a new national plan. The latter happening would be good. But it never leaves the domain of politicking as well. Again, it remains a slogan.

As Long as It’s Cute, Even Though Crude

I am waiting for a thorough inspection of the national plans from Manuel Roxas’s short administration up to Rodrigo Duterte’s presidency, or even up to Benigno Aquino III’s government. There is perhaps such an exercise at NEDA whenever a new secretary takes office. Perhaps. Because if such exists, these should be published in order to be of better use to the nation, especially our politicians. I am certain that every plan has great policies which might be extracted and resumed. Meanwhile, many programs with hefty and long-term harms to the nation are precisely the ones being sustained because they produce political delight among the officials. I even have a hunch that no administration has had a new and meaningful plan to supplement what Manuel Quezon had already planned before the outbreak of the Second World War.

Like the reality that the two dominant parties—the Nacionalista and the Liberal—do not have differing missions, and so every national election just seems like a rigadon between the Nacionalista and Liberal leaderships, we cannot expect the fundamental platform of governance in the nation to change. How is Carlos P. Garcia’s “Filipino First Policy” different from the “Bayan Muna”⁶ o “Buy Local First” that we keep hearing today? Just slogans. The job of wordsmiths at the Press Office of every politician and every new tenant of Malacañang.

Nothing is new. As long as it’s cute, even though crude ok. The country is happy. Slogans become maxims. Meanwhile, our nation’s leaders, from Senator Pacquiao to Captain Peles, are models in wearing branded, pricey, and imported bags, denims, or shoes. For shoes alone, has a national campaign been carried out to improve the Marikina shoes and so that Juan Tamad and Juan Pusoy can be proud of them? The drama goes, buy Marikina shoes because they are more affordable and they are ours. So as to help Pinoy shoemakers. Another slogan. Not because Marikina shoes are sturdier, more comfortable to wear, more beautiful, in addition to being more affordable. Not because our shoemakers have the expertise to match up against any Italian or French shoemaker.

Slogans are deceptive. I remember when I was once hired as a copywriter for a fertilizer company. I was very happy to get a job in a time when I was marked by the NICA. I was also very happy because they wanted me to render into a poem the copy of the insecticide which I would be selling. But after a week I noticed something in my couplet’s subject . The insecticides all had the same formula. They just change the labels, and the products take on new features, because of my salestalk-in-verse. My imagination got dulled thinking of adjectives for products that were really alike.

Commercialism is such. Misleading. And it is disheartening that such principle and behavior of commercialism are the same that we do in governing our nation.

6 “Nation First.”

The Cultural Perspective

Nevertheless, I do not wish to heap on to the mountain of criticism on our government. I also do not wish to propose a new national plan for the government. I have a greater desire to look at it from the cultural perspective and to look at our propensity for slogans as a cultural malady and as part of the Philippines' sickly culture. This is connected to the widespread corruption, the tentative policies in the West Philippine Sea, and other delicate issues, which are linked to the government's bald-faced lack of compassion for the Filipino language and culture. The problem cannot be solved by means of elections. Nor by a revolutionary government. Nor by loaning a bigger budget from China or Australia.

But it can possibly be cured by an effective cultural education.

But what if the Filipino culture's illness is itself critical? The Philippines indeed has a culture, but sickly. The culture of a sickly society. It just natural that a sickly society will have a sickly culture. I wish to focus on culture, however. My proposed education requires the reconstruction of the present culture, toward a new culture, and the construction of a philosophy of cultural education.

Let us begin by analyzing the present culture. Or perhaps, in order to be more specific and clear-cut, the present officials who take care of and manage national culture. For example, just by looking at its name, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) can be regarded at present as the mother and national agency for culture. But does it have the complete authority to manage the actions of the government's various and current cultural agencies? It should and it needs to. It should, because these agencies have a seat in the general Board of Commissioners which preside over the NCCA. It needs to, because the law itself commands the harmonized actions of the agencies involved in culture so as to make effective the management system of national culture. Often, everything just ends up stuck as law. The agencies also often participate but only to the point where no "interference" happens into their already planned directions. Whenever any such "interference" transpires, the director or representative of the offended agency disappears from the Board meeting, and the NCCA Board has no power to impose discipline.

