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## Philippine Textbooks and the National Self-Image

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## Notes and Comments

### Philippine Textbooks and the National Self-Image

NIELS MULDER

How to live with family, relatives and friends is taught in the home environment and comes "naturally" to the child. The world is presented as hierarchical and basically benevolent, focusing on relatives and other "near others." Relationships are highly personalistic and morally obliging, containing their own ethical measure. Consequently behavior is characterized by a high measure of consciousness of others. Often this type of home-based behavior provides the model for action in the wider society.

It is the task of the school to introduce children to the wider world outside and prepare them for their roles as breadwinners and citizens by transmitting basic skills and a sense of origin, history and national identity. At the same time the school is expected to reinforce core values of respect for age and authority, politeness and obedience, trust and religiosity that have been instilled in the home environment. In both respects the school functions as one of the most important transmitters of culture. At the same time the school is one of the most controlled and controllable instruments of cultural reproduction.

#### SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE

According to Bourdieu, all pedagogic action aiming at the reproduction of culture may be called legitimate symbolic violence. The force of this violence derives from the prevailing relationships of power

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that the pedagogic action conceals.<sup>1</sup> On a national scale the idea of symbolic violence is perhaps best demonstrated in the case of the Philippines, because the country was colonized by cultural means not once, but twice.

Whether the forceful colonial production of a culture may be called legitimate can be doubted, but once in place, its reproduction by way of symbolic violence legitimates and conceals the existing power relations. At present in the Philippines power is centered in a political and economic elite whose interests dovetail with the neocolonial exploitation of the country. Since they are in control of the production of symbols,<sup>2</sup> they spread their dominant ideology by way of school texts that are, not quite ironically, supervised and financed by the World Bank.<sup>3</sup>

The Spaniards came to the Philippines in search of gold and empire. The legitimization of empire was the bestowal of the gift of Catholicism upon the natives. In this latter endeavor they were quite successful. For want of higher civilization and political organization, which could be found among the Indianized, Islamized, and Sinicized civilizations of Southeast Asia, the major population groups of the Philippines were converted to Catholicism in the long period that they were effectively influenced by the Spanish missionaries.

Whereas there was never much doubt that Spanish rule was based on the subjugation of the population, the Americans came as friends. If their structural means were indirect rule through the cooptation and political emancipation of the elite, their cultural strategy was based on education and the use of English. This strategy was so effective that the memory of nationalism and the wars at the end of the nineteenth and in the early twentieth century became blurred. In 1945 the Americans were hailed as liberators and their grant of independence in 1946 merely changed the status of the Philippines to an economic and cultural neodependency which almost universally cherished the shackles to its former master as "special relationships."<sup>4</sup>

1. P. Bourdieu and J.C. Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 1977), pp. 13-15, 24-25.

2. The political culture of the power elite and their dominance of the production of symbols are analyzed and related to policies of national development in my "Philippine Poverty: Inquiry Into the Poverty of Culture." (Bielefeld: Sociology of Development Research Centre, *Working Paper* No. 117, 1989.

3. L. R. Constantino, "Education for Independence," in *Towards Relevant Education: A General Sourcebook for Teachers*, ed. Education Forum (Quezon City: Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines, 1986), 1: 42-53.

4. Alfred W. McCoy, "The Philippines: Independence Without Decolonization," in *Asia: The Winning of Independence*, ed. R. Jeffrey (London: MacMillan, 1981), p. 27.

Until well into the fifties the Philippine national anthem was sung in English which also remained the language of formal education and public life. American textbooks were used until well into the sixties. Five years after independence, Recto talked about "Our lingering colonial complex," exposing the evils of cultural colonization and dependence on the big brother across the Pacific.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, Agoncillo worked on a rewriting and reinterpretation of Philippine history from a Filipino point of view.<sup>6</sup>

In 1966, Renato Constantino published one of his best known articles, "The Miseducation of the Filipino." This article traces the relationship between the American system of education and the American domination of the economy. He makes it very clear that the naive identification of Philippine with American interests is a result of a colonial education that made Filipinos good colonials while at the same time depriving them of their soul, that is, their history, culture and identity, instituting instead a sense of rootlessness, dependence and inferiority.<sup>7</sup>

Since then, as I hope to demonstrate in the discussion of Philippine textbooks, not much seems to have changed. Although I do not basically disagree with Constantino, too much emphasis on American interests and neocolonial exploitation,<sup>8</sup> makes him lose sight of cultural dynamics per se. Not only the various historical experiences, but also the culture of the family in the Philippines have given rise to a cultural affliction that is often affectionately known as "our colonial mentality."<sup>9</sup> This mentality, about which many people feel a bit uneasy, has grown to become a distinct cultural characteristic that is reproduced on a wide scale and almost irrespective of conscious efforts at education.

