

Martial Law And Religion¹

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Abstract: *The Martial Law years as among the darkest in our history, accounting still for most of the ills that we continue to suffer today. That darkness explains the immediate and spontaneous response of the people who poured into EDSA on those four glorious days of September in 1986. It is no accident that the EDSA Revolution was saturated, among others, with religious motifs. It was a cleric, the much loved Cardinal Sin, who used the lone Catholic radio station to call for the people to congregate at the great highway, and a sea of humanity then made history as they flooded the long street not with guns but with roses and rosaries, a bloodless revolution indeed that filled the air with patriotic songs and prayers, a virtual potluck picnic for all members of the family, which included priests and nuns and seminarians in their recognizable garbs, a true People Power Revolution which is simultaneously a religious event. Thus, the revolution became a fight between good and evil, where Religion stood as the polar opposite of Martial Law.*

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This writer's actual experience of the Martial Law was when, on September 21, 1972, the dictator declared it. And then there was quiet – the quiet of a graveyard. There was no way to express opposition, so the noisy and rowdy voices of protest were gone, the streets cleared. One dared not say aloud in public the usual slogans which, besides being anti-feudalism and anti-capitalism, were also anti-Marcos. It wasn't a beautiful type of silence; it was the silence produced by the Big Brother of George Orwell's 1984, the silence of fear lest someone got you reported and then you got invited and then you disappeared forever. If you call that discipline, I tell you it was not. Media networks, both print and broadcast, radio and TV, were padlocked on suspicion of opposition; there was no free press to speak of,

¹This paper was originally delivered at the Diskursong Tomasino Thomasian Debaters' Council Forum, held at the Seminary Gymnasium of the University of Santo Tomas on 11 March 2017.

only administration mouthpieces which would bore you with propaganda stories. Only one genre was in abundance – the sex films deridingly called bomba, the new opium of the people. Those were the worst of times, and there was no way to speak of the best of times, only boring, if not scary, times. Before you knew it, there was already the much-bruited about New Society, with its new constitution on which was based a new government, supposedly parliamentary, whose laws were made anyway by the executive, at least most of the time. All students of political science know, of course, that when there's a change in the legislative, there should be a fundamental shift in the very nature of the government. It was, in truth, no longer a democracy with its three co-equal branches; there were superficially those three branches, all right, but all ruled under the executive who could also issue laws and decrees, even produce a new constitution, and act as judiciary at the same time. That was dictatorship, no doubt, sealed on the day the Martial Law was declared.

There were those of us who never believed in it since day one. The declaration was a self-serving move meant to silence the enemies of the administration and, it turned out, to freely dig into and plunder the treasury of the state. The result was the entrenchment of the culture of corruption that now bedevils every nook and cranny of our society, not to mention the creeping nationwide poverty. It was during the regime of Marcos that it became a new normal to engage in graft and corruption. Even a small-time teacher could not move up to the level of a head teacher without bribing his or her principal and supervisor, and the teacher-manager of a public school canteen was a fool who would not earn pesos for himself or herself at the end of the day. Pathetic cases like these proliferate even in very lowly sectors, and cheating became the order of the day, all that despite the First Lady's mouthfuls on the true, the good and the beautiful. Indeed, roads and highways were built, bridges like the famous San Juanico saw the light of day, structures like the Philippine Cultural Center, Philippine International Convention Center, Folk Arts Theatre, and a few more masterworks of architecture, including the ill-fated Film Center, were made to stand, sometimes in no time at all because the First Lady was just as omnipotent as the President himself. But all that was icing on the cake of increasing

poverty, declining morale, and the worsening moral fiber of the Filipino. It was then that our young idealists went underground and hid in mountain fastnesses while continuing the nationalist struggle. Some of our best minds had to fly abroad to seek asylum and evade the punitive hands of the dictator and his cronies. Cronyism became the fad of the hour. It's whom you know, not what you know, that counted. Students just went through the motion of education and eventually graduated in the hope of finding a patron who could land them a job. What used to be a nation envied by others in these parts of Asia as second only to Japan in terms of excellence began its slide down. The ambitious ones in public and private service were making the Italian mafia rather than Abraham Lincoln their benchmark. All that during the regime of the dictatorship, whose growth people would hope to arrest if it were not that the Martial Law was declared precisely in order to quash the opposition and prolong even further the stay of the dictator.