The NCCA's mechanisms thus have a weakness. They need to be changed. Make it into a Department of Culture, for example. But another huge hurdle to the united campaign for a single Department of Culture is the greater fondness that each of today's cultural agencies have for their respective "freedoms" that they have gotten used to. Explaining the benefits of integrated actions—from the greater gain in budget and personnel, to the stronger and better impact of unified projects—is not enough for agencies to completely surrender their fates to a single and dominant mother agency or department.

The lack of unified actions is illustrated by the cultural agencies' visions. At present, the NCCA's vision is stated as follows:

A Filipino people with a strong sense of nationhood
and deep respect for cultural diversity.

How closely do the stated visions of the National Museum, Historical Commission, National Archives, National Library hew to this? Well, it may be reasoned indeed that they have existed way before the NCCA did. And their respective charters may indeed be pointing to the said vision. [There was just a single architect who planned it all, so to speak.] Nevertheless, has there been an attempt to steer the direction of their annual missions in line with the essence of the NCCA's vision? If there are duplications of duties, has there been an effort to transfer the tasks (and the budget) to the more appropriate agency?

I know the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino (KWF) better so I will focus more on it. The NCCA became a concept only in 1987, while the KWF was created in 1991. How did the NCCA integrate the KWF in pursuance of the former's vision? And how did the KWF incorporate its mission in keeping with the NCCA's vision? The positive answers to my inquiries would have been the fulfillment of the ideal conditions toward the compact unity of the linguistic vision and the cultural vision in the Philippines. The same goes for the expected harmonization of the programs and projects of all cultural agencies with the KWF's and the NCCA's linguistic vision and cultural vision. How can the cultural agencies fulfill the ideal "strong sense of nationhood" if they themselves are not united? How can the "respect for cultural diversity" become manifest if the

Filipino language is not being cultivated across all agencies and especially in the NCCA's national boards and secretariat?

Whenever the mountain of obstacles to the said vision of the NCCA is probed, the finger is always pointed at the government. Supposedly, we haven't had a president who has understood the correctness of a national policy based on culture, which is also due to the fact that supposedly we haven't had a president with the right recognition and appreciation of culture, especially of "Filipino culture," aside from the truth that the presidents are part of the overall history of the Filipinos' miseducation. This is also a slogan. And I have a hunch that because of this verdict on our politicians (and on ourselves as fellow miseducated citizens of the Philippines), we further disgrace the cultural education.

The cultural advocates and activists themselves should be the first to rise and free themselves from the accustomed prisons of our mind, imagination, and behavior. A rewriting of no other than the duties of cultural workers is needed. The reconstruction of our cultural goals is a significant program in such a reform, and one initial step is the reassessment of the definition and aspiration of cultural education.

The Aspiration of Cultural Education

What is cultural education? We have many experts in cultural research and those who have studied what is called "development culture." Theirs are different objectives and aspirations from the aspiration of cultural education. They might meet together, work side-by-side, but their paths might also cross. They might also diverge if their respective scopes of tasks are not demarcated.

At the present, cultural education is not being accorded the proper significance in the entire cultural activity. It is often treated as a mere supporting task, and thus ends up as programs of dissemination and popularization. It is of course true that a big part of the cultural education's operations is the assembling of agencies and instruments of mass communication in order to promote the cultural goals. But cultural education is being confined to the staging of seminars, festivals, publication of pamphlets, magazines, and books, press releases in newspapers and radio and television stations, and now, the aggressive use of online platforms.

We do not try to understand the philosophy of cultural education, especially why it is called “cultural education.” It is not just culture’s dissemination. Likewise, it is not just culture’s popularization. My aforesaid and the current way of looking at cultural education is a major cause why the national culture is in dire straits. We do not fully understand its meaning and significance. And so we cannot use it properly and to the hilt in advancing the national culture.

As the term goes, cultural education is an educational activity. It is a kind of education. And I think, it is an education that is more than the separate regards of academic education and vocational education, like the ancient division between mental education and skills education, so to speak. *Mens sana en corpore sano*. It is gestated even in today’s disciplines of language and literature, history, and science and math in our basic education. But it is not the teaching of language and literature, history, and science and math. It was not comprehended in the days when there was a single department for education and for culture. Department of Education and Culture. It is not being comprehended by those who keep forcing to recombine the two.

