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PROCEEDINGS

The Cory Aquino Leadership: Perspectives from the Social Sciences

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Is there anything left for the social scientists to explain? What part of Corazon "Cory" Aquino have we not understood amidst the very public outpouring of grief and deep gratitude during her passing last August? The University of the Philippines (UP) Third World Studies Center (TWSC), together with the Office of the UP Diliman Chancellor, the UP Department of Political Science, and the Philippine Political Science Association organized this event to respond precisely to these concerns, which are borne out of cynicism and our haste to get over the former president's death. The organizers believe that Cory Aquino's life as a leader, her experiences, and the decisions she made that still strongly inform our society today were all drawn from a wide range and sometimes conflicting mix of personal convictions and political positions. Thus, to interpret her life in the same way we attempt to comprehend the nation's sorrow over her death, there is a need for the different disciplines of the social sciences to come together and share their understanding of her life and legacy. Equally important is the opportunity that this forum provides to the current generation of students whose idea of her role in the nation's history is only a faint approximation of what their elders have lived through. The forum challenges us to go beyond the narrow sentimentality of grief—that it be an occasion not only for old war stories but also for new inquiries

about a past and a leader whom we have considered so deserving of our sacrifice, too worthy of our tears.

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AMADO M. MENDOZA JR. (Professor, Department of Political Science, College of Social Sciences and Philosophy [CSSP], UP Diliman): Almost immediately after Edsa I, I essayed the position that, in relative terms, Cory was a "restorationist" (implying that she was not truly revolutionary) and that former president Pres. Ferdinand E. Marcos was the "real" revolutionary. At the time, I thought it was a good corrective to the euphoria of those glorious and heady days.

Two weeks before Cory died this year, I posted an entry in my blog extolling her "quiet charisma" and praised her for not exercising her dictatorial powers during the interregnum between Edsa I and the establishment of Congress under the 1987 Constitution—particularly to repudiate our then USD26 billion foreign debt (or at least the odious ones) or to decree a land reform program (Mendoza 2009). For this post, I was "mildly" rebuked by some friends and fellow activists.

Truth to tell, my views on Cory Aquino had both changed and not changed. Let me explain. First, my 1986 contrapuntal remarks. Marcos upset the system that prevailed from 1946 to 1972 and his faction monopolized power through the declaration of martial rule. Worst of all, the property rights of his political rivals were summarily erased.

The property rights system of the country is a product both of its colonial history and developments over the past few decades. The Spanish colonial state sought to impose property rights regimes that were alien to those previously instituted by the indigenous peoples of the archipelago, which included stewardship, usufruct, and communal ownership. In the process, massive asset theft, typical of all colonial ventures, occurred in the country. The main object of theft and ownership then was arable land. The American colonial state introduced the distinction between public and inalienable land and privately-owned and alienable real estate. In the process, several indigenous peoples in the highlands were disenfranchised of their so-called ancestral domains. The 1946-1972 postcolonial state continued these Western-originated property regimes even as the asset structure diversified over time. In general, access to political power guaranteed security of property rights and elites, at various levels, consolidated their political and economic positions.

Up to the eve of the declaration of martial law in September 1972, the property rights of rival elite factions were generally secure regardless of the political cycle's outcome. Ownership rights were not extinguished by an electoral loss. The elites were organized into two political parties that alternated in power at the national level. The ability of an elite faction to regain power in the next election deterred the faction in power from erasing the property rights of the "outs." Elite factions, therefore, were prevented by the possibility of electoral defeat from disrespecting the property rights of their rivals. The default behaviour was for the "ins" to plunder the state treasury instead of confiscating the property of the "outs." Notwithstanding a constitutional provision for two presidential terms, no president has been able to win reelection until 1969 when Ferdinand Marcos won an unprecedented second term. In this sense, 1969 already represented the start of deviation from the unwritten rules of the elite game.

The balance of power between the rival elite factions shifted decisively in favor of Marcos's faction after his unprecedented reelection in 1969. He monopolized political power through the declaration of martial law in September 1972 and proceeded to violate the property rights of his political opponents (Kushida 2003). The demise of the dictatorship in February 1986 saw the post-Marcos elites attempting a restoration of pre-martial law arrangements with respect to property rights and access to political power. The properties of the anti-Marcos elites (such as the Lopez, Lopa, Elizalde, and Jacinto families) were returned to their former owners. A new constitution adopted in 1987 provided the ground rules for political contestation and all but forestalled the possibility of new dictatorships. After an initial lock-out period, even the Marcoses were allowed back into the country and managed to win electoral posts or stand for elections. Despite the formation of a presidential commission mandated to recover the so-called ill-gotten wealth of the Marcoses and their cronies, these properties got entangled in a quagmire of unresolved lawsuits filed within and without the country.

The violation of elite property rights by Marcos during the dictatorship's heyday is like a genie let out of the bottle. Despite all efforts to date, the mess created by the initial massive cancellation of property rights has not been sorted out to satisfaction. The ownership of substantial portions of the equities of major Philippine corporations (including the top-ranked San Miguel Corporation [SMC] and the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company remains contested.

The fall of the dictatorship also led to the recognition of new asset claimants—the thousands of human rights victims who were tortured or murdered by Marcos's security forces and the coconut farmers disenfranchised by the so-called coconut levy. The United States courts had repeatedly recognized the claims of the human rights victims against the Marcos estate while the Philippine Supreme Court had repeatedly ruled that the coconut levy was a public fund and must be taken from the control of businessman Eduardo Cojuangco, who used the money to wrest control of the country's premier business firm—SMC. To date, however, none of these judicial decisions have been enforced since rival claimants have managed to secure restraining orders against them.

Given the above discussion, Cory's task was akin to putting back what was shattered by the dictatorship—and that is procedural democracy and restoration of erased elite property rights. Property rights of elites associated with the Marcoses were similarly erased to remedy the imbalance of power and wealth created during the dictatorship. The idea was to restore the pre-1972 balance of power between rival elites that will serve as the basis for elite democratic contestation. Of course, this was not entirely a transparent or nor a savory process. In fact, some graduate students should write their dissertations on how the Lopezes, et. al. regained their assets and how the Presidential Commission on Good Government worked (or not).

I think the task of coming up with a definitive assessment of Cory's leadership is to recognize that she morphed from being a relative unknown to a national leader and historic icon. I see four phases in the over-all process:

- end-game against the Marcos dictatorship from August 1983 to Edsa I
- revolutionary government from February 25, 1986 to the convening of Congress in July 1987
- regular government from July 1987 to June 1992
- post-presidency Cory (July 1992-August 2009)

Though flat and unspectacular, *Tita* (Aunt) Cory drew a wide following and led the nation in the end-game against the dictatorship. While I do not subscribe to the view that she "gave" us back our democracy—we actually won it for ourselves with her—she indeed led us at this crucial phase. She was a reluctant leader assuming the role

after her husband's assassination. Mocked by Imelda Marcos as a "plain housewife" who lacked the bombast and the experience of traditional "strong men" Filipino politicians, she challenged the wily Marcos in a one-on-one contest in the 1986 snap presidential elections.