No wonder our experience of the Martial Law was dark and traumatic. Marcos robbed Martial Law of whatever little positive element it might possibly have, for the fact that its occasional use is enshrined in the constitution is perhaps proof enough that its framers thought its declaration could sometimes serve the people's welfare. We will go back to this point later. For now, however, let's mark the Martial Law years as among the darkest in our history, accounting still for most of the ills that we continue to suffer today. That darkness explains the immediate and spontaneous response of the people who poured into EDSA on those four glorious days of September in 1986. [5] It is no accident that the EDSA Revolution was saturated, among others, with religious motifs. It was a cleric, the much loved Cardinal Sin, who used the lone Catholic radio station to call for the people to congregate at the great highway, and a sea of humanity then made history as they flooded the long street not with guns but with roses and rosaries, a bloodless revolution indeed that filled the air with patriotic songs and prayers, a virtual potluck picnic for all members of the family, which included priests and nuns and seminarians in their recognizable garbs, a true People Power Revolution which is simultaneously a religious event. Thus, the revolution became a fight between good and evil, where Religion stood as the polar

opposite of Martial Law. This is why at every mention of Martial Law we could not help but shudder. The dictator had made Martial Law an instrument of darkness, of evil, having used it for purposes other than what the constitution meant it to be.

And yet, the Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines, Article VII, Section 18, has enshrined the Martial Law in such words as follows: “In case of invasion or rebellion, when the public safety requires it, the President may, for a period not exceeding sixty days, suspend the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus or place the country or any part thereof under martial law.” The section continues:

Within forty-eight hours from the proclamation of martial law or the suspension of the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus, the President shall submit a report in person or in writing to the Congress. The Congress, voting jointly, by a vote of at least a majority of all its Members in regular or special session, may revoke such proclamation or suspension, which revocation shall not be set aside by the President. Upon the initiative of the President, the Congress may, in the same manner, extend such proclamation or suspension for a period to be determined by the Congress, if the invasion or rebellion shall persist and public safety requires it.

Marcos was allowed a term of 4 years with the possibility of reelection for another 4 years. In 1972, he would be about a year short of the end of his last term; the martial law saved the day for him and enabled him to issue laws and decrees changing the legislature and eventually changing the constitution. The regime of martial law went to almost 10 years, lifted only on January 17, 1981, during which, under a new constitution, Marcos was able to extend his term until 1986, when he was forced, with his family, to abandon the Philippines on the throes of the EDSA Revolution.²

²For purposes of this paper, the author consulted the following books relevant to the EDSA Revolution: Syed Hussein Alatas, *Corruption and the Destiny of Asia* (Malaysia: Prentice Hall [M] Sdn Bhd. and Simon & Schuster (Asia), 1999); Teodoro Benigno, *Ninoy Aquino: Portrait of a Hero* (Makati: Benigno S. Aquino, Jr. Foundation, 1993); Raymond Bonner, *Waltzing with a Dictator: The Marcoses and the Making of American Policy* (Mandaluyong, Metro Manila: TimesBooks, 1987); Sandra Burton, *Impossible Dream: The Marcoses, the Aquinos, and the Unfinished Revolution* (New York: Werner Books, 1989); Kaa Byington, *Bantay ng Bayan: Stories from the NAMFREL Crusade 1984-86* (Manila: Bookmark, 1988); Albert F. Celoz, *Ferdinand Marcos and the Philippines: The Political Economy of Authoritarianism* (Singapore: Toppan Company [S] Pte Ltd, 1998); Jose W. Diokno, *A Nation for our Children: Selected Writings*, ed. Priscila S. Manalang (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1987); Monina Allarey Mercado, ed., *People Power: The Philippine Revolution of 1986, An Eyewitness History* (Manila: The James Be. Reuter, S.J., Foundation, 1986); Robin Moyer, et al. (eds.), *Bayan Ko! Images of the Philippine Revolt* (Hong Kong: Project 28 Days, 1986); Sterling Seagrave, *The Marcos Dynasty* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).

