

Ano ang Pormang Pinoy?

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Ilang taon na ang nakaraan nang ako ay makabasa ng isang "Letter to the Editor" buhat sa isang Australiano na tumututol sa pahayagang kanyang sinulatan dahil sa pagkakagamit ng pahayagang nabanggit sa katagang "Aussie". Alam nating ang bansag na "Aussie" ay naghahayag ng mababang pagtingin sa mga Australiano. Binanggit din ng sumulat na ang mga Hapones naman ay nagagalit kapag sila ay tinatawag na "Japs".

Magbuhat noon, ako ay naglunsad ng pansariling aksiyon upang mabawasan ang paggamit ng bansag na "Pinoy" para sa ating mga Pilipino. Nakaraan ang mahaba-habang panahon ng aking pagsusumikap, at ako'y nadismaya sa aking adhikain sapagka't mga kapwa ko Pilipino mismo ang tumatawag sa kanilang sarili ng nabanggit na bansag. Tanong ko sa aking sarili, "talaga bang mababa ang paggalang nating mga Pilipino sa ating sarili at sa halip na magalit at itigil ang pagtawag sa atin ng Pinoy ay tayo pa ang nagpapalaganap ng ganyang bansag?"

Sa paglipas ng panahon, ako ay nakapag-iisip-isip at aking natanto ngayon na ang salitang "Pinoy" ay ating malambing na pagbansag sa ating sarili. Sa Ingles, masasabi nating ang "Pinoy" ay ang ating "word of endearment" para sa ating sarili. Sa madaling salita, ito ay hindi mababang pagtingin o di kaya ay insulto ng mga dayuhan. Hindi katulad ng mga katagang "Los Indios" o "Flips" na mapang-insultong ginamit ng mga Kastila at Amerikano sa atin. Natanto ko rin na ang diperensiya pala ay wala sa ating mga kababayang nagbabansag sa sarili ng katagang "Pinoy" kung hindi sa aking masasabing makakolonyal na pag-iisip na kung nagagalit ang mga Australiano at mga Hapon sa pagtawag sa kanila ng "Aussie" or "Japs", tayo rin ay hindi dapat pumayag na matawag ng Pinoy.

Hayaan ninyong ilahad ko sa inyo ang isang

kuwento sa akin ng isa kong kaibigan. Ayon sa kanya, mayroon daw isang Pilipinong bagong daling sa New York at ito ay tumuloy sa isang hotel. Sa "Check-in" counter, siya raw ay tinanong ng resepsiyonista, "check-in, Sir?" Ang sagot daw ng ating kababayan ay isang matunog na "No, noy-pi."

Maalala rin natin ang awit ni Florante na taas-noong nagsasabing, "Ako'y isang Pinoy, sa isip at diwa... Pinoy na nagmamahal sa sariling bansa." Sa isa pa niyang awit, pinagpayuhan niya ang mga Pinoy na, "Ika'y isang Pinoy, hindi isang Kano, huwag kang mahihiya kung ang ilong mo ay pango." Sana ay pinagpayuhan din niya ang mga Kano na huwag mahihiya kung ang ilong nila, sa tulis ay parang pako.

Marahil, ang mga pangunahing nabanggit ko ay makapagbibigay sa atin ng maraming ideya kung ano nga ang Pormang Pinoy. Naririyang ang: creative, improvising, light and transparent (perhaps) as against rigid and opaque, maybe even playful, but definitely human, romantic, and yes, pragmatic. Marahil, maidaragdag rin natin na tayo ay may pagka-kolonyal at kaagad tumitingin sa sarili buhat sa perspektibo ng mga dayuhan.

Kung masusing iisipin, ano nga ba ang Pormang Pinoy? Ito ay isang katanungang hindi madaling sagutin dahil sa katulad ng iba't ibang aspeto ng ating kultura. Ang hindi itim ay hindi nangangahulugang itim. Sa pagitan ng puti at itim ay napakaraming, kung tawagin sa Ingles, ay "shades of gray" na nagpapakita ng kayamanan ng ating kultura, isang katangiang ating mamamalas din sa ating mga kapatid na oriental.