Looking at the dream Department of Culture that is separate from the present Department of Education reveals their dissimilar tasks. And it is good to make the difference clear so as to also reveal the significance of cultural education as a complete task that is different from the task of education in the Department of Education. On one hand, education in the Department of Education should concentrate on the teaching of knowledge and skills needed by children in order for them to be useful citizens. On the other hand, it is the duty of education in the Department of Culture to cultivate and enliven the **proper values** in order for a child to truly become a useful citizen.

Is it clear?

At present, the said division between the educational duties is not being given the right boundaries. Which is why while DepEd is already breaking its back in attending to teachers, schools, and instruction materials for the knowledges and skills needed by the Filipino youth, it also needs to allocate a substantial amount of time for “character and conduct.” Meanwhile, it has become noticeable that the NCCA is competing in the staging of seminars

and conferences to teach knowledges and skills. Although teaching is related to the arts and literature, the NCCA is taking on the job of schools, aside from failing to give the appropriate time to the shaping of proper values in fulfillment of its vision.

The Goals of Cultural Education

If the goal of cultural education is to shape the proper values, what are the values necessary and relevant for the fulfillment of its vision? Perhaps, now that the goal of cultural education is clear, our review of the NCCA's vision becomes clearer. There are two values etched into the Board-approved vision this 2019. First, "a strong sense of nationhood." Second, "a deep respect for cultural diversity." I will translate the first into Filipino as "*isang malusog at matatág na damdaming makabayan.*"⁷ I will translate the second as "*isang mataimtim na paggálang sa diversidad pangkultura.*" [And I am open to any amendments to my translation.] The sense of patriotism needs to be nourished and fortified. Because, this means, the life of the Philippines as a free and independent nation rests on the said degree of feeling and love for the nation. We need to be innately and sincerely respectful of the various cultures of the nation's more than a hundred ethnic groups. Because, this kind of orientation is part of a democratic nation in a world with diverse cultures, and on this kind of respect rests the unity and peace that will enable everyone to move for the progress of the Philippines.

Are the two on equal footing? Both are regarded as being significant, which is why they are connected in a single sentence. But in my view, the first was stated first because it is more important to shape, especially in these times. The second is needed to remind us of the Philippines' multicultural aspect and to properly guide any program for a robust patriotic spirit. The rights of any ethnic group should never be violated; but the equal guardianship of all ethnic groups should be attuned to fortifying the ties and unity of the entire archipelago. The truth is, all of the values chosen for cultivation should become the stone and cement of our nation's monument.

From this perspective, the goal of cultural education has two primary characteristics. **National** and **for the nation**. The two are entwined and even. One cannot be shaped without keeping in

7 Literal translation: "A healthy and robust sense of patriotism."

mind the other. If there is something that can be regarded as being national but not being for the nation, it is a subversive desire and intended to contradict and defile our ideal in accordance with the NCCA's vision.

Then there are many who will present themselves as being for the nation but not as being national, and these are surely venomous for they serve the spirits of self-interested groups or parties, if not serving the forces craving for the destruction of the Philippine government's democratic principles. The earlier statement that a culture already exists in the Philippines should be reiterated. The said culture might already be national. But we also said that it is sickly and impaired; hence, if ever, a truly national yet sickly and impaired culture. National but not for the nation. The patriotic characteristic is a necessity for the prevailing national culture to be rescued from its sickly and impaired condition.

Nevertheless, even though I am of the conjecture that the cultural aspiration's most significant characteristics are the national and the patriotic, my proposed explanation is only based presently on the interpretation of the NCCA's approved vision. On one hand, the vision might change. [Because the government's system has become federal? Because a new revolutionary government has emerged triumphant?] Once the vision radically changes, the goal of cultural education likewise changes. And more so the fundamental programs and experiences that were created in accordance with the NCCA's current vision. On the other hand, based only on the NCCA's approved vision, the conjectured goal proposes the appropriate reforms in programs and educational experiences in order to fulfill the vision.