There is no telling how long yet he would have remained in power if it were not for the intervention of God through the People Power. *Vox populi, vox Dei*. The voice of the people is the voice of God. Marcos used every Machiavellian means to keep himself in power, but human strength has its limits. By the time he flew to Hawaii, he was in fact rumored to be so sick that he might already be dying.

Marcos is the epitome of Machiavellian politics. The Prince seems to have been written for him, if not for one like him. Here are some very famous lines from Chapter 18:³

You must realize, then, that there are two ways to fight. In one kind the laws are used, in the other, force. The first is suitable to man, the second to animals. But because the first often falls short, one has to turn to the second. Hence, a prince must know perfectly how to act like a beast and like a man . . .

Since, then, it is necessary for a prince to understand how to make good use of the conduct of the animals, he should select among them the fox and the lion, because the lion cannot protect himself from traps, and the fox cannot protect himself from the wolves. So the prince needs to be a fox that he may know how to deal with traps, and a lion that he may frighten the wolves.

A prudent ruler, therefore, cannot and should not observe faith when such observance is to his disadvantage and the causes that made him give his promise have vanished. If men were all good, this advice would not be good, but since men are wicked and do not keep their promises to you, you likewise do not have to keep yours to them.

This is the source of the infamous Machiavellian precept: “The end justifies the means.” The means is anything from what is human to what is bestial. Any means at all can be used by the prince, fair or foul, if it is to his own interest or end. This end is the political end, which is none other than power. To keep oneself in power is the alpha and omega of politics. In Chapter 15, Machiavelli says:⁴

For there is such a difference between the way men live and the way they ought to live, that anybody who abandons what is for what ought to be will learn something that will ruin rather than preserve him, because anyone who determines to act in all

³Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince and Other Works*, trans. Allan H. Gilbert (USA: Henricks House, Inc., 1964),

⁴*Ibid.*, 141.

circumstances the part of a good man must come to ruin among so many who are not good. Hence, if a prince wishes to maintain himself, he must learn how to be not good, and to use that ability or not as is required.

This play between seeming and being, between reality and appearance, is what the politician of the Machiavellian mold has achieved mastery of, which is also what we mean in the Philippines by *trapo* or traditional politician. Such deceit is played up by Thrasymachus in his speech in the first book of Plato's Republic, where he concludes that it is better to seem good rather than be good.⁵ This is why, to Machiavelli, it is better for the prince to be feared rather than loved, because to make himself feared is something within his control while to be loved depends on the other's will.⁶

Fear is, in fact, the military or martial cause. When President Duterte threatens to kill, he is actually instilling fear in those he would like to behave in a certain manner.⁷ This brings us to the all-important question of the day: Is Duterte just another Marcos, a Machiavellian politician who has no moral qualms for whom the end justifies any means, fair or foul, good or bad? It is easy to look and find elements of comparison, starting with the fact that both seem to project the strong image of one who rules by force. There are killings on both scenarios, and it is easy to conclude that there is impunity in the case of both. Let us then look at the morality of killing straight in the face.

⁵See Plato, Republic I, beginning with 338b, for the speech of Thrasymachus. His position was, however, strengthened by Glaucon in Republic II, which partly says: "To the perfectly unjust man, then, we must assign perfect injustice and withhold nothing of it, but we must allow him, while committing the greatest wrongs, to have secured for himself the greatest reputation for justice, and if he does happen to trip, we must concede to him the power to correct his mistakes by his ability to speak persuasively if any of his misdeeds come to light, and when force is needed, to employ force by reason of his manly spirit and vigor and his provision of friends and money. And when we have set up an unjust man of this character, our theory must set the just man at his side – a simple and noble man, who, in the phrase of Aeschylus, does not wish to seem but to be good. Then we must deprive him of the seeming. For if he is going to be thought just he will have honors and gifts because of that esteem." (Plato, Republic II 361b-c; The Collected Dialogues, eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns [New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973], 608; my italics) What Thrasymachus, through Glaucon, is trying to say is, that it is, in the final analysis, better and more advantageous, especially for a ruler, to seem good than be good.