Largely due to the perceptive thought of pioneers such as Recto and Agoncillo and the continuous crusading of Constantino, nationalism and the search for roots became fashionable in the sixties at the same time that interest developed in local social history and Marxist analysis. Established speculations about the origin and early history of the Filipinos were complemented by an interest in the non-Chris-

5. Claro M. Recto, "Our Lingering Colonial Complex," (written in 1951) in *Vintage Recto: Memorable Speeches and Writings*, ed. R. Constantino (Quezon City: The Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1986).

6. T. A. Agoncillo, *The Revolt of the Masses: The Story of Bonifacio and the Katipunan* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 1956).

7. Renato Constantino, "The Miseducation of the Filipino," in *The Filipinos in the Philippines and Other Essays*, ed. R. Constantino (Quezon City: Malaya Books, 1966).

8. See Education Forum, ed., *Towards Relevant Education*.

9. J. Bulatao, "Hiya," *Philippine Studies* 12 (1964): 433.

tianized populations which hold the key to pre-Spanish identity. Others sought to construct a cultural base from folklore and the revival of "ethnic" and local dances.

The expression of this quest for a past and identity is probably best expressed in the imaginative excursions of artists. The works of Nick Joaquin are of special interest.<sup>10</sup> Whereas his earlier works, such as the play *A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino* and the novel *The Woman Who Had Two Navels*, search for roots in the late Spanish period, other more recent works, such as *Cave and Shadows*, go back into a pagan past that was pure and full of vitality, a past in which women still were the equals of men and which had not been tainted by the hypocrisy in power structures and Christianity.

Before discussing the contents of the schoolbooks in use in Philippine public schools, it should be realized that the recognition of a colonial mentality as a problem is of very recent date. Historical myths about origin and prehistory, the blessings of colonization and the magnificence of America, are solidly established. This situation is exacerbated by cultural dependence on America and the underdevelopment of a native intellectual discourse upon which a cultural identity could be grounded. In other words, nationalists, educators and social scientists need to do more than debunk myths. They also need to develop and propagate alternatives, an endeavor that may take decades and a good deal of dedication. But this is often thwarted by the teaching about Filipino identity that is offered during the fourteen or fifteen years of elementary and college education.

The understanding of ethnic origins, population, history, national symbols and language, ethics, civics, religion and its expressions, geography, society, government, politics, economy, development, and the characteristics of being Filipino is taught in the Philippines in what is called an "Integrated Social Science Course." This course aims at concept formation.<sup>11</sup> It does so by presenting the same material over and over again, each higher step with slightly increased elaboration and conceptual difficulty. In this way the teaching materials in use are very repetitive and generally fail to integrate the concepts into a historical perspective or a social theory. In the absence of frameworks this method of presentation necessarily leads to rote learning, boredom, and the belief in infallible teachers.

10. There is no shortage of literature that can be interpreted as search for past and identity. The so-called Rosales novels of F. Sionil Jose (*Po-on, Tree, My Brother, My Executioner, The Pretenders, Mass*, 1978-84) should be mentioned. Also, NVM Gonzalez, *The Bamboo Dancers* (1959).

11. F. T. Leogardo and J. R. Navarro, *Challenges in Philippine Community Life* (Manila: Philippine Book Co., 1974), p. 111.

The same is true for the values education implicit in the course material. It is an ahistorical, noncontextual approach to values and rules that seem to exist outside of the person and the situation he is in and that do not appear to have a reason or a purpose.<sup>12</sup> They are just there to be memorized, but not to be lived by.

Not all Philippine textbooks are slovenly written, illogical, or contradictory. Some texts are well written and stand out in that desert of dullness of what could and should be an exciting course. Yet, the factual content, of all the books is basically the same, since it has to conform with the requirements of the Philippine Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS).