Cory admitted that she, indeed, was a plain housewife (even if not an ordinary one) and that she did not know a lot of things. For instance, she did not know how to engage in the record corruption that was associated with the Marcoses, their relatives, and cronies. That she was able to respond to such a riposte with sarcasm indicated political sophistication; sophistication that was not apparent to an adversary consumed by hubris.

During the revolutionary government period, Cory's government freed political prisoners and initiated peace talks with the communist insurgents, among others. She also kept her options open regarding the continued stay of US military bases in the country.

We must realize that revolutionary governments are most vulnerable to political challenges until they get consolidated, that is, until they get regularized or institutionalized. It is my opinion that while outmaneuvered by Edsa I, the balance of power has not really shifted away from the pro-Marcos, reactionary, and antidemocratic forces in the country. Early in the revolutionary government period, the insurgents had welcomed Cory's initial moves but could not yet enter into a strategic alliance with her government. Rightist forces were mobilized precisely by fears of such an alliance and the possibilities of asset redistribution away from the propertied. The US government under Pres. Ronald Reagan had to discern Cory's position on the military bases and the local communists before throwing full support behind her government.

Given this background, it is understandable that the first challenges to her government emanated from the militarist right—the coup-ku-ruh-ku-coups prior to August 1987—who felt they should capture what they failed to capture in February 1986. At the subnational level, landlords formed antipeasant militias while anticommunist vigilante groups were armed against the insurgents.

The country's politics could be modeled as a three-person strategic interaction game between the Left (personified by Jose Ma. Sison), the Center (personified by Cory), and the Right (personified by Juan Ponce Enrile). A two-person alliance shifts the balance of power against the third one. So, the dynamics of the game is for either the Left or Right to frustrate the formation of such an alliance against it. Cory's Center

initially tilted Left, inviting rightist attacks to force the Center's hand and to alienate the Left from the Center. Key events included the Mendiola massacre of left-leaning peasants in January 1987 and the assassination of two leftist leaders—Leandro "Lean" Alejandro and Rolando Olalia—by unknown forces. After January 1987, the peace talks were scuttled and the sword of war was unsheathed against the insurgents.

During this period, the greater threat to the survival of Cory's government came from the Right rather than from the leftist insurgency. For this reason, her government would be more inclined to adopt the rightist agenda, further straining its relationships with the Left. Things came to a head when the rightists mounted the most serious coup in August 1987. The centrist government felt it was strong enough to rid itself of its extreme outlier and fired Juan Ponce Enrile, Jaime Ongpin, Joker Arroyo, and Augusto "Bobbit" Sanchez.

The key agenda was to defend democracy (albeit procedural) from its rightist and leftist adversaries. For this reason, I understand now (though I did not then) why she did not repudiate our foreign debt or decree a land reform program before the adoption of the 1987 Constitution and the establishment of Congress, when she practically enjoyed dictatorial powers as head of a revolutionary government. Her landlord/upper class origin was a factor but not the sole one. I think she knew that deciding unilaterally on such major issues would divide us and seriously threaten the transition from authoritarianism.

An executive order on land reform would have destabilizing effects. The coup attempts against her government so far would have enjoyed broader support from threatened big landed interests (those with the wherewithal and the will to organize anti-land reform armed groups). A bolder foreign debt policy does not have straightforward effects. It is true that capital was precisely dried up at that time, that is, there was a heavy outflow of resources. The debt overhang became a binding constraint and the only way to protect growth (and therefore neutralize destabilization) was to reduce debt servicing based on the ability to pay. However, the uncertainty of the policy's success may have further split Cory's center (e.g., businessmen who fear inability to open letters of credit) making her government more vulnerable to attacks. A bolder foreign debt policy could also alienate foreign governments and interests. I am still reflecting on this issue. Nevertheless, land reform and debt policy was to be decided upon jointly by the executive and the legislative after July 1987.

I did not agree with everything she had done during her presidency. The influence of the Catholic Church on her was excessive. I squirmed every time she appeared on television to call on the nation to pray, especially when Malacañang was beset by various coup attempts. Obviously, it was not an ecumenical appeal. At the time, she tended to forget that not all Filipinos are Catholic.

She appeared silly when she showed journalists her proverbial "no-space-under" bed to dispel the rumor that she cowered under that same bed during one of the more serious coup attempts against her government. But then she did a class act when she filed an ordinary citizen's suit against one of the journalists who parlayed that rumor. She got humiliated when the Senate ignored a personal appeal to extend the bases agreement with the United States in September 1991. At her term's end, Tita Cory reported to the nation that she accomplished a single-minded, self-imposed task—that of presiding over the troubled transition from authoritarian rule to democracy. One can validly complain over the quality of our democracy. However, given a choice between a flawed democracy and Marcosian rule, my preference is clear.

After the presidency, Cory became a stateswoman. Divining the self-serving purposes of incumbents, she opposed repeated attempts to amend the Constitution. She helped oust Joseph "Erap" Estrada peacefully. She called on Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to resign after the "Hello Garci" scandal. However, I did not agree when she apologized to Erap. It was equivalent to a repudiation of Edsa II. As a political scientist though, I can understand why she did so. It was to help consolidate the anti-Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo front.

A dark blemish on Cory's legacy is the case of Hacienda Luisita. Nowhere is the problem of land rights and agrarian reform more starkly illustrated than in Hacienda Luisita, the family estate of the powerful Cojuangco family, which Cory belonged to. The family patriarch took out loans on two separate occasions, each guaranteed by government financial institutions on the condition that the land would be redistributed to the peasants. The redistribution should have happened in 1967 and 1978 and the farmers turned to the courts for redress. In 1985, after a long legal battle, the courts ordered that the land be given to the farmers. During the 1986 snap presidential elections, incumbent President Marcos used the case as an election issue against Aquino. However, Cory was declared president of the republic in February 1986 when the Marcos dictatorship was dismantled by a bloodless popular uprising. In spite of the court's 1985 decision, the Cojuangcos

signed in 1988 a stocks-for-land agreement with their farm workers. There were allegations that many farmers were forced to agree and give up their land rights. There were also complaints that returns on the stocks were meager and could not support the farmers and their families. In July 2005, the Cojuangcos broke politically with Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo when Cory asked her to resign. Afterwards, the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) started issuing adverse rulings against the Cojuangcos. Things came to a head in November 2005 when four thousand peasants went on strike in protest over the 1988 agreement. When a massive military police force moved to disperse them, violence ensued. Twelve farmers and two children were killed. In 2006, the Cojuangcos asked the Supreme Court to stop the DAR from distributing the estate to the farmers, claiming there was no proof that the farmers wanted the stocks-for-land agreement to be rescinded. The case is still pending before the high tribunal.

In sum, while Tita Cory had been unable to transcend her limitations, she had been able to frequently rise up to meet crucial challenges. In the process, she managed to endear herself to a people hungry for role models.

