Lastly, feminists in the Third World may be less bothered by the politics of appearance than by the economics of stomach or the politics of national liberation in their countries. The realities of imperialist exploitation and state repression are likewise the more pressing problems that confront their people. To put it in a trite yet simplistic manner, Third World women would not simply care about "burning their bras" as they do not have bras to burn. This only shows the peculiar nature of Third World women's oppression and hence, of the movement that will liberate them and the society as a whole. At the same time, the "silence" of many Third World women, including feminists involved in the women's movement, on the issues discussed by the book, only manifests that the problems of everyday life (especially in the realm of family, marriage, sex and reproduction) are rarely discussed not only within the women's movement but in revolutionary movements in the Third World as well. They are often treated as matters of personal concern, separate from politics, whose potentials for translation into political campaigns are rarely considered, if at all.

It is clearly a feminist value for women to create their own definition of themselves rather than accept society's definition of them, not to be restricted by sex-role, expectations of femininity and to define themselves as complete, whole human beings whose identity is not tied to relationships with men. It is equally important for women to develop a sense of personal power, not by dominating others, but by being active, assertive and self-reliant without being dependent on men for survival. While some feminists see their individual liberation as something not divorced from the struggle towards greater social change, there is also a strong tendency among some to see the women's liberation movement primarily as a source of psychological therapy or individual self-improvement. How many feminists would agree to Chapkis' ideas on the interlinked nature of women's oppression and other social inequalities in a divided society? And how many would prefer to take an individualistic attitude than seek from and provide support to other women and men who are equally confronted by sexism and other unjust social structures?

The book has touched on a variety of subjects very rarely discussed openly. Yet, until women are valued as full, complete and independent human beings regardless of appearance, the book shall not only "keep us talking for a very long time" but shall also be credited for being among the firsts to give a courageous revelation of beauty and its not-so-beautiful secrets.

Resolving an Identity Crisis

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There is one thing conspicuously absent in this collection of social democratic essays and its omission can perhaps be objectively decided as something very atypical. What is pertained here is that body of thought collectively known as Marxism which, for years since Philippine society detected that tendency of social democracy, has dutifully served as the latter's whipping boy. Yet the hostility is more than just pure intellectual contention between social democracy and Marxism; it indicates something more. Not a few will forget how during the polarized days of the Marcos regime, the adherents of social democracy painfully made its presence felt not only by way of indicting the dictatorship of various crimes, but also by equally villifying the most formidable enemy of the dictatorship, namely, the national democrats. Though, not a few will also forget how the social democrats' claim of being the 'third option' were repeatedly dampened by waves of mass defections to the national democratic camp; proof, as some observers would say, of how social democracy as an ideological formation fared under comparison with national democracy as the local variant of Marxism.

Thus, coming up with a *Readings in Ideology* will definitely bring observers a form of mild surprise. More so, the obvious absence of usual critiques of Marxism which, for the past years almost defined Social Democracy, will generate mixed feelings of bewilderment and hope. Have the social democrats arrived at last at their long overdue ideological maturity? Have they finally outgrown those lofty Jesuit

rhetorics that contributed to their infamous preponderance of obscurantism? Have they gone beyond mere gut feelings to see the need for a sound ideological basis for political actions? Lastly, have they been able to ultimately define themselves and establish an identity independent of Marxism and whatever critique they may have of it?

Such an inquiry can only be understandable. The Philippine context has, in the recent past, literally begged for an ideological breakthrough, a leap from what the conventional formulations hold, an alternative explicative system that shall take into account distinct phenomena that have already desecrated previously-held inviolable conceptions about the nature of Philippine society. At the least, given the mood of the people, patriotism now necessitates that they be given an array of intelligent options for their future enlightened revolutionary choice; options that base their claims of authenticity and applicability on penetrating analyses of Philippine society and serious historical reckonings; choices whose viability lies in such that they have been guaranteed their experiential validity through rigorous attempts at testing their congruence in the real world. In short, that time, is passed when political agenda are drawn primarily from the paranoia of the people and secondarily from obscure invocations of fate and faith. And more specifically, social democracy as a tendency which has been soiling its hands for almost two decades in Philippine society must seriously look deeper into its basic premises if it want its potency as the 'third option' enhanced and harnessed to the fullest.