Isa pang mapaghahambingan ng Pormang Pinoy ay ang brilyanteng napakarami ang "facets" o tapyas o mukha na siya ring nagpapakinang sa ating pagka-Pinoy.

Bagama't napakarami ang "facets" o mukha ang pormang Pinoy, mayroong namamayani o "dominant side" na siyang laging nakikita dahil ito ang nakalantad sa paningin ng mga mayroong impluwensiya kung papaano dapat mamalas ang mga bagay-bagay. Ang "dominant side" na ito ay ang pananaw ng mga may impluwensiya, ng mga lider sa iba't ibang disiplina at ng mga may pinag-aralan. Siyempre pa, ang may pinag-aralan ay iyung mga aral sa "dominant educational system" na hindi maikakailang buhat sa kanluran na kung tawagin ay "First World". Sa madaling salita, ang namamayani sa pormang Pinoy ay ang pagiging maka-kanluran (at maka-"first world") nito kahit na marahil ay sa panlabas na anyo man lamang. Maidaragdag rin dito na dahil ang mga may kaya ang humahawak sa "mass media" at teknolohiya, ang madaling nakikita ay iyung pananaw nila kaya tuloy madaling makalinalang na ang pananaw nila ay ang pananaw ng pangkalahatan o pangkalakhang Pilipino.

Ang pangatlong paghahambing na aking gagawin ukol sa pormang Pinoy ay ang pagkumpara nito sa "cross-section" ng pundasyon na kinatatayuan ng ating kultura.

Kung tayo ay tatapyas sa "geological foundation" ng ating kinatatayuan, mamamalas nating ang pinakaibabaw ay isang matigas na "layer" na sinusundan ng "semi-gold or soft-layer" at sa ilalim ng huli ay isang "fluid" layer na tila ba hindi mapakali at ibig pumasa-itaas tulad ng "lava" ng bulkan.

Ang ating pangkalabasang porma na siyang "dominant and highly visible" ay madaling taguriang maka-kanluran (American and Spanish influenced). Makikita natin ito sa dominanteng relihiyon sa nabanggit na "educational system", sa sistemang pampulitikal, sa pananamit o "fashion", sa mga programa sa sine, telebisyon at radyo, sa mga babasahin, sa musika at sining, sa lengwahe ng arkitektura at sining-biswal, sa lengwaheng pangangalakal at marami pa. Ang mga simbolong ginagamit at ang mga angkop na pangangahulugan sa mga simbolong ito ay buhat sa kanluran. Kung ang mga simbolo at mga kahulugan man nito ay angkop sa isa't-isa ay ating tatalakayin. Sa ngayon, atin munang kikilalanin bagama't mistulang maka-kanluran man tayo sa panlabas, ang ating kabuuan ay nahahaluan ng mga kaugaliang mayroong impluwensiyang nag-

bubuhay sa Tsina, sa ating mga kapatid sa Indo-Tsina, Malasya, Indonesya, India, Arabya at kalakhang Oceania. Ang mga impluwensiyang ito marahil ay hindi kaagad-agad makikita o maihahayag kung ano, subali't alam nating ito ay bahagi ng ating kultura at hindi minsan lamang ay pumapaibabaw at nagpapamalas. Tulad ng lava ng bulkan, ito ay maaaring nakakasira at maaari ring nakapagpapaganda at nakapagpapayaman ng lupa.

Mayroong kasabihang, "mass follows class". Ayon sa kasabihang ito, ang masa raw ay gumagagad lang sa kung sino at ano ang para sa kanila ay "class". Kung susundan natin ang argumentong ito, sino at ano nga ba ang "class" sa Pinoy? Natural lang siguro na ang mga may poder o lakas (sa pera, sa sandata at/o kaalaman) ang siyang titingalain. At siyempre, silang tinitingala at ang mga ari't kilos ng mga ito ang siyang titingalain rin bilang "class". Kung sila ang tinitingala, hindi ba't sila rin ang gagagarin?