⁶Is it better to be loved than to be feared, or the reverse? I answer that a prince should wish for both. But because it is difficult to reconcile them, I hold that it is much more secure to be feared than to be loved, if one of them must be given up." (Machiavelli, The Prince, Chapter 17; Gilbert trans., 145) "I conclude that since men love as they please and fear as the prince pleases, a wise prince will evidently rely on what is in his own power and not on what is in the power of another." (Machiavelli, The Prince, Chapter 17; Gilbert trans., 147)

⁷President Rodrigo Duterte repeatedly threatens death against those engaged in drugs, criminality and graft and corruption. It is amazing that, having openly expressed such threats of violence as early as the campaign period, he was still given an overwhelming mandate by the people during the election, winning by about 6 million votes.

Let me go straight to the point and ask about the source of our conviction that killing is a moral evil. Come to think of it, what is it that assures us that killing is bad? Events in our country today seem to be giving all of us the opportunity to ask this all-crucial question: Where did we get the idea that it is an evil thing to kill another? Perhaps we have never ventured to ask the question; we simply take it for granted that we should not kill. Indeed, what is the source of this conviction? Speaking as a Christian, I would personally go to the Ten Commandments that say, among others, "Thou shalt not kill!" (Dt 5:17) With this injunction written on a tablet of stone by Yahweh himself, there was no way for the Old Testament to go wrong, except that there was still to be the New Testament which rewrote the old commandments and summarized them all in one commandment: the Commandment of Love. "Love one another as I have loved you!" (Jn 13:34) is an even more simple version of the twofold love consisting of, first, love of God and, then, love of neighbor (Mt 22:37-40). Love, now, becomes the genuine measure of good, especially because, to be blunt about it, "God is love." (Jn 4:16)

With love as the measure of goodness, everything becomes possible. In philosophy we can liken this to what Immanuel Kant tells us in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*: "There is nothing in the world, or even out of it, which can be taken as good without qualification, except a good will."⁸ Any act that flows from the good will is good, so that even what looks like an exemplary behavior, if it actually comes from a bad or evil will, is, on that account, unequivocally evil. Love, then, makes good. As St. John of the Cross emphasizes, "One act of pure love is worth more than all the good works." It is the disposition of our heart that ultimately counts, no matter what the act may be.

What Kant calls the good will is generally considered to have been inspired by J-J Rousseau's general will, the will that never errs.⁹ It is this good will of Kant and general will of Rousseau which, this writer would like to think, was at work in those four days in February we call the EDSA Revolution. The collective movement of the people went beyond all legal expectations and

⁸Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, 1, trans. H.J. Paton, in *The Moral Law* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1966), 59.

⁹Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, II.3, ed. Lester G. Crocker (New York: Washington Square Press, 1967).

broke the letter of the law. This was when came alive literally the saying we heard from the Latins, *vox populi, vox dei*. The voice of the people is the voice of God. That was, then, true People Power, and I dare say that true People Power always ends in victory, precisely because it is equivalent to the power of God.

The general will, or the good will, comes from within us and is the source of all that is good. We have therefore within our natural selves the key to what makes good. This is why a transvaluation of values such as Nietzsche proposes makes a lot of sense.¹⁰ Once, when we were still merely the rational animal made unto the Greek ideal image of a man,¹¹ it was rational to set up a table of good and evil, the transgression of which makes us feel guilty and culpable. Under that table, to kill is bad in an absolute sense. Still, the great St. Thomas Aquinas found the wisdom to make for exceptions, e.g. “it is lawful to repel force by force, provided one does not exceed the limits of a blameless defense.”¹²

In brief, it would be a mistake to consider killing as an absolutely wrong act independently of the context. Indeed, if any act such as killing earnestly comes from the good or general will, one may even say that the killing is good. Had Abraham killed his son, Isaac, on the command of Yahweh,¹³ that would not have been a bad thing. A reading of the Old Testament, assured a bona fide biblical scholar to me, shows us a God who has no qualms about killing, if that would be tantamount to good.