RANDOLF S. DAVID (Chair and Professor, Department of Sociology, CSSP, UP Diliman): Victory, it is said, has many parents, but defeat is an orphan. So it was with the 1986 People Power Revolution. Various groups vied with one another to claim paternity of the new government that was being born. Each one of them saw the Edsa I uprising in the light of their own self-referential narrative.

The businessmen and the politicians interpreted the events of February 1986 as a continuation of the moral battle that pitted Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino's irrepressible widow, Cory, against the dictator Ferdinand Marcos in the snap presidential election. The military rebels of the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM), together with their principal sponsor, Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile, saw Edsa I as a unique event, separate from the elections—a product, they said, of the historic partnership of the people and the military. The social movements, on the other hand, saw the same events as the culmination of more than two decades of sustained struggle not only against the dictatorship but against a feudal and neocolonial social order propped up by the United States. Each group, in other words, tried to assert its authorship of the revolution. The underground Left which, up to that point, had played a crucial role in

the struggle against the dictatorship, chose to disparage Edsa I by insisting that the entire event was a Central Intelligence Agency-scripted show. They questioned its credentials as an authentic people's uprising. To understand the nature of these competing narratives is to appreciate the dynamics of redemocratization in the first few years following the so-called Edsa revolution.

As Marcos and his family fled Malacañang Palace aboard US helicopters, the leaders of the military rebels and the civilian advisers of President Aquino lost no time in negotiating the composition of the transitional government. Enrile retained his post as defense minister while Fidel Ramos, previously the chief of the notorious Philippine Constabulary, was named chief of staff of the armed forces. The politicians and business people who drafted Cory for the presidency in the snap election took most of the other seats in the new government. A number of social movement figures were appointed to a few government departments and agencies. Everyone seemed happy except the military rebels who felt that their role at Edsa I had been downgraded, and that they were not being consulted. Indeed the civilian leaders wanted them to return quietly to their barracks and to completely entrust governance to civilians. The soldiers thought they deserved to be equal partners in the new government, at least until a regular constitution was ratified and a whole new set of officials chosen in fresh elections. This perspective was dismissed out of hand.

The first act of the new civilian leadership was to declare a provisional revolutionary government, with Cory exercising full executive and legislative powers until a new regular constitution could be put in place. Cory threw away the 1973 Marcos constitution, disbanded the Marcos legislature, and fired all local government officials, replacing them with her appointees. The military was completely excluded from the formal exercise of these revolutionary powers. But so was civil society. Cloaked with revolutionary powers, Cory found herself in a position not only to dismantle the odious structures of the Marcos dictatorship but also to promulgate social reforms that could benefit the vast masses of the people. She held these powers for more than a year, while the country awaited congressional and local elections under a new constitution.

Four issues, in particular, defined the ideological character of the Cory government, namely: the foreign debt, agrarian reform, the crony properties, and human rights. Her handling of these issues showed her basic conservative leanings, but it also reflected the dynamics of the power struggle that hobbled the crucial years of her presidency.

The Foreign Debt

Marcos left behind a foreign debt amounting to more than USD26 billion. Forty-seven percent of the national budget every year went to debt service. The debt burden had become the single most important impediment to the country's economic development. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) program that was in force dictated restrictions on money supply and government expenditures and maintained a regime of tight credit and high interest rates. The country had to tighten its belt in order to pay the foreign debt, when what it probably needed most at that time was a momentary relief from the debt burden so that the economy could grow and improve its capacity to pay its debts. The relief could have come in various forms: debt forgiveness of some official debts, debt repudiation of fraudulent debts, liberal rescheduling terms on legitimate debts, debt swaps, etc. Cory's global popularity and the worldwide sympathy earned by Filipinos in their quest for democracy had given the new government enough leverage to negotiate better terms than had been possible under Marcos. But the new president chose a different path, that of the ideal debtor. On her first visit to the United States after becoming president, Cory told a joint session of the US Congress that her government was honoring all the debts left behind by the previous regime.

Cory was worried that a radical approach to the debt problem could invite retaliation in the form of cancellation of import credits, which in turn, could result in production cut-backs and further unemployment. She was not predisposed to take that risk because her primary concern, she said, was to be able to normalize economic and political activities as soon as possible.

Agrarian Reform

When Marcos declared martial law in 1972, one of his first acts was to promulgate a land reform program that promised to liberate the Filipino peasantry from bondage. The Marcos program was limited to lands planted with rice and corn. Excluded were sugar and coconut lands, which formed the economic base of a large segment of the oligarchy. Cory had the rare opportunity to correct this while she held the powers of legislation. But, as it turned out, land reform was not among her top priorities. Indeed, the post of agrarian minister was the last position in her Cabinet to be filled up. It was only much later, bowing to pressure from the people's organizations that she issued an executive order declaring the entire country a land reform area

irrespective of the crop planted. But even that belated order fell short of expectations. It left unresolved two basic issues that would have distinguished her agrarian policy from previous programs—namely, retention limits or how much the landowners could keep of their land, and compensation or how much to pay the landowners. She wanted these issues to be resolved by the new Congress, which, as everybody anticipated, would likely be dominated by lawyers for landowners or the landowners themselves. It is fair to ask whether in fact the restructuring of Philippine society ever figured in Cory's personal vision of what a revolutionary presidency could do. In the end, the post-Edsa Congress passed an agrarian reform law that, as expected, made it virtually impossible to break up the large landholdings. Not surprisingly, the first hacienda to successfully avoid actual redistribution was Hacienda Luisita.

The Crony Properties

One of the battle cries of the Edsa Revolution demanded the immediate return of all stolen wealth to the national treasury. A Presidential Commission on Good Government was created immediately after the Edsa Revolution to sequester all properties suspected to have been stolen. Its first chair was Sen. Jovito R. Salonga, a highly respected lawyer and opposition leader. With respect to wealth located in the Philippines, what the Cory government did was to seize the properties first, operate these as state assets, while awaiting the findings of the courts. In almost all instances, indefinite sequestration for the purpose of securing the assets while their status was being determined, led to the freezing or downright collapse of these businesses. This scared away potential investors and clients. By the time a case was resolved, usually the business had so deteriorated that its eventual sale would net the government only a pittance, often not even enough to pay the lawyers.

It might have been better if the government, during its revolutionary phase, had seized whatever stolen properties it could lay its hands on, dispose of these or allow them to be run by the workers, and then file the appropriate cases against their illegitimate owners. But this was out of the question; the Cory government was, above all, a government of lawyers. Lawyers had a definite notion of what due process entailed, and they wanted this as a check against possible abuses by their own people. But the point that needs to be highlighted here is the powerlessness of the government to recover much of the stolen wealth and to prosecute the thieves from the previous government. Twenty-

three years after its overthrow, no one from the Marcos regime has been put in jail for stealing.