#### PHILIPPINE SELF IMAGE IN TEXTBOOKS

The first lesson for the first grade of the series *Our Country and its People* relates the ethnic origins of the present day Filipinos:

The Aetas or Negritos were the first to come to the Philippines. Aetas were short people. They had black skin. Their hair was short and kinky. They had small flat noses. Their lips were thick. Their hands and feet were short. They used bows and arrows to hunt for their food.

Indonesians came to the Philippines. They were taller than the Negritos. They had wider bodies. They had wide foreheads. They wore better clothes.

Malays were brown in color. They were not so short and not so tall. They had black hair and eyes. They had small bodies. Like the Negritos, they had small and flat noses, too.<sup>13</sup>

In subsequent lessons throughout the school years this picture is elaborated. The Indonesians are divided into types A and B which came at different times. The Malays became separate groups, each coming in a different boat (*barangay*) with different linguistic characteristics. This explains the various languages and cultures of the Philippines. Finally, upon reaching grade 7, every schoolchild knows that he has 40 percent Malay blood in his veins, 30 percent Indonesian, 10 percent Negrito, 10 percent Chinese, 5 percent Hindu, 2 percent Arab, and 3 percent European and American. This interesting cocktail explains his native qualities. Malay blood is particularly freedom-loving. The Hindi strain is fatalistic. The Chinese are frugal and the

12. L. R. Constantino, "Nationalism as the Core Value," in *Issues Without Tears* 6, ed. L. R. Constantino (Quezon City: Karrel Inc., 1987), p. 69.

13. N. Carmona-Potenciano and T. T. Battad, *Our Country and Its People* 1 (Manila: Bookmark, 1987), pp. 3-5.

Spanish are proud and deeply religious. The American is democratic and efficient.

This knowledge should ensure "that every Filipino shall become conscious and aware of his roots and feel proud about it" in order that he will "make his country great" and "preserve the greatness of his race." So at least it is stated in the Preface of the series.

It is of course not the question here whether the legendary origins of the Filipinos can stand the test of historical scrutiny (they can not),<sup>14</sup> but whether this mixture can inspire a feeling of rootedness and pride. The rootedness is said to be found in "our permanent Malayan heritage" which forms the deeper basis of contemporary Filipino civilization. This heritage is obviously in need of improvement, since it seems to imply that all good things have been brought to the Philippines by strangers.<sup>15</sup>

The texts clearly assert that the various strains of blood are also the transmitters of qualities:

Ten percent of the blood that flows in our veins is Chinese. This must be the reason why our people have acquired the Chinese qualities of frugality, patience, humility, industry, and devotion to family.<sup>16</sup>

Apart from blood and innate qualities of foreign origin, Hindus, Arabs, Chinese, and Japanese also brought their culture:

Through these Hindu-Malayan empires the culture of India flowed into the Philippines. Our barangay system was of Indian origin. So were the titles of nobility . . . Our ancient system of writing was believed to be of Indian origin. About twenty-five percent of the Tagalog dialect was derived from the Sanskrit . . . Our longest epic, the *Darangan*, is Indian in plot and characterization. . . . Many of our superstitions came from India. . . . Our metalwork, weapons, and armors were influenced by India. From the

14. Inspired by and suspicious of the common pre-Spanish historical content of the school texts, Scott sifted myth from history. He found "a considerable discrepancy between what is actually known about the prehispanic Philippines and what has been written about it. . . . Part is due to honest error like mistranslation from foreign languages, and part to innocent misuse of historic data . . . as well as several spectacular cases of deliberate fraud which were endorsed by a competent American scholar who should have known better. . . . acceptance may have been made all the more ready by varying degrees of disinterest in a primitive past and a reluctance to recognize a common cultural heritage. . . . and the evident determination to preserve it (dubious or even dishonest scholarship) unemended for Philippine posterity." W. H. Scott, *Prehispanic Source Materials for the Study of Philippine History* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1984 [rev. ed.]).