Could it be that the killings his enemies attribute to President Rodrigo Duterte are morally justifiable? Only if there has occurred in his case what Nietzsche refers to as the transvaluation of values, so that overnight the moral table of the “civil society” has turned stale and outdated. It is clear that the “yellows” of the “civil society” who likewise make up the elite of the church are in the forefront of the “demolition work” against the President, which speaks not so much against their sincerity and earnest purpose

¹⁰The very title of Nietzsche’s work, *Beyond Good and Evil*, strongly suggests the transvaluation of values, truly a “prelude to a philosophy of the future.” The idea is, of course, underlined in all of his works, including probably his main work, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann [New York: Vintage Random, 1966]; *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale [England: Penguin, 1966]).

¹¹The definition of man as a rational animal came from the Greeks, e.g. Aristotle, see *De Anima*; also, Plato, *Republic IV*.

¹²St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Pt. II-II, Q. 64, Art 7: Whether it is lawful to kill a man in self-defense; trans. *Fathers of the English Dominican Province Vol. III* (Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, 1981), 1465.

¹³Genesis: Chapter 22.

as their lack of comprehension of a possible paradigm shift in the moral stance of the case. They show a lack of a compassionate space for the side of the President, the same tack worn by such other biggies as the former president of the US, Barack Obama, the UN, perhaps the EU, the Commission on Human Rights and, more recently, the Amnesty International. The times, I think, demand that we keep our minds open and dare to rethink and review our revered values. Although I myself did not vote for this President, there is something instructive in the fact that our people has unequivocally, perhaps even unerringly, given him an overwhelming mandate. If the elections were to be held today, this writer would possibly take the risk and vote for this man, the only man (it seems) who could turn the cultural tide of corruption, crime and drug addiction in our country today, all supposedly for love of country and in the name of the future generations.¹⁴ There is no doubt that this is a President who believes in God, but not in that type of an idol who allows for hypocrisy and vicious culture to thrive.

That, at least, is the image the President would like to project, and so far this writer still finds no reason to reject and dismiss that claim outright. This writer would rather give him the benefit of the doubt since he was the elected president of the country. We know exactly what to expect when the country voted for him, and so we should at least give him the chance to do the work according to how best he knows. This is exactly the kind of thing which the “yellows”, the “civil society”, the Church elite, and the human rights advocates, as well as some international sectors, would not like to give him, what in simple parlance we call “the benefit of the doubt.”

And so, can martial law go hand in hand with morality and religion? Why not, “in case of invasion or rebellion, when the public safety requires it”? To this writer, there is a difference between Marcos and Duterte. Marcos desecrated the constitution by violating its very spirit when he used it to justify the prolongation of his rule, the salvaging of his political enemies and the plunder of the people’s wealth. That was not an act of the general will, nor

¹⁴I have never done this before, but night after night since the election of Duterte I would not go to bed without checking the news of the day as well as his talks and press conferences, not because I am a die-hard fan of the President but because I would like to keep myself as well-informed as possible, which is a prerequisite for an open and critical mind.

one that proceeds from a good will, but an act of greed that led to the impoverishment of the country and the entrenchment of the culture of graft and corruption, from which we cannot till now extricate ourselves. The drug culture, for one, emanates from that. Drug sale makes for big, easy money, and so it is understandable that politicians and policemen are forming a network to protect it, causing – Duterte says - the slow death of our country which wastes our youth and deprives the generations to come of the future that they deserve.

Is Duterte proving to be another Marcos? Hopefully not. So far, we have not seen a systemic elimination of the President's political enemies, and we don't see those who oppose him either going underground or rushing abroad to stay alive and continue the struggle. Perhaps the worst case is that of Senator Delima, but she indeed has some explaining to do and so it is not unfair to bring her to court on suspicion of an unbailable offense. This is not to pre-judge her case, but there is no doubt about the seriousness of the scenario where, under her watch as the Secretary of Justice, the National Bilibid Prison became a hub of the drug industry, turning the national prisoners into a den of drug lords, pushers and users, and – incidentally - just as serious is that she was named recipient of millions of drug money for her senatorial bid.