Human Rights Violations

Apart from corruption, the other issue that hounds leaders of authoritarian regimes after their removal from power is human rights. From Argentina to East Germany, from South Korea to South Africa, the brutality of the police state has been one of the most important targets of the new leaders in the aftermath of the democratic revolution. In the Philippines, a Presidential Commission on Human Rights (PCHR) was formed to receive and document complaints by victims who had suffered in the hands of the police or the military during the dictatorship. The first chairman of this commission was the prominent human rights lawyer, Jose W. Diokno, whom Marcos had placed in solitary confinement for over two years. The PCHR, under Diokno, immediately went to work, interviewing victims and filing cases in court. Unfortunately, the noted civil libertarian succumbed to cancer without seeing a major military figure put behind bars. Witnesses routinely disappeared or withdrew their depositions out of fear of the military. And leaders of the military establishment began to put pressure on the government, complaining that the Commission was engaged in a witch-hunt which allegedly caused demoralization and restlessness in the military. The soldiers who were being prosecuted claimed they were just following orders from above. It was a typical defense. But it brought to the fore a truth that the Cory government had tried to ignore—namely, that the chief of the dreaded Philippine Constabulary during the dictatorship was no other than the hero of the Edsa Revolution himself, Gen. Fidel Ramos; and that the martial law administrator for many years was none other than Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile, another key figure of the Edsa Revolution. Was it possible to go deeply into these investigations of human rights violations without implicating these two important men? The answer clearly was no, unless the Cory government was prepared to take the risk of aggravating the already polarized situation between the civilian leadership and the young officers of the RAM.

The absence of an organized mass constituency that could actively support revolutionary initiatives under the Cory presidency was underscored by the boldness with which successive coup attempts were launched by the military after 1986. There were at least six such attempts against the Cory government during its first three years. The

principal issue that the RAM raised against Cory was that she had fallen under the influence of communists in the government.

The coup attempts had the effect of further pushing Cory to the Right and of making her rely increasingly on the support of Gen. Fidel Ramos. To his credit, General Ramos stood by Cory at the most crucial moments in 1987 and 1989, even if this meant turning his back on the young adventurous officers who brought him to Edsa on that crucial day in February 1986. Enrile's conduct was a different matter. Cory questioned his loyalty and dismissed him from his post as defense minister after the August 1987 coup.

The unintended effect of the coup attempts on the progressives in Cory's circle was to further diminish their role in the government. Cory became convinced that coup attempts were a military problem requiring military solutions, and that there was little that the unarmed mass movements could do to defend her government. The route she took was to win the loyalty of the remaining elements in the military that had not joined Col. Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan. General Ramos became the rallying figure of these elements. On his advice, Cory raised the salaries of soldiers by 60 percent immediately after the 1987 coup. Later, after the Mendiola massacre, she launched a total war against the communist insurgency, terminating all possibility of resuming peace talks with the communists. And again, on the prodding of her generals, she recognized and validated the role of the notorious paramilitary groups formed and armed by the military as a buffer against the communist insurgency. What insights might we glean from this experience? I submit the following:

1. The first problem that transitional democratic governments face upon the termination of a dictatorship, is deciding what should be their priority—immediate redistributive reforms or political consolidation. It became very clear during the first eighteen months of her government that Cory was determined to remain in office. Political consolidation and normalization thus became her most abiding obsessions. Looking back, one wonders what would have happened had she chosen to become the reforming president the social movements wanted her to be. She could have repudiated all the fraudulent debts incurred by Marcos. She could have broken up the economic base of the landed oligarchy by decreeing a

radical agrarian reform program. She could have confiscated all the Marcos and crony assets and used these to improve the lives of the Filipino people. She could have used her global popularity to shame the Swiss banks into returning the Marcos deposits to the Filipino nation. She could have disbanded the paramilitary units of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and subjected all human rights violators from the Marcos regime to a public trial. But she could have done all these things only if there was a powerful constituency for social change—a force from below that could shape the direction of national policy and more importantly, defend the government against its enemies from all sides. That force was not there in 1986. The people power that was there was united more by what it opposed than by what it stood for.

2. The termination of any dictatorship is never a clean break. There are discontinuities as well as continuities: some old faces in new roles, some new faces in an unchanged bureaucracy. Movement leaders became bureaucrats overnight, isolated from one another by the intimidating chores of running a government from day to day. They could not initiate meaningful changes within their own departments and offices because they discovered, to their dismay, that the very things they wanted to change fulfilled certain functions. And the alternatives were not easily available. Nothing was more frustrating for them than to realize that they often had to resort to the old Marcos presidential decrees because it was expedient to use these.

3. When and how to respond to elections called by a corrupt government is a tricky question. On one hand, because they are expected to be rigged, it seems logical to boycott them. On the other hand, they may well provide the crucial occasion in which a unified movement can be galvanized into action. The radical Left made the mistake of calling for a boycott of the 1986 snap presidential election. As a result, the moderate forces became the sole opposition to Marcos in the election. The middle forces tapped into the Filipino public's need to express their unified disapproval of Marcos. The ensuing events showed

that, in the end, what was more important was what the people were actually prepared to do at any given moment—than what they should have done if they knew better.

4. The termination of a dictatorship is an open-ended process. The risk of a violent civil war is ever present. In a military confrontation, unarmed civilians are usually sidelined, unable to play a meaningful role. What was different about people power was that masses of unarmed civilians dared to intervene at the crucial moment, interposing themselves between opposing elements of the armed forces while signaling very clearly where their sympathies lay. In this regard, one must not underestimate the role the Catholic Church in the Philippines played in providing the necessary language and narrative that permitted ordinary Filipinos to perform such acts of heroism as pushing tanks with bare hands.

5. Transitions are constant struggles for legitimacy. In a world of satellite communications, the attitude expressed by the world at large, not just by official government entities, but by elements of global civil society, is crucial in deciding the fate of an unfolding process of democratic transition. Marcos was aware of this, which is why he dispatched his most articulate representatives to the United States to explain to international media his government's perspective of the events. But it was too late. Mass media organizations were already reporting and interpreting events from where they were happening.

6. And finally, social movements are powerful agents for waging campaigns, but they are nearly helpless for the equally important task of crafting and negotiating policy reform. In the day-to-day policy debates that took place in the Cory government, the progressives found themselves at a disadvantage vis-à-vis the technocrats and the professional politicians who were familiar with the ways of government. Clearly, it was easier to overthrow the dictatorship than to form a government that would be different. The building blocks for a different government—a new ethos, a new political culture—could have been created in the course of the struggle. But the transfer of

power came too fast. In the absence of a clear program pushed from below, the aficionados of politics and the technocrats of policy took over. This was how the revolution led to elite restoration. But this account is also just another narrative.