And it is in this context that an attempt like this takes its primary importance. The authors may have rightfully sensed the call of the time when they wrote that this pamphlet is a " 'coming of age' ritual". Indeed, for too long, it might have dawned upon them that with the numerous political movements and electoral parties that their tendency has engendered throughout the years and their being (or identifi cation) with the Center, survival takes the form of coming up with a serious ideological challenge to both the extreme Right and Left or else they continue to suffer the unenviable position of the center whose ideological and practical bankruptcy is unsheathed every time a Rightist coup d'etat threatens or a radical peasant demonstration ends up in bloodshed.

No other time is more opportune than the present for the social democrats to clarify key concepts that have in the past boggled those who do not have sufficient faith. What does the definition of authentic humanism actually mean other than man being an embodied spirit? Does the expediency of a thing rests more on the spiritual considerations of an issue than the material and practical gains that a person can acquire from it? What happens when there arise a conflict between spiritual needs and the material needs of a person, which category would he take side? Similarly, does the "democratic means" and the "democratic ends" leave no room for any Machiavellian machination, and are they assumed to be the logical cause and consequence of one another? Again, what happens when conflict arise between the democratic ends and the democratic means such that a stringent pursuit of one may possibly negate the fulfillment of the other? Ultimately, what is the relationship between political democracy as the governmental expression of authentic humanism's moral side and economic democracy as the expression of that same humanism's material side? What happens when there arise strategic conficts between the two during the task of socialist construction; which shall take priority? Is economic democracy without political democracy worse than political democracy without the economic side? Which facet of authentic humanism should be given greater weight than the other?

These are questions that social democrats must answer categorically not only before their opponents but more importantly, before themselves. The conflict-situations are questions worth deep contemplation since in the real world, they do happen and they happen with seeming inevitability. Unless of course, one summons the necessary faith enough to believe otherwise. Yet one cannot avoid maintaining the uncanny impression that the dichotomy made between spiritual and material, between democratic means and democratic ends, and between political democracy and all the other forms of democracy, were not at all done as a result of a philosophical logic evolving but rather a form of asserting or emphasizing one against the others.

It is interesting to note how social democrats define ideology as "a combination of social philosophy and social program." Social philosophy, according to them, is that which sets up the ends, the ideals, the aims and the aspiration of society while the social program is the one which draws the blueprint necessary for these ends to be attained. This peculiar definition of ideology as a combination of social philosophy and social program rather than a social philosophy *concretized* as a social program is more than just a semantical curiousity. In fact, this can be the key towards a deeper understanding of what Social Democracy is really in essence. It is necessary to ask, what is it they combine? No doubt, social democracy's philosophical foundations are culled heavily from Catholic theology. Their social program, however, if they are to be taken at face value, is socialistic in character. Combine the two and one has a paradoxical ideological formation which reaffirms a lopsided spirit-matter relationship where the inequality is tilted in favor of that of the spirit and a cognizance of the secular socialist (utopian, scientific or whatever) need for material equality. One then wonders which of the two is the concession to the other. To paraphrase a Christian saying, the social democrats are serving two masters at the same time. As to the question where they are mediocre and the implications of this is for anyone to make. Yet nevertheless situating it with the historical context of social democracy's birth, it can be deduced that this eclecticism was born out by a religious dilemma awed by the onslaught of Marxism's revitalization — in effect, it is saying that in the people's quest for material equality, the spiritual is supreme.

There are, indeed, accusations that social democracy is just a reaction against some parts in Marxist thought and practice. Immediately, one wonders whether this is true: for

it would seem that authentic humanism took off only from a popular perception of Marxists being murderous atheists who find motivation only in economic terms; that the prerequisite of democratic means to democratic ends stemmed from the fear and experience with Marxists as being ruthless opportunists who will deceive and stop at nothing just to reach their aim of "seizing State power"; that the delineation of political democracy as opposed to economic democracy was a result of that justified aversion to a rigid police state so typical of socialist countries nowadays.

But perhaps the irony of the matter is that an ideological tendency whose basic formulations arose as a result of fears in Marxism cannot possibly establish its own identity, much less ideological coherence and soundness, unless it confronts its fears of Marxism and ultimately resolve them.This pamphlet shows the failure of doing exactly the opposite; one is likely to get drowned by its rhetorical verboseness. Perhaps it could have been much better if the authors took up the challenge of Marxism openly as they did before, yet without their former same rhetorical obscurantism. Perhaps they could have defined themselves more clearly had they discussed the conflict-situations afforded their key premises. But of course, this could be asking too much.