15. Leogardo and Navarro, *Challenges in Philippine Community Life*, p. 124.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

Chinese our ancestors learned the use of porcelain ware, umbrellas, gongs, silver and other metals. Our ancestors also learned from them the art of metallurgy . . . , mining, some industrial arts, and the manufacture of gunpowder and other weapons. . . . Many of our customs, such as the arrangement of marriages by the parents, the employment of a go-between in marital negotiations, the respect of our children for parents and elders, the veneration of ancestors are Chinese origin, too.<sup>17</sup>

Whatever the contact, Filipinos learned and others taught them. From the Japanese "our ancestors also learned the important industry of breeding ducks and fish for export."<sup>18</sup> Even during the Pacific War the Japanese were apt teachers for "the Filipinos learned to cook Japanese foods such as sukiyaki, tempura, sashimi and many others. We learned to eat raw vegetable, meat and fish from the Japanese."<sup>19</sup> The great happening in Philippine cultural history was the arrival of the Spaniards.

As long as we Filipinos remain Christians we shall always remain indebted to Spain. Christianity is Spain's most lasting heritage to our people. Christian virtues have elevated our way of life and our ideals. The Spaniards enriched our culture. By absorbing the best and the beautiful of Spanish culture, we have become the most socially advanced of the Asiatic peoples who have shaken off western rule. We have learned much of the sciences, arts, and letters from the Spaniards. The Spaniards also taught us an advanced system of government and laws. Spain was responsible for the geographical boundaries of the Philippines today.<sup>20</sup>

The great blessing the Philippines enjoyed was the privilege of being conquered and colonized by the Americans.

But soon the Americans won the friendship and cooperation of the Filipinos. Unlike other colonial powers, America preached as well as practiced democracy in the Philippines. Realizing that the aspiration of the Filipinos was for independence, America set upon herself the task of teaching the Filipinos the art of self-government. . . .

We shall always associate America with democracy. We are forever indebted to her for our democratic system of government and laws. Because America trained us in self-government, the Philippines has become the outpost of democracy in the Orient. . . .

The American occupation brought about material prosperity never before enjoyed by our people. The standard of living was improved. The Filipinos

17. Ibid., pp. 119-20.

18. Ibid., p. 121.

19. J. A. Alcala, T. M. Anastacio, and M. C. Antoja, *Our Country and Its People 4* (Manila: Bookmark, 1986), p. 197.

20. Leogardo and Navarro, *Challenges in Philippine Community Life*, p. 127.



took to the American way of life as ducks took to water. The Filipinos became Americanized and were proud of it.<sup>21</sup>

In this "they-taught-we-learned" presentation of culture the Filipino with his "permanent Malayan heritage" disappears. To be Filipino is not good enough. He stands naked and in need of being dressed in foreign gear. Even for qualities that he most certainly had before alleged or actual culture contact took place, he must feel dependent, indebted, and grateful to others. To the Chinese for close family ties, to the Hindus for being superstitious, to the Spaniards for Christian virtues, and to the Americans for learning to take care of his own affairs. Everybody brought things to the Philippines and nobody is apparently interested in the idea that the pre-Spanish Filipinos sailed the South China Sea in all directions, trading with the Moluccas, Malaca, Champa, and southern China, and that they might have discovered and developed things for and by themselves.<sup>22</sup>

From the way prehistory, ethnic origins and cultural history are presented in the textbooks, it should be clear that the past is veiled in vagueness and offers little to identify with. The teaching of national history is not much different. It allows for little or no controversy and is basically the view of history that the Americans saw fit to spread.<sup>23</sup>

This view is represented by Zaide whose works have dominated the content of history and social science textbooks since the American period. Basically his recording of the Spanish period is colonial, focusing on the Spaniards in the Philippines. Zaide is critical of Spanish abuses, maladministration, exploitation and suppression in his tracing of the origins of Filipino nationalism. The revolution against Spain is amply elaborated upon, and in the last editions, the revolution against the Americans gets some space. Yet the picture of the American period is one of progress and prosperity, culminating in the grant of independence in 1946.<sup>24</sup>

Social movements, farmers' protests, the emergence of a national elite, and the practice of politics are neither mentioned nor analyzed. Zaide avoids anything that could be controversial. The same goes for the discussion of the period after 1946. The manipulation of internal and external policies by the United States, the perversity of Philippine politics and elections, the subversion of democracy, the reasons for

21. Ibid., pp. 130-32.

22. W. H. Scott, *Prehispanic Source Materials*.

23. R. Constantino, "The Continuing Miseducation of the Filipino," in Education Forum, ed., *Towards Relevant Education*, p. 40.