FILOMENO V. AGUILAR JR. (Professor, Department of History, Ateneo de Manila University): The front page of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* on the day of Cory Aquino's funeral, August 21, 2009, shows the photos of Cory and Ninoy Aquino appearing side by side. Other images that I have seen in the Internet all have the same pattern: invariably Ninoy appears on the left side of the tandem, Cory on the right. Even the image of two pairs of eyeglasses, rendering them as pure signs, is in the same mold: Ninoy's on the left, Cory's on the right. I thought to myself that I have seen this pattern before. In countless middle-class neighborhoods, embedded on concrete fences and proximally located by the gate, one finds this common imagery painted on a pair of tiles put together side-by-side: Jesus on the left, Mary on the right. Pure coincidence? Perhaps this pattern is just the way we publicly position the male-female pairing. However, it is best to be reminded that Ninoy's assassination in 1983 prompted Reynaldo Ileto (1985) to write a short piece titled "The Past in the Present Crisis." Ileto argues that the death of Aquino harkened back to the death of Rizal, which in turn harkened back to the death of Christ.

Just as at the end of the nineteenth century Spain was perceived by the Filipinos as the "mother whose love was false"—justifying the separation to be with one's real mother, *Inang Bayan* (Mother of the Filipino Nation)—Ileto argues that Ninoy's death provided historical parallels: the Marcos regime was the equivalent of the "bad Mother Spain." And just as Rizal had to die, so did Ninoy. Just as Rizal's death signaled the end of the Spanish colonial regime, so did the death of Ninoy seal the fate of the Marcos regime.

For Ileto, it was another moment for the "other politics"—usually pressed underneath the rational layer—to rise to the surface, thus inverting the sign system imposed by the Marcos regime. The "underside" of history was once more asserting its salience at a crucial moment.

In 2009, the story of an innocent man's death was not the master narrative. Rather, the death of Cory Aquino on August 1, 2009, which was met with collective mourning unseen in recent Philippine history, completes the story that started in 1983. Interestingly, in death, Cory was being hailed as *Ina ng Bayan* (mother of the Filipino nation), in the

words of one writer, "*paalam ulirang ina ng bayan*" (farewell, exemplar mother of the nation). Just as the nation is deemed to be "pure and disinterested," as Benedict Anderson has elucidated in his *Imagined Communities* ([1983] 1991), so was Cory deemed to be pure, untainted by corruption, sacrificing herself for the people. Ultimately, of course, she was not just *Ina ng Bayan* (Mother of the Filipino Nation). Not surprisingly, Cory was hailed as representing *Inang Bayan* (Mother Country) itself (as explicitly stated by some), the "good mother" who, at the same time, personified the nation.

I would argue that most Filipinos imagine the Filipino nation congenially as a family, a kin group, but especially a siblingship. The popular tag of Tita Cory signifies a siblingship headed by a *tita* (aunt), a member of an older sibling set. Many who call her Tita Cory now might never have called her so when she was alive, but doing so now, in the moment of bereavement, is a strategy to mean belonging to a moral community that mourns the loss personally as well as nationally.

As we know, the imagery of *Inang Bayan* (Mother Country) drew on the Catholic image of Mary, the "true mother." Finally in death, in a gesture perhaps largely unconscious but with deep historical parallels, the *Ina ng Bayan* (Mother of the Filipino Nation) becomes *Inang Bayan* (Mother Country), who becomes Mary. Thus, the image of Mary/*Inang Bayan* (Mother Country)/Cory can be placed legitimately on the right beside the image of the Christ/Rizal/Ninoy on the left. Why the need for this underside of history to rise to the surface? Death itself seems to trigger it. Particularly in Cory's case, when everyone knew she was in hospital and in a very critical state, as widely reported in the mass media. The nation was like an anxious relative sitting outside the hospital room, being given periodic updates on the condition of the beloved patient. Then we are told that the security men detailed to her as a former president were withdrawn, reportedly because of orders from Malacañang. In her last days, this former president became a victim of sorts by the state.

Indeed, at Cory's passing, the wider historical context signaled another historic moment—as in Rizal's death in 1896 and Ninoy's in 1983—when the frustrations, the anger, even the expectations, and the hope, were organized, given a focus in the person of a dead icon. Cory, now lifeless but virtue personified, stood in sharp contrast to the current ruling elite, widely perceived as far from virtuous. One may ask, has Cory's imagery always been in this mold? Why did her popularity apparently wane in the course of her presidency from February 25, 1986 to June 30, 1992?

To understand this better, we need to call on an ancient model of leadership, that of the men or women of prowess that Oliver Wolters ([1982] 1999) outlined for precolonial Southeast Asia. The person of prowess, according to Wolters, had a special relationship with familiar spirits who ensured success and prosperity, such as in farming or raiding. The position was not inherited, it was not based on ascriptive traits. A claimant to a leadership position had to prove his or her worth through extraordinary feats, supernatural abilities, and a constant stream of achievement. Persons of prowess concentrate on their persons an abnormal amount of the potency and energy that suffuses the cosmos. Given cosmic favor, these leaders attracted wealth as well as supporters, including lesser leaders. Usurpers there were many. But leaders of prowess were (in Javanese) *halus* (refined), not given to violence; with minimal effort, they defeat their enemies. Toward their dependants they were like a "father," or we could say "mother." Once they die, leaders of prowess were revered as supernatural entities—*papu*, as they called them in these islands before the Spaniards came.

In the snap election called by Ferdinand Marcos in 1986, Cory was already being hailed a saint, as someone in her staff told me when I attended one election rally in Marikina at that time. Talk of sainthood (rekindled after Cory's death) suggested that the language of her supernatural prowess was in her faith—and in the highly visible support for her by the Catholic Church hierarchy. Her courage in running against Marcos, which fitted the plot of the lamb versus the wolf, of David confronting Goliath, was deemed to be a demonstration of an extraordinary ability. Had she not risen to the occasion, had she not dared to fight Marcos in an apparently lopsided electoral battle, Cory would have been consigned to oblivion from the start, just another wealthy scion whose life was quite tragic. But no, her run for the presidency gave her the aura of anything but tragedy.

After she became president in the wake of People Power, the expected social peace (not to mention prosperity) was not quite easily achieved. Usurpers abounded in the form of several attempts at a coup d'état. Facing one coup should have been enough to establish her credential as a woman of prowess. But the repeated coup attempts shook her prowess credentials. Not unexpectedly, therefore, her popularity was affected. Nevertheless, by the mere fact that she survived the coup attempts meant that the favorable perception of her would remain high.

The major criticism from the left plank of the intellectual class, of course, is that she did not undertake genuine agrarian reform. Her

presidency was also tainted by other failings that the other speakers in this forum have pointed out. However, meeting such expectation as the pursuit of agrarian reform is unnecessary in the model of the leader of prowess. In this perspective, no one expected Cory to take the route of class suicide. What was expected was that she would remain formidable in her own right; that in fact she would remain wealthy but never personally arrogant; that she would remain like a good mother (heightened by her own maternal travails with daughter Kris); that her supernatural abilities would not diminish (seen in her fervent religiosity and untarnished integrity); and that she would remain *halus* (no doubt about her grace and refinement). In all these expectations, as the model would predict, Cory met them. But her leadership was largely dormant, rising to the surface on critical occasions that needed her intervention—like the underside of history that would rise to the fore at critical moments, from facing the challenge posed by Marcos to attempts to change the constitution under Ramos, the Jose Pidal episode under Estrada, and the "Hello Garci" debacle under Arroyo. Finally, the moment for her leadership came into full bloom at her death, even while grief must do its work.

