IN MEMORY OF…

THE ADVENTURES OF A POLITICAL SCIENTIST

REMIGIO E. AGPALO
1929-2008

by Malaya C. Ronas

Relatives of Professor Agpalo, colleagues, friends, ladies, and gentlemen,

We honor tonight a good human being and outstanding academic.

For over three years, we shared FC 3149 as our common room. It was during this period that I had a closer look at Professor Remigio Agpalo. He had established himself as among the leading political scientists in our country because of his research on legislative decision-making process and the politics of Occidental Mindoro. He described our unique understanding of the concept “nationalization” and pictured local politics as “Pandanggo sa Ilaw”. Through these researches, he contributed to the behavioral studies of policy-making and electoral politics of our country. He was also interested in the political thought of Jose Rizal, Emilio Jacinto, and Jose P. Laurel. He
developed from these studies his paradigm of Filipino politics, the “*Organic-Hierarchical Paradigm*” and the “*Societal Pangulo Regime*”. His academic leadership in these areas of political science is borne by the citations of his works in related studies and his widely acknowledged academic authority both by his peers and students.

To be with Professor Agpalo in the same room is to be treated to his broad and deep knowledge of history, literature, philosophy, and politics. I recall those conversations more as tutorial sessions between an eminent teacher and a hopelessly awed student. One cannot help but be impressed by his mastery of ancient and medieval political thought as well as the liberal inspiration of the thinkers of the 1896 Filipino Revolution. He was also learned in literature and recited from memory verses from both Filipino and western poetry.

He was very serious about his academic work. Preparation and persistence, he believed, are indispensable in any kind of work. Even before embarking on his doctoral studies at Indiana University, he had thought of his research proposal and started his field work. When he was formally admitted to the doctoral program, his research was nearly completed. He left for the U.S., he said, with one “baul” full of data with him. He completed his PhD in three years.

Beneath this veneer of ideas and picturesque words, however, was a compassionate heart. There were few occasions in our conversations when he looked back at the challenges of his life as a young adult. After successfully completing his college education in the U.S., he was faced with the challenge of being the breadwinner for his family. He sought employment in private companies which offered higher salaries, but eventually opted to respond to his vocation, the teaching profession. He financially supported the college education of his siblings and opened his rented apartment on Kamuning Road to relatives from the province studying in Manila.

His compassion extended to victims of injustice. He considered it unjust for anyone to be punished without having his day in court. He was uncompromising in this belief and stood by unpopular political personalities whom he thought were victims of injustice. He said that the “higher law” of righteousness invoked by Antigone should prevail over the law of man.

This also applied to what he deemed was an unjust rule of the College of Human Kinetics (CHK) banning non-students from using the tennis courts near the UP Shopping Center. Non-students were advised to join the
UP Diliman Tennis Club if they wished to play on campus. He wrote the Collegian and the administration, and argued persuasively that the CHK cannot prevail over the faculty’s right to use the facility. When the CHK closed the facility supposedly for renovation, Professor Agpalo climbed the tall fence of the court as an act of civil disobedience against the unjust rule. This rule was rescinded. Professor Agpalo proved his point.

The tenacity to hold on to what he thought is right appropriately describes his academic life. His favorite line from Alfred Tennyson’s “Ulysses” showed him the way in his “adventure in political science”:

“To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield.”

Selected Works by R. E. Agpalo:


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