24. G. F. Zaide, *Philippine History* (Manila: National Bookstore, 1984 [updated ed.]).

rural unrest, and anything else that could be provocative and that would stimulate pupils to take a stand or identify with, and teach them to view society historically and sociologically, is sidestepped if mentioned at all.<sup>25</sup>

Few are the students who study Renato Constantino's *The Philippines: A Past Revisited*.<sup>26</sup> This book, written from a "nationalist" perspective provides the antidote to the colonial view of the other texts. It offers history with a purpose. From a historical point of view, Constantino's interpretations often do not seem to hold water,<sup>27</sup> yet their merit is that they stimulate debate and controversy, thus developing a sense of historicity and a taste for social analysis.

#### THE PERVERSION OF A NATIONAL HERO

Before doing any research about the Philippines, I had read Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* (1887) which I appreciated as a well-written book and penetrating social analysis of Philippine society under late Spanish colonial rule.<sup>28</sup> I likened this work to Sriburapha's *Lae pai khangna* (1955-57) and Pramoedya Ananta Toer's *Bumi manusia*<sup>29</sup> and wondered why Rizal was so much ahead of his time compared with other socially critical Southeast Asian authors.<sup>30</sup>

Without venturing to answer that question here, the reasons for Rizal's contribution are more than the facts that he wrote novels and treatises, knew many languages, was an outstanding physician, and critical of Spanish rule. His greatness is primarily in his intellectual stature, in his perceptive mind which reacted creatively to his confrontation with Europe. He was the first to formulate the nature of colonial rule, its blunt and subtle mechanisms of dominion, and the insult it perpetrated against the humanity of both rulers and ruled. In that respect he was the first among the great Asian nationalists, ahead of Sun Yat Sen, Gandhi, Tagore, Nehru and Sukarno.<sup>31</sup>

25. Ibid.

26. L. R. Constantino, *The Philippines: A Past Revisited* (Manila: the author, 1975).

27. L. R. Constantino, "Nationalism as the Core Value," pp. 3-24.

28. Jose Rizal (Berlin, 1887).

29. Sriburapha, *Lae pai Khangna* (Look Forward), 1, 2 (Bangkok, Wangna, 1978). Pramoedya A. Toer, *Bumi manusia: sebuah roman* (This Earth of Mankind) (Jakarta: Hasta Mitra, 1979).

30. Niels Mulder, "Individual and Society in Contemporary Thailand and Java: An Anthropologist's Comparison of Modern Serious Fiction," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 14/2 (1983): 312-27; and N. Mulder, *Individual and Society in Java: A Cultural Analysis* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1989), p. 126.

31. Austin Coates, *Rizal: Philippine Nationalist and Martyr* (Hong Kong, etc.: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. xxvi-vii, 351-52.

In the Philippines however, Rizal is considered only as a national hero and his message is looked upon as an anti-Spanish stance that is not really relevant for understanding the present. Before I was conscious of this, I naively asked how it could be possible that Rizal was taught during the days of martial law. In Thailand Sriburapha's novel was banned during the days of military rule and Toer's writings are still categorically forbidden in Indonesia. So how could notoriously subversive texts like the *Noli* and *Fili* (Rizal 1891)<sup>32</sup> be studied in a repressive dictatorship like that of Ferdinand Marcos?

The people who answered my question were amazed. There was nothing controversial about Rizal, they said, at least not since the passing of the Rizal Bill of 1956 that made the novels compulsory reading in high school and college. At that time the Catholic hierarchy of the Philippines passionately opposed the required reading of Rizal's books because it felt them to be offensive to the faith.<sup>33</sup> But since then the books have been standard fare and nobody takes offense at their message.

The reasons for this may be that, whereas Rizal wrote his novels as social analysis, his works are taught as literature, and whereas he wrote in Spanish, his novels are used to teach Tagalog, the national language which is also known as Filipino or Pilipino. In this way the heritage of Rizal which should inspire self-confidence and pride is subverted. While every schoolchild in the Philippines knows that Rizal was killed on 30 December 1896 at Bagumbayan field, the exposure to Rizal is generally negatively appreciated by the students.