And so, Cory was laid to rest, fittingly, in a nonstate funeral. After all, Ninoy did not have a state funeral; neither did Rizal. The model nonstate funeral was that of Jesus. Ultimately, Cory was, for a brief period, in the state, but not of the state. She was the nonstate actor that sought to transform and reform the state and its apparatus of power. In fact, from the moment she confronted Marcos, she was antistate, in the sense that people understand the state as the playground of the rich and powerful. In the end, she belonged to the nation, and the nation did its work of grieving for its symbol.

MICHAEL L. TAN (Professor and Chair, Department of Anthropology, CSSP, UP Diliman): I wanted to zero in on the Cory Aquino leadership around the issue of gender. As many of you know, the World Economic Forum at Davos has an annual gender equities scale wherein the Philippines has ranked sixth for the last three or four years (Hausmann, Tyson, and Zahidi 2009, 156). We beat many industrialized countries in terms of gender equity and we are number one among developing countries. Every time I talk about this ranking, my feminist friends greet it with incredulity, impossible they would say, that is a flawed instrument—to some extent I sort of agree. Yet they do try to use objective indicators, like number of women in executive

positions, in business, in universities, and of course, in political positions. And one of the most important measures that they have is number of years under a woman head of state and, of course, we did very well there because of Cory Aquino and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. I think the main problem with the gender equity scale is that it presumes that a woman leader is going to be "pro-women" and that a woman leader is an advocate of women's issues. It does bring up many important questions which we will have to deal with next year as we go into the elections. For that alone, the gender equity scale should make us think very hard about women leaders, in general. Definitely, it makes us rethink stereotypes. We often talk about the Filipina in terms of the Maria Clara archetype, a stereotype. Certainly in the twenty-first century, we need to look at that again especially in relation to our experiences in politics and leadership.

Some of you might have read the column I did two months ago (*Philippine Daily Inquirer,* July 8, 2009), when Cory Aquino was still alive, where I noted how there was such a difference in public responses to her illness and to that of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo who had also been ill at that time.

I said it reflects—it actually brings out—three female archetypes that we have in the Philippines, to which we have very strong, almost visceral, responses. I will start with Madam Imelda Marcos. Much as she tried to recreate herself in the mother image—I only think of the Philippine Heart Center here where you can see in the lobby her arms outstretched in compassion—she, until today, remains Madam Imelda. She is distant, almost aristocratic despite her origins, and she will always be a madam, almost intimidating.

I have activist friends who say they hate her like anything but when they are in her company they are still dazzled and all and they hate themselves for feeling that way. Why does she have that effect? Because she is madam.

And then you have *Ate* (Elder Sister) Glo. There were attempts in the beginning, if you remember, to have her as Tita Glo; it did not take off. She could not be *tita*. She was always *ate*. She was always the stern *ate*. We all love our *ate*, but we know too she represents a stern *ate* here. I am almost being kind because there is more to her than being stern. She is unyielding; she wants to project herself as strong, creating a strong republic. That does not endear her to Filipinos. Despite the news of her illness, no one offered novena masses. What we had were rumors about silicon implants. Amazing what the difference is.

Also at that time, Tita Cory was sick and you had the novena. It was not just because it was a serious illness; people genuinely cared because she was a *tita*–all of a sudden we thought of the *titas* in our lives, all kinds of *titas* as well, from the very tiny *titas* to the eccentric *titas.* We love them all. And the *tita* is there because she is not *nanay* (mother) but she is a surrogate *nanay*; she is kind, she has some distance; there are many qualities in the Filipino *tita* that we love.

I am stereotyping as well, but this is for the purpose of breaking the Maria Clara stereotype in looking at elderly women, women leaders especially. You already have these three archetypes and it is important to look at how we respond to them. I ended my column saying that perhaps our responses to our leaders reflect our own responses to our own *titas*, to our own *ates*, to women in our lives.

It is very interesting that one of my women friends called me and said that she did think about that, but more importantly, she started to think, "Who am I? Am I an *ate*, a *tita,* or a madam?" It started, at least among my women friends, in thinking about how Filipinas are raised and what Filipinas who enter positions of leadership bring with them in terms of acculturation and socialization to become *Pinay* (Filipina).

The Cory Aquino leadership represented so much of the aspirations in our lives. Her being a woman leader, starting out first in the shadow of Ninoy but transcending that, and being her own woman, I think was important. Yet I keep thinking too that her being a woman, her being "Tita Cory" also shaped the kind of governance that we saw at that time. We have to keep thinking about that because we may be a patriarchal society, but we are also a matricentric one. Women will always be central in our lives, public and private. And we should be thinking about this next year. It helps us, it protects us, from making blanket conclusions. I am already starting to hear, "Do we want another woman president?" I do not think that is the issue. The issue here is what kind of governance do we or we might anticipate. We may have a male leader with many of the qualities of "female" governance. I do not want to essentialize female governance here but I want to talk about governance that is the product of how a *Pinay* is socialized. There are many good points that can be taken from that; many good points which unfortunately Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has not taken. She has taken the worst of "masculine" leadership; she neglected what she could have picked up from the socialization of women in the Philippines.

I would also suggest, because we are a matricentric society, to think hard who the women are in the lives of the male candidates. Their

presence will spell and convey a lot, and to a certain extent, will make or break the candidates. We should learn from history. I do hear quite often that Marcos was basically a good man; it was Imelda's fault. That is replaying the whole *Eba* (Eve) story, that it was Eve's fault. At the top of my head, there is this completely different interpretation. Adam was *bobo* (stupid). He would keep quiet, he would leave everything to Eve—she was the smart one. Anyway, that is another story for another workshop. Let me leave you with those questions about women's leadership. Maybe we can write to Davos. They need to come up with better indicators. But I do not, I will not question the fact, that we are up there. Our high ranking presents other challenges when we look at other women's leadership, not just in terms of national leadership. Many local governments are run quite ably by women executives and we need to pick up lessons from female leaders in corporations, in universities, and in other spheres.

Open Forum

JULKIPLI M. WADI (Associate Professor, Institute of Islamic Studies, Asian Center, UP Diliman): Listening to the presentations of Professors Mendoza and David gave me the impression that they have a certain sense of *panghihinayang* (regret) on Cory Aquino and her leadership during her term. She could have done much but she simply did less. Professor Aguilar's presentation seems to provide an answer despite this so-called sense of *panghihinayang* in his cultural interpretations of Tita Cory's life and her contribution to the nation, but this cultural interpretation is clothed in mythmaking on the persona of Cory Aquino. I am reminded of Thomas Carlisle, a historian, who said that a society that is suffering from disorder and chaos would eventually look for heroes and engage in hero worship to provide order in society, for that society to have a center. We would look for a symbol to fill in the void every now and then—a symbol that is not really able to provide the answer to the need for a massive, revolutionary social restructuring. What is the use of myth in a country continuously suffering from disorder and chaos? If I may use a term by Carlisle, what is the utility of mythmaking in the transformation of a society?