Culture is Experience

It is important to remind that the cultural education should not end with or end as the identification of proper goals. This was the failure of past campaigns which started and ended on posters and TV ads. For example:

*Isang bansa
Isang diwa.*⁸

8 "One nation / One spirit."

Which thankfully lent its name to mobile stores called “Kadiwa.” Even the “Filipino First” as a livelihood policy has left no monument save for the already fire-prone NEPA-Q Mart. There have been many political slogans sweet to the ears whose fulfillment have been neglected post-elections.

Meaning, the primary and gravest task of cultural education is to make the people experience its ideal culture. **Culture is experience.** Cultural education should bring down culture itself from its lofty pedestal of history. Cultural education should be able to present culture from the high clouds of abstract thinking and beliefs, in order to have a definite and defined shape from the distant settings of folk wisdom and heritage of our ancestors. Cultural education should be able to find a suitable place for culture in today’s world of the Filipino people.

This is exactly the core of progressive education and which I recommend to serve as a guide for cultural education. Further meaning, the experience apt for the proper cultural education should be produced. And this is a gargantuan task that, due to not being taken to heart, is not given the necessary time and reflection in cultural discussions and plannings.

Think of this. In the span of more than 30 years, the NCCA has celebrated many performances and festivals, staged many regional and national conferences, sent artists, scholars, and experts to other nations, granted prizes and medals, contributed to the safeguarding of ancient rituals and arts, etc. But has the NCCA’s vision changed? And why has there been no thought to revise it toward an expanded vision? Recently, there was a disturbance in the DepEd when one student’s question of why Mabini is always seated went viral. Recently, a national survey sowed distress in many teachers. In the list of the top ten most important things in Filipinos’ lives—from Batanes to Tawi-tawi—love of the nation was nowhere to be found. In one survey of heroes, Dolphy and Pacquiao even edged out Rizal and Bonifacio. When high school students of UP were asked where they want to live in, only a few chose the Philippines.

The response of Congress, restore and make stricter the teaching of character and conduct. [Without even thinking that they, the congressmen and congresswomen, are products

of character and conduct when they were students.] Someone suggested to make the recitation of the “Panatang Makabayan” mandatory especially since during one hearing regarding the Filipino citizenship of a broadcast station’s owner, the owner could not right away recite even its first line.

I will scrutinize these instances more in our lack of proper understanding of the cultural education’s worth and role. On one hand, we presumed that it was merely the crafting of better slogans. The orientation of commercialized advertisements and political brainwashing. On the other hand, we considered that it was also part of the teaching of necessary knowledge and skills. In truth, it is more delicate and difficult, for it concerns the shaping of the proper national values.

Identifying the Concrete Experience

But again, to identify the proper and applicable experience is a big task. My earlier statement that culture is experience entails the reorientation of our total perception of cultural education. Connected to this are the contemplation and necessary discussion in order to revise the principles of tasks for cultural education.

The main characteristic of the proper and applicable experience is being **concrete**. [How to translate “concrete”? That characteristic of being solid by sight and by touch? To be “distinct” and “definite” is different.] How can the national and patriotic cultural goal become a concrete experience? Its first aspect is to become an intimate **part of the language and experience** of the people. Its reverse is the abstract, which means distant and alien, not just because the masses find it hard to understand, but because it is also absent in the present—it is in the past, in history. There is nothing wrong in studying history. But history needs to be brought closer to the real life in order to become more relevant. Who is interested in the dead who are neither your relatives nor your friends? History needs to become a relative or a friend. For example, an old narration needs to be a theme that resembles or tallies with the problems in the life of Juan de la Cruz. Such is the effect of the work of sermons taken from the Bible. It is also the proper duty of the revisiting of Manobo or Subanèn legends. And using indigenous languages, or at least the Filipino language, is a step that brings it closer to today’s idiom.

Its second aspect is being of **definite use** to the people. Meaning, an additional experience to one's personal experience. In this way, even if one cannot materially profit from it, it enriches one's nature as a human person and benefits his life. Aside from being a breathtaking view, what is the use of the payyo in Banaue for an ordinary farmer or for an ordinary city dweller? Had a photo taken with the payyo as background? Showed off the photo in his barangay or office? His drinking buddies in the barangay or his fellow employees envied him for having the cash to spend a vacation in Banaue. What else? He will forget the payyo once the photo fades. Or he gets lucky and takes a vacation in Kyoto or in Paris. Because he was just a tourist in Banaue. He was not guided by the cultural education to reflect, for example, that he had the ability like the Ifugaw to create an awe-inspiring farmland on the mountain. What else?