#### A NEGATIVE SELF-IMAGE

While the lower grades in Philippine schools emphasize respectful manners, gratefulness, obedience, helpfulness, love of parents, dependence on God, and similar positive traits, as early as the fifth grade, negativism about their own qualities filters in when children have to study statements like the following:

Our ancestors during the Spanish time were more industrious and patient to the existing problems. These can be attributed to the truth that our ancestors were trained to work hard even before the coming of the

32. J. Rizal (Ghent, 1891).

33. S. H. S. Totanes, "The Historical Impact of the *Noli Me Tangere* and the *El Filibusterismo*," in S. S. Reyes, ed. *The Noli Me Tangere, A Century After: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* (Budhi Papers No. 7), pp. 24-25.

Spaniards. They believed that laziness is detrimental to the progress of a country.<sup>34</sup>

Even in presidential speeches Filipinos are constantly reminded that they are lazy and should work hard if their country is to prosper. Whether Filipinos are like the proverbial *Juan Tamad* (Lazy Juan) is beside the point. The point is that they are taught that they are.<sup>35</sup>

There is a shift of focus from laziness to bad working habits between the fifth grade and the third year of high school when pupils learn about socioeconomic development and progress. A few chapters on the relationship between the economy and culture belong to the required curriculum. These chapters are invariably comparative, contrasting the work ethics of Americans, Japanese and Germans with Filipino working habits that are characterized as:

Do not work hard; *ningas kugon* (never finishing a project); *mañana* habit (postponing); sacrifice work just to meet social obligations; absenteeism; lack pride in work; work just to please the boss; the quality of work is inferior; spend money recklessly, then borrow.<sup>36</sup>

A few pages further on nepotism, submissiveness, dependency, and the willingness to accept corruption are added as deeply ingrained traits leading to economic retardation. This interesting tendency toward self-flagellation increases while moving up the ladder of formal education. In Manuel Garcia's popular sociology text for college one can read that Filipinos are:

irresponsible, imitative, improvident and indolent; they dislike manual labour; their government is corrupt and serves foreigners; they are not self-respecting, not self-reliant and have an inferiority complex. Moreover, they are the laughing stock of Asia.<sup>37</sup>

34. N. C. Potenciano and M. O. Anda, *Our Country and Its People* 5 (Manila: Bookmark, 1987), p. 180.

35. It is of interest to note that the individual self-perception about laziness is at odds with what is being taught about a national self-image. In the view of young students, Filipinos are not lazy (M. L. C. Doronila, "The Socialization of Students into a National Identity Through the Public Elementary School System: A Case Study and Analysis," *Occasional Papers* 2, Education Resource Center, 1986, p. 31). According to Heiko Schulze, who interviewed college students in Lucena, they perceive themselves as diligent. It is the unknown others (peasants, civil servants) whom they characterize as lazy (interview held in 1989).

36. J. B. Bilasano and T. Abellera, *Socio-economic Development and Progress* (Quezon City: Educational Resources Corp., 1987), pp. 62-63.

37. Culled from the text of the 1987 (1988?) edition while in the Philippines. Since the book got lost in the mail, it was unavailable to me at the time of writing and thus the reference is not precise.

Whether a student has an inferiority complex before studying such texts, chances are that such readings become self-fulfilling prophecies. When I asked about this, textbook writers told me that a concept of national development is behind all this. If Filipinos would become aware of their weaknesses and know why others succeed, they might change their ways. A similar opinion is voiced in the "Shahani Paper" and is also the basis of the courses in "Values Education" that are supposed to remedy attitudes.<sup>38</sup>

Granted that the possibilities of teaching and learning sociological insights are very limited in the short span of ten years from elementary to high school, social science teaching should at least provide the background that allows for the critical reading of a newspaper. Yet most students who finish college have not been prepared for simple social analysis. Thus the wider world they live in remains vague.

The social facts that are presented in elementary school always seem to belong to a world that is in the best of order. Laws are for the good of all and are strictly imposed; minors are protected and beer should not be served to them; firearms are deposited at the counter upon entering a bank; the police are helpful; professionals, community leaders, politicians, civil servants, and judges are honest, efficient, and reliable in serving the public; people pay their taxes with a smile, so that the government may improve roads, provide electricity and water, build fine schools, and housing, provide full employment, and stimulate cultural and recreational facilities.<sup>39</sup>