JAIME B. VENERACION (Professor, Department of History, CSSP, UP Diliman): I would like to comment on the *ulirang ina* (exemplar

mother) mentioned by Professor Aguilar. It was not Cory but Imelda Marcos who used to be alluded to by that title. How do we modulate or moderate such conflicting symbols? The time of the Edsa Revolution was also the start of the Cable News Network's international broadcast. The media became ever-present. Ninoy's funeral was the subject of experimental cinema, of a documentary; thus the extensive coverage. Unlike Jose Rizal's time when a narrative could easily take root among the masses, there were several competing narratives on the Edsa Revolution. The Left was left out; some actors gained prominence then eventually faded out in the sidelines. An example is Professor David who launched his career as a media man right after Edsa with his television program, "Public Forum." It was very popular but somehow along the way he went off the air. New technology mediated both the extent of the people's participation—which made it a revolution—and the various contending narratives which emerged.

ATHENA LYDIA CASAMBRE (Professor, Department of Political Science, CSSP, UP Diliman): I would like the speakers to make a few remarks on how the narratives they presented today can be linked to the continuing narratives that have been attempted to be restarted this morning. I mean, what is the role of this perspective from Professors Mendoza and David and the counterpoint from Professor Aguilar? How are the yellow forces at Club Filipino going to take up this narrative? Or, is the narrative just going to be suppressed?

AMADO M. MENDOZA JR.: Maybe it is not regret but an understanding of why she had done what she did. Missed opportunities, we always hear those; that she could have done more given her revolutionary powers. Now we understand why she did not. Professor David and I are in agreement that despite the disparate forces pushing on her their own agenda, there was no significant force that pushed for the reforms, which, as we have mentioned, she failed to provide. For me, democracy is an important issue, no matter how flawed it is. I can sacrifice or I can recognize that democracy can take precedence over asset reform, even if I also recognize that asset reform can strengthen democracy, so that it becomes not simply procedural but substantive. Yet the question remains: Could the reforms have been done? Cory could not have at that time. But could it be done now? Should the two points in the narrative be linked? The narrative is not new. The desire for a more equal society, for the masses to have better opportunities in

life—that narrative was present even during the 1896 Revolution. Though it has been interrupted a number of times, it remains a continuing narrative. I do not know when a critical point, a tipping point can be reached, still the imperative for a continuation of the narrative is there. The people have never been idle. There are developments other than those we know. Are we waiting for another death or for the supposed mother to over-step her bounds? Maybe. When Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo declares a failure of election to perpetuate herself in power, maybe then we will have the resolve to see the narrative to its logical conclusion. If our insight is limited to responding to a death, not in learning how to build the society we desire, then we will get stuck in this narrative.

RANDOLF S. DAVID: I consider Professor Wadi's question to be a practical political question rather than a theoretical one. There was no *panghihinayang* (regret) in my remarks this morning. I took seriously the invitation from the Third World Studies Center, that this is a theoretical reflection from the social sciences. I think social scientists have no right to *panghihinayang.* We describe and we analyze; we do not take as much as possible certain normative positions, but of course it is very difficult to distinguish a theoretical interest from a practical, political interest most especially in a society like ours. I deliberately, consciously, actually, resisted the temptation in preparing this paper to take a political—an *explicitly* political—perspective here; otherwise it would not look good. I mean, it was over but it faces us again. I have been asked several times, what I think of Benigno Simeon "Noynoy" C. Aquino III's running for the presidency. I ask them if they are asking me as a political participant or as a social scientist. As a political participant, I think he is doing well; his candidacy tops a semiotic script that is woven around a myth which is very powerful. At the same time, as a social scientist who is glued to a modern perspective, I find it revolting to be exploiting a religious, moral perspective to advance a political goal. This is not a contest between good and evil. The people in the Liberal Party and the people allied with it are not the personification and embodiment of everything that is moral and good. And certainly, not everything about the present dispensation can be regarded as evil, much as we may dislike Mrs. Arroyo. I do not know in the siblinghood that Professor Aguilar was describing where she fits, is she the witch or what? Actually, from an explanatory, or a theoretical, or a practical political perspective, I do not find it useful. This is where

I disagree with my comrades in the social movements. They asked me to go to Club Filipino [to attend Noynoy's press conference wherein he announces his intention to run for president], but I have to wear yellow they told me. Before that I was asked to go with them to Eraño "Ka Erdie" Manalo's wake. I told them that I am not a politician, so why should I? They replied, "But you are going to run in Pampanga." But I am not close to Ka Erdie. I do not feel that I have either the right or the obligation to go there. I feel sorry for the Iglesia ni Kristo (Church of Christ) that they have lost a leader but I am not going to troop there like a politician. I just find it so premodern and so revolting, especially if you understand the nature of these things. But I guess, if you are immersed in the political game then you have to adjust to the prevailing political culture, which is probably the reason why so many of us in academe are not in politics, because politics demands of you to be that kind of person that rationally and theoretically and philosophically you should not be. But I do appreciate very much and I listen in rapt attention to Professor Aguilar's fascinating semiotic account of where we are. And Professor Veneracion is right, Noynoy's campaign is being planned by celebrities. I can almost imagine them putting Noynoy's glasses under those of Cory's and Ninoy's. It will be very powerful. It is a trinity, a triangle, a very powerful symbol. But should we as academics, should we as inhabitants of a modern institution like a university participate in and encourage such mythmaking that we know very well, either from a practical political perspective or a theoretical perspective, that is not quite in step with the times? I do not think so. That is my answer to your question.

FILOMENO V. AGUILAR JR.: I think myths can be dysfunctional as you suggest, but on the other hand, most societies actually cannot operate without myths. Founding myths are integral to societies; they make collectivities function. But these myths or legends or folklore, as Professor Veneracion was suggesting, are not unitary or singular. There are different fragments of myths, but my analysis, in a sense, can be argued to have been the dominant myth at that time. I would think that, of course, we are simply making deductions; this is just trying to piece together from different pieces of evidence. Certainly, there are conflicting narratives of how people lived their lives, out in the streets, in their homes, but what I presented is, I suggest, my way of making sense of what happened during that historical period. Imelda, of

course, fashioned herself also as *Ina ng Bayan* (Mother of the Filipino Nation). And for a while I think she was successful in many ways. President Marcos, as *Ama ng Bayan* (Father of the Filipino Nation), was also successful. I believe that Imelda actually lost that imagery and began to be part, if you like, of the bad mother that one should be free from. As we have heard from Professors Mendoza and David, the narrative may continue and a lot will really depend on how history unfolds, how events unfold. But will the continuation entail deaths? We cannot really explain; these are all after-the-fact explanations. If you are really a political entrepreneur you can try to manipulate the narratives. I am not a political animal. But a lot of us would have to come to this room again and then perhaps we can have another occasion and look back if the narrative worked or did not.