Yet just enough. For too long, social democracy's critiques of Marxism were at best based on a sophomoric knowledge of it and at worst, derived from the Cold War propaganda against it. Surely, Marxist revolutionaries would have wanted to be given the control of the bourgeois state – or any state for that matter – without comrades getting killed in the ensuing violence. Yet the real world would tell that this cannot be the case: where state power will just be relinquished by those who control it with much gusto just as to preserve the moral fiber in society, just as to live to that unMachiavellian relationship between the democratic ends and means. The Nicaraguans of 1977, the Chinese in 1949 and the Russians in 1917 would have surely wanted to see hundred flowers blooming in contention so that the best idea would be crystallized by the mechanism of dialectics. Yet history will tell us that had they done so, they would have been merry, graceful and good-natured Little Red Riding Hoods whose naivete would have been tremendously appreciated by not a few wolves' palates. What these tell us is that whatever ideological presupposition one has, it must be tested against the multitudinuous eccentricities of reality. If it does not seem probable or it doesn't practically work and runs counter to reality, then there is no recourse but to alter that conception.

The crux of the matter is that social democracy, with its various possibly validable gut feelings, sorely lacks the methodological tool necessary for a compact, coherent and realistic analysis. This can possibly explain why its formulations sound hollow, are susceptible to attacks and have that infamous tendency to regress to obscurantism whenever scrutiny puts it under searing lights. Compounding their difficult situation is their almost demonic view of dialectics and historical materialism. This is in itself a disastrous position. Since their knowledge of historical materialism is limited to its vulgar and dogmatic versions they are hampered by the limitations imposed upon it; not knowing that the power of the materialist method transcends even the most advanced and intelligent conception of its scope; that the vast possibilities dialectics offer can possibly explain and even appraise the spirituality social democrats are known to be rabid defenders of. It pains one to note that social democrats have not seriously reckoned that the present richness of Marxist thought would not have been possible had Marxists limited themselves to what Marx originally said, had Marxists not gone beyond what the conventional held.

As such, it can be said that social democracy is at best prescriptive, and at worst, merely descriptive of an ideal state of things. As an operational concept, it does not possess the instruments needed to deal effectively with the intricacies of a conflict-ridden reality. The difference between a faith healer and a surgeon is not exactly in reading correctly the symptons of a particular disease since correct diagnosis is more of a function of the symptons and their intensity. But rather, their difference lie in the methodology they use to extricate or cure the disease: surely, the surgeon knows that in thrusting his scalpel, he is fully aware of the consequences and the hindrances he might encounter and thus, he does not thrust it to where his fancy might take him. Consider the social democrats' concept of socialism as "the vision of human freedom in its totality: not only in social and political relations, *but in economics as well."* Again, this statement is not just a lapse in priority. The statement makes clear its concept of socialism, a concept utterly devoid of political economy that shall make the necessary (and realistic) connection between social and political status, and economic wealth. Just how to attain this social and political equality without having first the economic precondition in a socialist construction transcends the secular comprehension. Unless of course, one calls their socialism by any other name.

Perhaps the saving grace of this pamphlet is the article on ideology which outlined what it should be – dynamic, alive, flexible and deeply rooted in the Philippine context. In other words, an indigenous ideology. But then again, this conception could very well arise from a full appreciation of historical materialism. Far from advocating a universal ideology with inviolable maxims and precepts, Marxism as a methodology actually emhasizes the necessity of ideological formulations based on the "concrete analysis of concrete conditions". This can only mean that the context in the dialectical method takes primary and exclusive importance in bringing forth the corresponding text, not vice-versa as the social democrats and sadly, most subscribers to Marxism would have it at present.

Yes, indeed, the identity crisis is still there. The gut feeling persists in social democracy: but this time, it took a significant leap, a bold declaration comparable perhaps to the one made by Rosseau in his time. And unless they go beyond mere gut feelings (one starts from it, only to reaffirm or reject it after a methodological tool of analysis is used), it would probably take another Kant awakened from a "dogmatic slumber" to give justice to their intuitions.