

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

The Politics of Choice: The Making of the President

Review Author: Jorge M. Juco

Philippine Studies vol. 15, no. 2 (1967): 395–400

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies@admu.edu.ph.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>
Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

human nature — stands. But as a counterbalance to much of the criticism, I would recommend to the seminarians of the Philippines (to whom this volume is dedicated) a book entitled: *Cross Currents of Psychiatry and Catholic Morality*, edited by W. Birmingham and J. Cunneen (Pantheon 1964). In it, Albert Ple on "St. Thomas and the Psychology of Freud" says: "Freud's discipline in no way detracts from the spiritual conception of man...it merely adds an intermediate level, unnoticed by the medical science of the 13th century.... St. Thomas had, and could have, no knowledge of the Freudian unconscious... Nevertheless he allowed a place for the less excellent activities of human life," (p. 91) and, "...it would therefore be a misrepresentation of Freud to restrict the libido to the sexual impulses. Freud's 'libido' and 'pleasure' when conceived as vital instincts, have more than one point of comparison with the 'appetite' and 'delectatio' of St. Thomas " (p. 94).

There are any number of big issues in a study of this kind: notably, the problem of unconscious determinism and freedom. Admitting freedom and denying absolute psychological determinism with the author, the problem remains of determining when and to what extent we enjoy this freedom. Jean Rimand in the book recommended above states the situation in these terms: "Our freedom is conditioned. Moralists should join the psychologists in studying this play of determinism and liberty in order to refute both those who exaggerate infraconscious determinism and those who claim we are free as soon as we are awakened and fully conscious" (p. 127).

In the conclusion the author quotes appreciative passages about psychoanalysis from J. Nuttin and I. Caruso. And he leaves us with the impression that if the disciples of both (St. Thomas and psychoanalysis) set to work seriously and patiently in a spirit of mutual regard for their respective disciplines much valuable exploration can be accomplished regarding the conscious process of integration of personality.

J. J. KING, S.J.

THE POLITICS OF CHOICE

THE MAKING OF THE PRESIDENT, 1964. By Theodore H. White. New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1965. xii, 431 pp.

"The people behind and below cannot see as far as their leaders. Their feet hurt; the children are crying; or the old ones are sick. But they must march; they are compelled to go; they cannot choose the way themselves. Their only choice is the choice of leaders who will

direct the way for them." This, to Theodore White, is the essence of the democratic political process.

Though analysts of the democratic process still resort to the dictum "government of the people, by the people, and for the people," they recognize that in reality, it is the representatives of the people who must exemplify it. What falls upon the shoulders of the electorate is the free choice of representatives and leaders. Where the choice is well made, there still remain numerous problems, both domestic and foreign that cannot all be solved. Where it is foolishly made, the problems are multiplied a hundredfold. The task of democratic leadership is the provision of direction.

"A Choice, Not an Echo." On this slogan, Barry Goldwater, Republican, conservative, prophet and patriot, ran for the Presidency of the United States, and lost. The election of 1964 might have been just another in a long line of elections. That it was not was due to the fact that it offered the electorate a choice between two leaders and two modes of life. Here, for once, were two men, one a passionate prophet, the other a pragmatic politician. The battle they waged, the philosophies they espoused, and the choice the electorate made, constitute the subject of Theodore White's latest journalistic portrait of American politics in action.

The Making of the President, 1964 reads like a lengthy political novel. Truth here is not stranger than fiction, but certainly more involved. There are, of course, the stories to be told in the footnotes of history books, of those who also ran and those who would have ran had they had the chance. But this is only part of the book—a study in political personalities, of maneuver and counter-maneuver, of hurt and elation. What one is apt to overlook in this verbal maze is the more important part of White's narrative. True, it is not as facile a book to read as his *Making . . . , 1960*. Neither is its prose, for the most part, as eloquent and stirring. Beneath the narrative icing, however, lies the analytical cake. It is bitter to the taste, and some American readers may have imagined it so. But without it White's work would merit no more attention and space than a cub-reporter's initial fling at political journalism.

If there is anything that this volume has which his *Making . . . , 1960* had less of, it is depth. Whether he is talking of the Negro revolution, the democratic process or the Johnsonian concept of the "Great Society," White exhibits a keen perception. In these portions, he graduates from the journalist to the political analyst. Whether his assessments are accurate and admissible is for less involved writers to ascertain later and (if necessary) refute. His work belongs to the here and now.

"Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice! . . . Moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue!" With these words, Barry Goldwater

completed his coup of the moderate Republican leadership at the Republican Convention. It had been a long and disappointing road to the "coup at the Cow Palace" for several men: William Scranton ("He had seen no reason, no duty to become President before; but there was now, clearly, a duty he owed to his Party"); Nelson Rockefeller ("If he could not stop Goldwater... then he saw the country and the Party in desperate trouble"); George Romney ("Not until... after hearing from his advisers that the Detroit newspapers would beat his brains out if he broke his pledge [to the people of Michigan, not to run], did his short-lived candidacy die"); Richard Nixon ("with the flak of the Goldwater batteries still trailing him, [he] flew off,... wondering how he had been mousetrapped"); and Henry Cabot Lodge.

The Goldwater coup had been a rout (883 votes nominating him where 663 would have sufficed.) "And so Goldwater and his Puritans were left alone to face the greatest pragmatist of all time—Lyndon B. Johnson." Disunity set in among the Republicans, and Goldwater began his trek on the road to political defeat.

Of Johnson's convention, White writes: "the melodrama of August 26th, 1964, was staged and produced entirely by Lyndon Johnson. In its mixture of comedy, tension and teasing, it was a work of art;... as excitement and a study of personality in power, it was unmatched." Along the road to the Democratic convention, what primarily titillates the interest of speculators is the process by which Robert Kennedy was excluded. White presents two versions of this incident.

Lyndon Johnson's version is a simple one—"He'd told Bobby he approved of his desire to run the country some day, but after giving the matter a lot of thought he had decided that he wasn't going to ask him to run for Vice-President with him this time." Kennedy's version differs little—"The President had looked at the wall, then looked at the floor, then said he'd been thinking about the Vice-Presidency in terms of who'd be the biggest help to the country and to the Party—and of help to him, personally. And that person wasn't Bobby."

The death and unreason which marked the last days of the Kennedy administration demonstrate effectively the continuity of the democratic process. A president had died, and immediately there was a new one, ready to assume command. Continuity must be provided for by each President, so that the choice of a Vice-President must be made with the thought in mind that here, in the flesh, is a possible future President of the United States. The office of the Vice-President is not an honorary one. The framers of the Constitution never intended it to be a decorative office. The President who fails to realize this jeopardizes the security of his country's future. This Johnson realized.

He may have had personal reasons for excluding Kennedy: "What Johnson found difficult to forgive was indifference. And the indifference of Robert F. Kennedy during his brother's presidency had been

embittering. So, too, was Kennedy's abruptness of manner. Kennedy, a man as straightforward as Johnson is complicated, had not so much offended Johnson as ignored him." Whatever the real and most weighty reason may have been Johnson finally chose a man whom he believed to be a fit successor: "if one were to choose a successor to the President—and one had already eliminated Robert F. Kennedy and Robert S. McNamara—to whom else could one safely entrust the government of the United States?" It is hard to say when men finally reach a decision. But the decision had been made, and action followed at its heels.

Contests for the presidency are profuse with issues and personalities. Whether the issues prevail or not, and whether the personalities differ at all, the political battlefield offers ample room for a showing of both. In 1960, "Peace without surrender" might have been Kennedy's theme just as handily as "America cannot stand still; this is a time of burden and sacrifice" might have been Nixon's, instead of the other way around. And so it had been primarily a battle of personalities. 1964 was not such a fight. The issues were paramount, but personalities were so closely bound up with the issues that it was difficult to tell where one left off and the other started.

Goldwater's principles may have been sacred to him, but the contradictions in his public statements offered too little proof of his sincerity, and the translucence of his thoughts little showed the soundness of his philosophy of reason and action.

White points out four dominant issues in the campaign: Peace or the risk of war, the role of the central government, civil rights, and "quality". White is both sympathetic and blunt where Goldwater is concerned. "He was a man of cause and principle, but in his campaign he proved he was not leader, because he could make no bridge from his cause to the realities either of government or of politic...the press...whom he had denounced had to deal with the whole record of a man. It was as a sharp, clearly limned figure of many writings and many passions that Goldwater entered the campaign; he would not repudiate them, nor would he explain them, and was innocently horrified when they used them to slash him to bits."