PEDRO R. ABRAHAM JR. (Associate Professor, Department of Art Studies, College of Arts and Letters, UP Diliman): I am on sabbatical but I could not resist coming to this forum. Professor David, precisely to understand the Filipino completely you have to take a look at what Professor Aguilar was saying. That is not a problem for us in the humanities, to understand that human beings act to a certain psychology and that they also act according to a certain perspective on life. Certainly, images are created—certain legends, or myths that are part of their persona. I do understand that it is useless to just dwell on the myth but it is also true that myths change as conditions change, if that narrative swerves somewhere else then that myth will change into something else. Every nation has to have its myths. I think the most telling examples are the myths concerning the dictatorships of Hitler and Kim Il-Sung. But then there are myths also in South Korea about how they went from their military dictatorship to the present. The Americans have their myths too: the Americans as an isolationist, now the Americans as somebody kinder to the world with Obama. These things change. To ignore that is to ignore an aspect of the Filipino personality that is very important. Remember the debates, Professor David, in 1985, on whether those in the Left should participate in elections. Many from the radical Left boycotted, but we insisted that this is where the people are. This is not the revolution; it may not be real yet, in terms of real change, but this is where the people are this time. We cannot abandon them by isolating ourselves from them and that is what happened. If we did not listen to where the people are then we will not be participants to the Edsa Revolution and we would have

less right to criticize somebody who participated in it because we were not part of it in the first place. So, the last point is that, please, those of you in the social sciences, there is a strained subconscious artistic dimension to human behavior that very often in your empiricism you may tend to forget.

KARINA BOLASCO (Publishing Manager, Anvil Publishing Inc.): I wonder how much of the collective grief over the death of Cory was really motivated or drawn out by television? Alto Broadcasting System-Chronicle Broadcasting Network (ABS-CBN) played a big role, I think. Maybe ABS-CBN did it out of gratitude—because Cory returned the station to the Lopezes—or maybe out of the realization that they are the best mythmaker. Our people are deeply mired in this narrative because of the soap operas and everything that they give the audience day in and day out. I am sure it was sincere, but many people did not feel like going to Cory's wake until they were exposed daily to the television coverage. This is mythmaking in effect because they know the power of images from the impeachment of Joseph "Erap" Estrada to now. Maybe also out of the realization of the context of political helplessness at this point and this is something that they can drum up and play up. Maybe you say that we should not be part of that but we are and I think they are turning the 2010 elections into—as you said, Professor David— a morality play, good versus evil.

RANDOLF S. DAVID: It is precisely because of what Karina Bolasco mentioned that myths can be manipulated as political weapons that they are not as innocent as an analysis of narratives might suggest. In which case, it becomes all the more important for people in academe or for every other rational person to interrogate them and not to accept them because they are part of the culture. Not everything that is part of the culture is positive. There are many elements of culture that ought to be rejected because they are no longer appropriate to the times. That is how a society progresses. And truly it is not a question of humanities versus social sciences, or constructivism versus positivism; it is not a question of people like myself ignoring the importance of narratives and myths. As a matter of fact, I started with that: there were so many competing narratives that were at play and were being asserted to establish the legitimacy of certain claims to power during that time. We do pay an enormous amount of attention to these narratives and look at their functions in an ongoing political dynamics rather than to take

sides at a certain point on which narrative is more valid or which narrative is more truthful. I call my own presentation a narrative, which means that it should invite interrogation. So, it is not a question of us unable to appreciate the value of myths. Myths are nothing but frameworks of interpretation to what anthropologists have called "little traditions," especially as the drifting consciousness of the people in contrast to the official tradition that has been propagated by the state. But we know very well that myths can be exploited for political purposes. This therefore makes it very, very important for us to take a critical attitude towards the seductions of such myths rather than to accept them unproblematically, but worse of all to exploit them in our capacity as political consultants. I just find that so unethical from an intellectual perspective, so obsolete, so archaic.

Why is this country constantly in search of heroes? Because the existing narratives call precisely for that, a quest for heroes rather than say builders, or institution-builders, which is the definition of statesmen, in contrast to the definition of heroes as the doer of good deeds and the speaker of eloquent words. That is why Socrates engaged the people of Athens in interrogation of what they thought. What the people thought was the truth in the dialectical fashion and to me if there is one important function that intellectuals should play it is precisely to interrogate all the existing myths that are at play in any given social condition.

Again, I must say that we are not ignoring myths but we do not accept them uncritically; the business in my view of all intellectuals is to investigate all existing narratives.

MICHAEL L. TAN: There are modern myths. There are mythmaking processes that are very important to modern society, especially in this age of mass media: television has replaced storytelling, the recitation of epics. What we see on a daily basis is the mass media taking over all these processes and it is important—I agree totally with Professor David—to be conscious of how these can be manipulated. It was manipulated in traditional societies as well, and it is manipulated in modern cities with greater impact because of the mass media, so many people can be affected, more people can be swept into the performance. It is performance. People know this. That is why it has been advised, for example, that if you have a hostage-taking incident, the worse thing that can happen is to send in the cameras. Because the cameras will change the script, the hostage-taker is now performing and it could lead to real

disasters as we have seen over and over again in the Philippines. But returning to Cory Aquino's funeral and everything else that complicates it, I did watch on television and I was uneasy as well about it. I wrote very positive things about the funeral coverage but I have also many reservations. You can compare ABS-CBN's and Global Media Arts' (GMA) coverage. There were real differences, which reminds us to think of what ABS-CBN's role is. ABS-CBN is foremost a commercial station—it is a business. And the biggest business that we have in the twenty-first century is the commodification of emotions. Emotions sell very well and you do not need capital, that is why you have reality shows where people are willing to show their fears, their happiness, and their repulsion of others. You do not even have to pay them talent fees, and yet millions of people watch them. And the funeral was one big commodification of emotions. They knew we needed catharsis, they knew we wanted to cry, and they made sure that the cameras were there. And I am not downplaying our grief, it was very real and I felt ABS-CBN was capitalizing on it. I also felt ABS-CBN's colors as a political party. We say this half in jest, but ABS-CBN is the biggest political party today, literally and figuratively. We have to think of how they were framing the events. They have the power to choose who and what they are going to film, what sound bites are going to be passed on to us. We are part of history but ABS-CBN is making sure history is recorded on their terms. I am not saying there is a conspiracy among ABS-CBN executives, planning what to show and what not to show. In many ways, they are swept up by history as well. They are swept up by many characters here, and the scripts sometimes clash with each other, but there are scripts and framing. I see a lot of students here; what we hope you will learn to be aware of is that there is framing and that you learn to look through the frames and to think for yourselves and to look at the stakeholders involved here. This takes me back to the gender issue. I said we are a matricentric society, so when elections come around, besides thinking of ABS-CBN, GMA, and all the others, we might want to look at the important women in the candidates' lives. In Noynoy's case, may I ask you, let us not forget the sister factor. It just falls together with ABS-CBN and the commodification of emotion.

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