Nourishment for memory. This was what the Hot Dogs song "Manila" strived to fathom. This was also what Mabini wanted to distinguish as the concretization of love for the nation— "because of your country, you have life, love and interests, happiness, honor, and God." They say that it is much more genuine when it visits an expatriate as a longing for his "*lupang tinubuan*,"⁹ and was the key to the success of the Balikbayan program back then.

Its third aspect is the trait of **mutability**. Not something which has already come to pass, and is usually the effect of culture's common presentation as history and heritage. It might be good propaganda for museum exhibits, but often becomes the people's failure if the exhibit is disordered and small. It becomes disheartening instead of enlivening for the memory. As such, more relevant is culture's presentation as a changing history, something that has not yet happened or is currently happening, and the people can feel its relevance as an active participant if not a true witness to the change. In truth, the moment he takes to heart his active participation in the cultural changes is the ultimate victory of cultural education. Not only was the citizen encouraged to exalt his own culture which he had studied, it also became his device in order to place value in the added experiences as part of his being a true Filipino citizen.

9

Homeland, or more literally, "the land where one took root."

Cultural education as experience has other aspects. But what I wish to propose is the true experiencing of cultural education in line with the said principles of progressive education.

Indigenous and Truthful

The first and second aspects have conservative impulses. They feature more the **indigenous**. That memory will naturally grope for the native roots in the “*tinubuang lupa*.” The deeper the roots, the more full-bodied the memory. But memory also has a factual boundary. The deeper, the more distant from the truth of the present. And this is the challenge for cultural education. While its objective is to search for and discover the indigenous identity, the object might have already disappeared in an ancient era or already damaged by the passage of history. In the Philippines, Spanish colonialism embodies all obstacles against the search for the indigenous memory. The colonial memory is the one which sets astray the conservative impulse, creases the consciousness, seduces to a closer yet shallower naturalized, if not blinds outright the possibilities of the indigenous ideal.

Which is why the pure concern and compassion for cultural diversity is an important duty, and should be incorporated into the cultural education’s vision. This vision is directed at the culture of native groups, the culture that survived colonialism’s violence, but is possessed by the minority groups—minority, because their population is small and holds no political power. A big part of the conservative desire is the safeguarding and revival of this native treasure which is very vulnerable to the vicissitudes of modern and foreign civilization.

The balanced view of the indigenous and of the naturalized elements of national culture is part of the delicate job of cultural education. On one hand, the school’s walls, the home, and the surroundings of a child need to teem with cultural icons. The national flag, national song, national flower, national language, national tree, and even the gallery of national heroes are not enough. There is a need to augment their proper valuation with the help of new poems, songs, stories, plays, contests, and other cultural activities. There is also a need to research new legends, riddles, and folk wisdom which match the values that we want to extol or we want to criticize. Why do our heroes always need

to be martyrs, politicians, or generals? We also need the fitting monuments of honor for writers, artists, and cultural leaders, similar to the monuments for indigenous languages and important cultural commemorations.

On the other hand, the proper presentation of these needs to be truthful. They should not always be veiled in a mythical shroud. When exaggerated, even positive traits become negative. For example, textbooks in the past said that the Philippines is abundant in natural resources. To prove this blessed nature, one secretary of education then even had an anecdote that if your excrement happened to have a santol seed, a santol tree will sprout, even without nurturing, on the spot where you had defecated. But reality, especially the environs of the impoverished, contradicts this. The land is indeed ample but owned by hacenderos and corporations. Where can squatters plant even okras or beans in their closely packed shanties? Even the sand is being mined by foreigners in Cagayan. The production of oil in Malampaya is very limited. Irrigations dry up during the El Niño and the harvests plummet.