Ang kaibigan kong kenkoy ay may isa pang kuwento. Ayon dito, may isang probinsyanong mag-asawa na may anak na nars sa Amerika ang pinadalhan ng ticket ng kanilang anak upang sila'y makadalaw sa kanya at nang ang mga ito naman ay makapag-abroad. Sa loob ng eroplano, kinakabahan ang mag-asawa dahil unang pagkakataon lang nilang sumakay sa sasakyang panghimpapawid. Gulat na gulat sila sa laki at lapad ng 747. At may mistisang wetres pa na walang ginawa kundi pagsilbihan ang mga pasahero.



"Ano kaya ang inoorder dito?" ang nerbiyosong patanong ng lalaki sa asawa. "Malay ko," ang sagot naman niya. "Umorder ka na lang kung ano ang oorderin ng katabi mo. Siguradong sanay iyan," ang dagdag nito.

Katabi ng mag-asawa ay isang mukhang kongresman na mukha rin namang alahero dahil sa maraming palamuting alahas sa daliri, sa dulo ng manggas, sa relo, sa kurbata at pati yata sa sinturon. Mayaman, "class" at siguradong sanay sa ganitong mga sitwasyon.

At dumating nga ang stewardess, unang tinanong ang katabi ng mag-asawa dahil ito ay nakaupo sa may "aisle". "What would you like to drink, Sir?" Ang sagot nito ay, "I'll have coffee."

Nang magtanong ang stewardess sa mag-asawa, kape ang inoorder ng lalaki para sa kanila. Dumating ang kape at humingi ng "cream and sugar" si Mr. Katabi. Siyempre, humingi rin ng "cream and sugar" ang lalaki.

Oras na ng hapunan nguni't bago ito ay may "cocktails" munang ibigay. "Scotch on the rocks" ang inoorder ni Mr. Katabi at ganoon din ang hiningi ng mag-asawa.

Sa hapunan, nagbigay ng "choices" ang stewardess at "pork dish" ang inoorder ni Katabi kaya't ganoon din ang inoorder ng lalaki. Humingi ng "red wine" si Katabi, humingi rin ang lalaki para sa kanilang dalawa.

Pagkatapos kumain, "tea" ang hiningi ni Katabi. "Tea" rin ang hiningi ng lalaki.

Nakahalata na si katabi at siya ay naasar sapagka't pakiramdam niya ay niloloko siya. Tutulugan na lang sana niya ang kanyang pagkaasar subali't kailangan niyang magpaantok muna. Tinawag niya ang stewardess at inis na sinabing, "Newsweek, please." Siyempre, "Newsweek, please," ang kaagad na gagad ng lalaki.

Lalong naasar si Katabi kaya hindi siya nakapagpigil, tinanong niya ang lalaki, "Niloloko mo ba ako?" Sumagot siya, "Bakit, ikaw lang ba ang marunong kumain ng Newsweek?"

Iyan ang isa sa mga "facets" ng pormang Pinoy. Sa harap ng sitwasyong hindi tayo komportable at sanay, kayang-kaya natin ang manggagad upang ipakita sa ating sarili't sa ibang tao na kung kumakain sila ng

Newsweek, tayo ay ganoon din. Kung uso sa ibang bansa ang banlon, turtle neck, nik-nik shirts, o kaya ay woolen pants, woolen suits o Amerikana at overcoat, pasasaan ba at umuuso rin sa atin ang mga iyan kahit na sa loob nito, tayo ay naaalibadbaran sa tindi ng init ng ating klima.

Kung ano ang sineng popular sa Hollywood ay siya rin nating pinipilahan dito. Hindi lang iyan, ginagawan pa natin ng local version. Kaya't kung may Rambo sila, mayroon din tayo. Marami pang halimbawa, katulad ng Bobo Cop, Starzan, Jackie Tiyan, at ngayon ay ang "Barbi, Maid in the Philippines" ay ang ating "Tootsie".