President Duterte's most visible fight is against the drug network in the country and for this he is fully utilizing his role as commander-in-chief of the entire armed forces of the Philippines. This war against drugs, however, is very profoundly connected with the culture of corruption and the widespread criminality in the country, all of which he has pledged during the election campaign to destroy or at least mitigate radically.¹⁵ In this war against drugs it is inevitable that some lives will be lost, and it is good that Filipinos are vigilant against careless and ruthless killing. It is good, too, for the government to be tolerant of criticism, staunch in its commitment to break the bone of the narcotic state, even if blasphemously boisterous against the critics of his campaign against drugs, sometimes threatening to the point of making one feel like one is before a tyrant. The truth, perhaps, is the opposite – he seems to be listening, willing to change his

¹⁵He repeatedly reminds his audience of these three campaign promises he made against drugs, corruption and criminality.

mind when necessary, and well focused on what he considers to be right. He often tells us that he has no more need for politics, that he is mainly concerned about the health of the nation, that his heart is truly with the poor – and he exudes a sense of sincerity which translates into ongoing popularity. If one has not closed one's mind and continues to listen to him, one might even get a glimpse of wisdom from his words and see a president who does not only sit in Malacañang but one who also teaches, thus a teaching president who's showing us what paradigm shift is all about.

In short, it might yet turn out that we have, despite the scandal of the killings, a truly ethical and religious president. But we will have to listen beyond the expletives and see beyond the gruesome deaths that still occur daily. The church is currently not in a position to wage an all-out war against Duterte in the same way that we did at EDSA against Marcos, if only for the reason that people power seems still to stand by Duterte. That explains the caution on the part of the church elite who could not, even in their walk for life, be completely transparent about their anti-Duterte stance. People generally agree with President Duterte's fight against corruption, which is why even the church and the civil society are finding it difficult to draw support against EJKs and the bloody war against drugs. It is not true that we are looking for a stronger voice than that of Bishop Socrates Villegas; the suspicion is that even a Cardinal Sin won't be listened to in the same way that he was heeded so soon as he was heard summoning the faithful to EDSA on those four days of the Revolution in 1986. It was smart of President Duterte to call attention to the corruption happening even within the Church and smarter yet to name a few names. Institutions have lost their moral ascendancy since corruption has seeped into all nooks of society, not exempting the government, the justice halls, business, school and the church. It seems that much of our reserve of creativity has been channeled into the creation of this culture of corruption.

This writer did not vote for Duterte because of the risks involved, of which he (Duterte) however has been thoroughly open about; he did not lie to the people during the campaigns, telling them exactly then what to expect. Yet, the people voted for him. *Vox populi, vox Dei*. The voice of the people is the voice of

God, especially since the elections turned out to be reliably clean and honest, as well as credible. Duterte won overwhelmingly so that all his rivals had inevitably to declare their acceptance of defeat. There was no question on which side God was on, at least so far as our recent presidential election was concerned. The people have spoken, and so has God. The way things seem to be going now, it seems that, so far, both people and God have not yet withdrawn their support for the duly elected President, and that – this writer says – is the main reason why all moves against the administration, including those of the bishops, have not proved strong enough to organize another EDSA Revolution. Not even a Cardinal Sin would have succeeded in mobilizing a people who, while remaining faithful to the church, has its own mind when it comes to politics and society. Exactly what is happening here? Will the President manage to keep his lead in terms of the people's confidence, the main reason why none of those who oppose him have so far cracked the proverbial hard nut of his political strength?

If we are truly concerned about the loss of lives, especially innocent lives, and if we are convinced about the rehabilitative capability of those in the habit of taking illegal drugs, then we should do as Duterte suggests – seek out some of the millions of drug victims and help rehabilitate them, in the way we know it. There is no use preventing Duterte from engaging himself in the drug problem also according to the way he knows best, and that is by using his clout as commander-in-chief. He prefers and perhaps thinks he needs the military solution, and he is within his right to resort to that solution, especially since the supposedly more kindly and benign strategy of the past administrations did not seem to have worked effectively, have seemed, in fact, to have rather made the problem worse, so that now the scope of the drug industry looks formidable and beyond repair. Nevertheless, the church is also within its right not just to talk and criticize but to actually do something more proactively in order to prevent further senseless loss of lives on account of this war on drugs. The police are, of course, expected to do their job, but only for as long as there are drug dependents on the loose. That constitutes their job, and it should not surprise anyone that their operations could involve killing within the ambit of the law. If that's what we