Meanwhile, portraying the negative reality too much is often negative. The truth is, identifying the negative was a very sensitive matter during the period when national and patriotic values were being established. We are not sure if the critique on Bonifacio's "haughty" behavior is being helpful, unless we first lay out carefully the objective conditions in order for an underprivileged to hold his head high in the society of the affluent and educated. Likewise, what are the values that we aim to propagate when we list Rizal's succession of lovers? History becomes gossip-mongering. The heroes purportedly become more "human"? But is this human being our desired model for the youth?

The vegetable-surrounded bahay-kubo is the slogan of an administration that failed to plan for industry. While the home with the aircon, TV, car in the garage, and imported appliances is the product of commercialism. Is this what is really important in our lives? We need to inspect even today's private desires and dreams. For example, what is "comfort" really? There is an indigenous philosophy that relates comfort to freedom from hunger, illness, fear, and anything that burdens man's feelings. If so, is the accumulation of money and material wealth a form of comfort? Do the perceptions of individual comfort and the planned social comfort correspond with one another?

A Collaborative Authorship

The very important principle of cultural education as a concrete experience lies in the third aspect. By recognizing culture as a kinetic concept, the democratic tasks of education are also given berth. Culture changes, but is not changed by an authority—by the government, by the expert, by the teacher, by the parish priest, by the parent. Instead, the people are involved in the methods to be used by education in authoring a new national culture. The cultural education needs to be opened to all opportunities so as to fulfill the said desire. Not only because the people are authoring their new selves, but because the basis and source of change are their own objective conditions—their current consciousness, love, desires, joys, dignity, etc—in summary, their current culture.

Of course, no single measure or method exists for the entire archipelago. What to breastfeed the baby is different from what to spoonfeed the toddler, what to give as toy to the teenager, what to provide as amusement for the adult. The themes and means, and perhaps also the grammars of language, are different for the residents of Basco, those of Boracay, and those of Mamasapano. But how? Does this need a new cultural experience? Or can the old ways of festivals, contests, or performance be used? Here is the required reliance on the creative talents of the agents of language, literature, and the arts. But what is more important is a definite goal. The methods of fulfilling the goal will be dictated by the cultural education's needs that will be identified.

Related to this, the cultural education is not an exclusive duty of the NCCA, or of the eventual Department of Culture. The formation of a total cultural educative environment is a collaborative effort. What is the use of posters and pictures of national symbols on the classroom's four walls, if a student will be greeted on the streets by pollution, giant billboards of cigarettes and softdrinks, beggars and sidewalk vendors, bingo sessions by the roadside, and upon getting home the family is watching Korean teleseries, photos of Hollywood stars are framed in the living room, and father shows off his new Nike and mother serves the pasta she cooked? At present, the school is like an orphaned bahay-kubo inside the farmlands and fields filled with imported plants and flaglets of Western products.

And if I return to my observation regarding the unity of cultural agencies, the cooperative fulfillment of the cultural ideal now entails the participation of museums, libraries, archives, theaters in order to produce a complete environment in line with the aspired values. To desire an intellectualized national language is to desire a new culture. Similarly, to desire libraries in every barangay, major museums in every province, comfortable theaters in every national school, the meticulous compilation of historical information and documents is to desire a new culture. And this is not just the job of cultural agencies. The desired culture needs to be printed and engraved on all books and signs, on food and clothes, on products, on merchandise in public markets and malls, on bridges and streets, on town halls and capitols, on terminals and airports, and all instrumentalities, corporations, LGUs, bureaus, departments, and branches of government work together to highlight it. Do not forget the role of private organizations and institutions.

This is just an outline. A sketch. It needs to be filled in with details and additional measures. Plans and applications need to be collaborated on. There is a need to be fastidious even with my statements now. And to immediately put this into action. It is also impossible to be realized in a short time. Like the reality that our sickly and impaired culture of today was shaped by three centuries of colonialism and an added century of miseducation. But this is not a slogan. The zeal needs to be unceasing and unrelenting; every tower erected in the countryside, every commercial fund, every inaugurated port, every prohibition should be in the national plan. But my idea of cultural education is a necessary step toward the revolution of Filipino society. It is a revolution that needs no violence and bloodshed, that is not a child of rebellion, coup de etat, and terrorism, for it went through a collaborative national cultural revolution.

Ferndale Homes
2 September 2020