Ang ating mga peryodiko at magazine ay hindi pahuhuli sa mga modelong pangkanluran, nandaraig pa. Kung may "freedom of the press" sila, hinihigitan pa natin ang "freedom" na iyan. Sa society pages, walang laban ang Europa at Amerika sa ating version ng ating mga royalty, tycoons, billionaires at mga movie stars. Kapag ang mga ito ay nagpakasal sa Sarrat, sa Fort Santiago, sa Manila Polo Club, o sa loob ng tubig sa dagat at kumpleto pa sa diving suits. Huwag lang hindi mabalitaan ay nakakasigurong kung mayroon sila, mayroon din tayo at higit pa.

Sa advertising, kung maaari ay hindi pango kundi ilong pako at blandino't blandina pa ang mga nagrekomenda ng mga produktong "export quality" na para bang "if it is good enough for them, it should be good enough for us as well". Ganoon din sa nilalaman ng ating mga binabasang pocketbooks at textbooks. Tadtad ng mga insinuations, biases, and subtle suggestions that promote global tastes and values which are dominated by western orientation.

Our architecture reflects the same realities. Look at our homes. The houses of materially well-off Filipinos are local and/or miniaturized versions of American or European models.

Thus, we find Swiss Chalets, Paladian and Renaissance facades, Moroccan-style villas and, of course, Beverly Hills and Hollywood-style mansions in the enclaves of the rich. We wonder what style of life their homeowners possibly lead.

As for public structures, we have a cultural center that is supposedly for the masses but unless you come in a limousine that can surely bring you up the steep ramp without stalling midway, you'd better use the side stairs although

they smell of fresh and stale urine. The walk alongside the ramp going up the main entrance is so narrow, you are in danger of being side-swiped by a motor vehicle whose driver, making sure he does not stall midway, has to accelerate his ascent.

No offense to the architect of CCP (actually it is really an impressive structure inside and outside), but the center was conceived to encourage the development of our culture. Now, it may have something to showcase, but at the time it was constructed, there was not much to present and what could have been done was to create regional centers wherein cultural activities closer to the grassroots level could have been encouraged. What happened was that, since there was not much that local which could be presented, the center had to import foreign spectacles; and as a result, much of what subsequently emerged in our local cultural forms were very much influenced by (if not bastardized versions of) the imported models. Artists who thought it important to work on and with our own indigenous forms were unfortunately, very often left to themselves in their struggle. I understand that the present thrust of CCP is to make up for the neglect of the past. In the design of structures which require highly technical considerations, we have often neglected cultural matters in our effort to achieve efficiency.

Hospital design is one area where this is obvious. In the past, we have been using imported design criteria, and we have been leaving very little place for our cultural values. Thus, we find our hospitals with no place for "bantays", and these people have to suffer discomfort and loss of human dignity as they contort their bodies in their improvisations. In fact, our hospital authorities merely close their eyes to the presence of these people. Where possible, these "bantays" are discouraged, shamed or embarrassed, if necessary. Now, in the first world, medical authorities are realizing the value of relatives in helping hasten the convalescence and recovery of patients, and they are encouraging such relatives to do their part by providing facilities for them. But I suppose, there are not many who would have the time for they would be very busy making money or attending their careers.

One public structure which would have been efficient had it been designed in the first world is our international airport. Not only that, one may even say that it is beautifully impressive. However, that is not how our "kababayans" and their

local relatives see it. When one has to suffer the indignity of having to be fenced out in the rain or under the heat of our merciless sun, when one is unable to see one's beloved off or meet him in a non-humiliating circumstances, then how can he say, "ooh and ahh" in praise of high-tech efficiency and beautiful aesthetics? In the first world culture, a traveller is seldom seen off or met at the airport; thus, a little space is necessary for well-wishers. But this is not the case in our culture. Bus-loads of relatives send off or meet a single departing or arriving relative. Is it in our effort to ape foreign models or in our refusal to consider cultural factors that we end up creating situations that prove dehumanizing for our own people particularly for those who have little power and means to find their way into restricted areas? In the case of the airport, could we not have provided an entire floor where people can say their goodbyes and/or hellos? At the same time, this floor can be overlooking the arrival and departure areas, with bullet-proof-glass protection, if necessary. It would have cost us so much, but did cost really matter when MIA, now NAIA, was constructed?