The opposition portrayed him as a man who would not hesitate to go to war. "In your heart, you know he *might*," the counter-slogans went. What he really believed in mattered little. "In the end, because they had been persuaded that indeed he might, millions...voted against the Republican." His tragedy was that, while "he introduced the condition and the quality of American life as a subject of political debate," the comparative peace and abundance of his times lent no substance to his arguments.

Goldwater's second major issue "was his issue against the central government—against an all-dominating, all-entangling Federal bureau-

cracy in Washington." It was easy enough to say to the people, "I will give you back your freedom," but it was difficult to show them that this was good for them, to "make clear just how, and by what degrees, he would free the American people from paternalism and central government without exposing them at the same time to personal loss." The threat of loss was great, for while he struck at a system, Johnson and the Democrats took just one aspect of that system—Social Security—and flung his words right back at him.

Over a century after the civil war, the issue that had sparked it was still an issue. True, the times were indeed changing but for some, change lay in another direction. The legislative battle over the Civil Rights Bill proved one thing—while equality of opportunity is one of the most famous of American catch-phrases, it will still be just an empty shell for as long as men cite it without conviction. The Negro revolution of the 1960's had its peaceful men, but it also had its violent men, as do all revolutions. The riots in New York were a violent response to the status quo that refused to yield to the forces of change. That the concept of freedom still escapes many Americans who claim to be its universal champions galls the Asian viewer. It offends his better sense.

The Civil Rights bill offered the representatives of the American people their chance at creating their own political profiles in courage, and many passed their chance by. It is perhaps truer said of politics more than any other field of human endeavor that men's loyalties and reason do not always come to terms. Goldwater, rejecting the bill, again played the politics of no compromise; as one observer at the convention said, "My God, he's going to run as Barry Goldwater." As an issue, the candidates knew that it was "too difficult and dangerous to debate in public," and so they buried it, leaving it to "work its way silently in the big cities, where the white workingman took out his fears on local candidates who threatened to open and perhaps destroy his neighborhood—but in his national choice, forced to buy either the Johnson package or the Goldwater package, chose Johnson."

The issue of "quality" is not wholly definable. Goldwater labelled it as the "morality" issue, while Johnson spoke of the "Great Society." "During the campaign, neither could define what he meant—but they were bringing into engagement what in another decade, if peace persists, may well be the central issue of American life: What is the end of man? What is his purpose on earth? How shall he conduct himself with grace and mercy and dignity?" Goldwater failed mainly because the questions he emphasized—"What's happening to us? What's happening to America?"—which were intended to define the issues he believed in, only stressed all the more the reality that was there. "For what was happening was not bad at all."

The culmination of White's political tale ends with the Johnsonian concept of the "great society." Looked at from the outside, it

is not an original concept. What Johnson did was to put behind the vision the force and authority of his own beliefs and persuasion. What is the "Great Society"? Johnson presented his own definition in a speech at the Commencement of the University of Michigan: "The Great Society rests on abundance and liberty for all. It demands an end to poverty and racial injustice . . . It is a place where men are more concerned with the quality of their goals than with the quality of their goods. But most of all, the Great Society is not a safe harbor, a resting place, a final objective, a finished work. It is a challenge constantly renewed, beckoning us toward a destiny where the meaning of our lives matches the marvelous products of our labor."

Explained in these terms, the "Great Society" is the goal of all mankind. The circumstances of its being and the substance that gives it life may differ from one people to another, but ultimately this concept expresses the same foundation underlying all governments; the common good. In the context in which Johnson presents it, it is neither Utopia nor the millenium of the Marxist dialectic. For the democratic view knows no limits—there is no end to progress, nor does progress exclude decay. As long as man thinks and acts, so will he move the world to progress or decadence.

The Making of the President, 1964 offers little to the Asian reader, as far as the story of the election itself is concerned. For it was not his election; the choices were not his to make; these were not his men. What is important is that Asian democracies have something to learn from the American democratic experience. Once one realizes that the responsibility of choice is not an empty thing, but one that may mold or corrode the future, then White's book will have been worth an unhurried and reflecting reading.

JORGE M. JUCO