want to prevent from happening, we should be ahead of the police operation and bring the drug victims to our side for the kind of solution which we prefer to undertake. Unfortunately, the past administrations of the government have not done enough of their homework in this regard and, under their wings, the drug problem has not only worsened; it has grown into a multibillion industry protected by politicians from top to bottom and by policemen from the generals to their humblest posers such as Mr. Edgar Matobato. In contrast, we now have a government in earnest, one that seems to mean business and whose strategy can only be on a military scale. Thus, our opposition should take the opposite tack, the tack of intelligent and strategic charity following the example of the Good Samaritan, perhaps also of Mother Teresa. It won't do to stealthily and politically organize a common struggle against the President and seek to oust him through means fair or foul. How are we to do that since the people in whose power we trust are actually still possibly on the side of Duterte and not on our side, not on the side of the church perceived to be elite and certainly not as clean as we might want ourselves to be? Possibly, we could be committing a worse wrong in our passionate effort to correct what we rightfully or wrongly condemn to be wrong on the other side. As a case in point, we can cite what happened once to Mr. Jim Paredes who looked foolishly pathetic at his age berating seven Duterte youth hoping against hope to get them to understand what he considered was the truth and nothing but the truth of his advocacy.¹⁶ Such a crusader's passion is in danger of becoming worse than the wrong it seeks to correct, like the infamous Inquisition waged by the Church in the waning days of the Medieval Period.

This writer thinks it is better that, as Plato would say it, we mind our own business.¹⁷ Or, as Confucius would put it, we rectify our names.¹⁸ Whether we admit it or not, we now have a government that tries to work in the way it knows best. And under it we now see the police and the soldiers doing their job while

¹⁶The incident happened during the celebration of the EDSA Revolution on February 26, 2017; this was widely recorded by the media.

¹⁷Plato's Republic is famously concerned with the problem of justice, which is defined in Book IV as the "principle of doing one's business." Republic 433b2; Collected Dialogues, Hamilton and Cairns, eds., 675.

¹⁸"Let the ruler be a ruler, the minister be a minister, the father be a father, and the son be a son." Confucius, The Analects, 12:11, in A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy, trans. Wing-Tsit Chan (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973), 39.

cleansing their own ranks. It does seem also that the legislature and the courts are, despite human limits, keeping to their contract with the people. The elite Church, together with the yellows and the civil society, which are in fact arguably one and the same group, as well as some international groups allied to the West, are not necessarily wrong; they are indeed correct in what they are honestly and passionately trying to advocate. Indeed, who can argue against human rights? But we should here remember the lesson we are being taught by the philosopher Hegel who has the wisdom to see the notion as a living notion, so that even the meaning of “right” cannot remain unchanged in the course of history.¹⁹ What Barack Obama and the Amnesty International, for example, might have failed to notice is that, as soon as the populist Duterte took his office as President of this small, insignificant country, the meaning of “human rights” might have already changed overnight. This is what Friedrich Nietzsche calls the transvaluation of values, so that the values we used to uphold reverently as we mourned the death of our hero, Ninoy Aquino, have already drastically altered when faced with the very local situation of the drug culture and industry in the Philippines. The likelihood is that Duterte’s perception of human rights is now ahead of ours, that he understands us better than we understand him, precisely because, as he insinuates aloud, he has moved on and we have not, making our passionate advocacy look as foolish and brazen as Jim Paredes’ useless rhetoric against the strong, unyielding youth of Duterte.

That, then, is this writer’s optimism, that President Duterte is not equivalent to the late President Marcos, and that the martial law which has been desecrated by the Machiavellian hands of Marcos will not be so desecrated by the more realistic hands of the still immensely popular Mayor of Davao.

¹⁹See G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T.M. Knox (London: Oxford University Press, 1967). One might well say that the *Philosophy of Right* is the “*Phenomenology of Mind*” applied to the concept of right; the concept continues to evolve historically.

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