Going back to our homes, while many of the houses of our rich are miniaturized versions of foreign models, we find that, as we go down the economic ladder, houses of those in the middle and lower income brackets are actually miniaturized versions of those in the income levels above them. Eventually, variations occur such as, for example, a balustrated lanai or balcony for the leisure of the rich becomes a balustrated narrow fire exit for the less economically well-off. We see bar counters with or without bar stools under the narrow and steep staircases of accessories. Very often, an estante goes with it, too. Its shelves are lined with recycled wine and liquor bottles filled with colored water. In between, we may find miniaturized copies of Venus de Milo in plaster of Paris. In this land of flowers and greens, those shelves would be adorned with plastic flowers covered with several layers of dust, and they would be held together in an improvised vase that was once a mayonnaise or some other jar with its label intact.

I can go on and on; and maybe only succeed in giving the impression that I do not like our culture. But what is it I am really trying to say? I guess it is this:

That, speaking of pormang Pinoy, whether we like it or not, form and context in our culture need not match, need not be harmonious and

need not be one; at least, not in the western concept of harmony and oneness. Maybe our culture just has so much diversity that we have learned to live with the presence of so many forms that need not come in "sets" as in a western style dinner set where each piece must match the other pieces.

We, Pinoys, have the great ability and flexibility to focus our attention to a given subject and exclude the peripheral elements. As a result, we are not bothered by what others may find incongruous, such as for example, what Lino Brocka portrayed in one of his movies where an altar of sacred images is surrounded by photos of superstars. We also see this in jeepneys where the sacred images are surrounded by sexy and censorable stickers.

However, this gap between form and context or content, I believe, is more prevalent for the well-off and the schooled than those who are not; and this is because the former can afford to indulge in their whims. They are also better exposed to what the powerful and the mighty (the "class") indulge in. This syndrome becomes a little less prevalent, but never becomes completely absent, as we go down the so-called economic ladder and class levels.

Perhaps, this is because people in the lower categories can less afford to be pretentious, and maybe, they have less need for pretensions. Thus, as we go down the ladder, we may find people who can be more and more true to themselves, people with whom more forms are more true to the context of the circumstances they are in.



We then ask ourselves, what could possibly be the root of this syndrome where in form need not be true to its context? Could it be that it is really natural for man to indulge in fantasy and

imagination so that a model can be set as the goal to be concretized... for fantasy and imagination are parts of having a vision? Is the Pinoy therefore, really just having a vision when he allows himself to be pretentious, when he tries to be what he is not- believing that he will eventually be what he pretends to be if he tried hard enough? Or, is he just exhibiting a defense mechanism to escape from economic and other difficulties?

I do not have categorical answers to those questions. But I would like to allude once more to our past.

Before our colonial masters arrived, our forefathers must have had their own forms and since theirs was an era of more rationally-paced development, (unlike ours when one of our hands cannot even keep pace with what the other is doing) forms, through the years, must have had better chances of developing true to their context. However, when our colonial masters arrived (and they arrived when Europe had just emerged from the dark ages and was on its way to industrialization, an era characterized by fast-paced development) they brought with them entirely new systems with their own forms. The context of these systems and their forms were forced into our people through the elites, who were eventually known as the ilustrados. Naturally, these elites were given special privileges for which they had to serve as the extensions of the colonial masters in every way. The implication of this "having to act as extensions" brought in a lot of consequences-both positive and negative. On the negative side was the emergence of a gap between the chosen few and the rest of the population. This gap has, through the years, become wide and is still growing wider. Considering that this has given birth to "having to be what one is not" the incongruity of form from context has been institutionalized and has become a way of life for all with the elite as the most affected. And since "mass follows class" the syndrome filters down to the masses in (fortunately or unfortunately, depending on one's perspective) diminishing degree as one moves down the economic ladder or as one physically moves away from growth centers which serve as the bastions of the political, social and economic elites. These growth centers and the elites are the most effective conduits of imported goods and imported ideas-unadulterated, in their original forms, initially, but adapted by necessity and more and more within local context as they filter down to the masses.