The problem with this picture is that it does not apply to the world the children live in. On the other side of the school fence, traffic laws are not "strictly imposed"; some of the stores opposite the school serve beer to truant pupils in school uniform; the policeman is probably preying on jeepney drivers and he is certainly not very helpful; physicians charge stiff fees, community leaders and politicians are boastful and effective only if one has leverage or good personal connections, etc. Government services are poor and poorly developed,

38. In September 1987, Senator Leticia Ramos-Shahani proposed to conduct an "inquiry into the weaknesses of the character of the Filipino with a view to strengthen the nation's moral fiber." This resulted in the "Shahani Report," officially known as "A Moral Recovery Program: Building a People—Building a Nation" (May 1988). According to the report written by Ateneo de Manila and University of the Philippines social scientists, Filipinos lack patriotism and national pride, a sense of the common good, a sense of integrity, the values of discipline and self-reflection (p. 20). These deficiencies should be changed into positive values and mainly cultural strategies to that purpose are proposed.

39. J. A. Alcala and R. M. Milambiling, *Our Country and Its People 6* (Manila: Bookmark, 1987), pp. 96–99.

and instead of adequate recreational facilities one is more frequently confronted with the private initiative of the *basketbolan*. Therefore the pupils' conclusion may be that what they have to study in school has little to do with their everyday experiences.

In high school and college certain environmental, cultural, governmental, demographic and developmental problems are introduced. Yet, these problems are never discussed in the context of the political economy of the country. Consequently root causes cannot be identified and the basic political problems of the Philippines are not recognized. In other words, because a sociostructural context is not developed, problems are presented in a pick-and-choose (*turu-turo*) manner and seem to exist in a vacuum. Questions are neither posed nor can they be answered. For example, why does the country import rice? Why are apples cheaper than mangoes? Why is there a civil war raging in the country? Why is society so violent? Why are so many people so very poor? Why are children in Negros starving? The textbooks do not provide a basis to move on to serious analysis and do not develop the conceptual tools necessary for insight in societal processes.

This type of social studies teaching may exacerbate the persistence of one of the most outstanding problems of contemporary Filipino civilization, namely, the apparent absence of the ideas of common weal, nation state, and the generalized other. Formal education does little to remedy this nonarticulation of the public realm. The student is not made to feel a part of it and his perception of the outer world beyond home, school and immediate community, remains vague and somewhat irrelevant. The rhetoric of politics and good government that people are confronted with, seems to fit the outside world best. Land reform, national recovery, inflation, military bases, internecine warfare in the Senate, or just the potholes in the street, the traffic jams and the failing telephone system, all seem to be so much greater than man.

#### AN EVALUATION

A few days after the proclamation of martial law (1972), an Education Development Plan was enacted. With it went a textbook project (1976), financed by the government and the World Bank. One of the main thrusts of this project would be "reform directed at problems of national identity."<sup>40</sup> Consequently books were written that should make Filipinos conscious and proud of their roots.

40. M.L.C. Doronila, "The Nature, Organization and Sources of Students' National Identity Orientations," in *Towards Relevant Education*, ed. Education Forum, 1986, pp. 54.

But it would seem to me that the problems of Philippine national identity are far from being solved, unless by national identity is meant a confusion of roots and a bastardization of descent, a colonial mentality forever indebted for the material benefits, blessings, and civilization that foreigners brought,<sup>41</sup> the near absence of a historical consciousness, the perversion of the ideas of a great man, a negative self-image eternally in the shadow of the great qualities of others, and a very vague (if any) identification with the encompassing state. It may not be impossible that Filipinos become conscious of their roots, but whether it will inspire pride remains to be seen.

This was precisely one of the things that Doronila wanted to find out in her research projects that aimed at measuring national identity formation. Her conclusions were depressingly negative, "if these young students had their way, they would rather be citizens of another country."<sup>42</sup> The students were characterized by a high consciousness of other countries, an implicit acknowledgement of these countries' superiority in various areas and perhaps even an identification with them. From this she concluded that instead of a national identity, it is the colonial mentality which remains firmly embedded in the respondents' consciousness and that "independence of mind and spirit" is largely missing from the Filipino self-concept.<sup>43</sup>

It seems that the purpose of positive national identity formation has largely been missed and that whatever identity we find among the Philippine school youth of the period after 1972 is almost the opposite of the fervently nationalistic student generation that staged the so-called first quarter storm.<sup>44</sup> The succeeding generation of martial law babies, that is, those who received all or most of their schooling from 1972 up to 1986, often appears to be a dull lot whose consciousness about social issues has been blunted.<sup>45</sup>

41. This bastardization of the heritage on the basis of the speculations of Dr. H. Otley Beyer, the all-overshadowing dean of Philippine anthropological studies (Scott, *Prehispanic Source Materials*, p. 140), drew the ire of Professor Paz Policarpio Mendez in "Ang Sikolohiyang Pilipino at ang Edukasyon" (in *Sikolohiyang Pilipino: Teorya, Metodo at Gamit*, R. Pe-Pua, ed. [Quezon City: Philippine Psychology Research and Training House, 1982]). It is ironic that in the first sentence of this article she regrets that the Bureau of Education and Culture is now run by Filipinos, in contrast to her school days under the Americans. Here references are clearly pre-1972.

42. Doronila, "Nature, Organization and Sources," p. 77.

43. Doronila, "The Socialization of Students," pp. 25-26.

44. Jose F. Lacaba, *Days of Disquiet, Nights of Rage* (Manila: Asphodel Books, 1986).

45. During my field research, I gained these impressions from interviews with members of the martial law generation. My evaluation agreed with the opinion of their university and college teachers. To this filmmaker Marilou Diaz-Abaya observed, "Another problem is that most of our audience are between the ages of seven and twenty-one.

The arguments for educational reform that come from the side of Education Forum, a task force committed to nationalist and people-oriented education, are directed against the foreign domination of the economy and culture of the Philippines.<sup>46</sup> Education Forum's thinking is clearly Constantino-inspired and presupposes an intimate relationship between a society's economic basis and the culture/consciousness that it produces.<sup>47</sup> In this approach education becomes the handmaiden of an economic policy that is characterized by export orientation, hospitality to foreign investment, the growth of capitalist agriculture as an adjunct to TNC's (transnational companies) "free trade," a free floating currency and dependence on loans from international institutions.<sup>48</sup>

This handmaiden function of education is underscored by the Education Act of 1982 which specifies that education in public and private schools must support the national development plan.<sup>49</sup> Consequently the Department of Education, Culture, and Sports (DECS) strives to improve education by inculcating in the young adherence to government concepts of material development and by training the required manpower. No wonder that the World Bank is interested in textbook development projects!

The national development policy and program requires a docile labor force that is politically naive, economically unenlightened, uncritical of foreign domination, and submissive to elite leadership. This is what World Bank-sponsored and Ministry-approved textbooks for social studies try to achieve. Such books shy away from analysis, promote a bogus nationalism based on folklore, national costumes,

These are children and adolescents who have known no other society or regime than that established by Marcos. And because of the decade of repression and oppression, they went through an education that is largely and rigidly restricted to those favorable to the government. The curiosity level of the audience has sunk to an unbelievably low level. Nobody is curious about anything, there is no intellectual challenge for them. They have no historical or cultural perspective" (M. D. Abaya, "On Filmmaking in the Philippines," in *Culture and Technological Development in Southeast Asia*, eds. B. Dahm and G. Link [Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1988], p. 75). For perceptive literary descriptions of the mental climate under martial law, see Lualhati Bautista, *Dekada '70* (Manila: Carmelo and Bauermann Printing Corp., 1988). Jun Cruz Reyes, *Tutubi, tutubi, 'wag kang magpahuli sa mamang salbahe* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1987).

46. Education Forum, *Towards Relevant Education.*, inside cover.

47. Renato Constantino, "Identity and Consciousness: The Philippine Experience," in *Neocolonial Identity and Counter-consciousness*, ed. R. Constantino (London: The Merlin Press, 1978), pp. 25-92.

48. L. R. Constantino, "Education, Handmaiden of Economic Policy," in *Issues Without Tears* 3, (Quezon City: Karrel Inc., 1984) pp. 39-40.

49. L. R. Constantino. "Educating for Nationalism," in *Issues Without Tears* 6, p. 110.



and cultural uniqueness, while avoiding all discussion of political and economic nationalism.<sup>50</sup>

The image that is disseminated promotes popular half truths, such as, foreign investment is developmental, foreign business creates employment, big nations are like helpful elder brothers vis-a-vis small developing countries, etc. The onesidedness of the presentation becomes very clear in things that are closer to home. The discussion of tourism emphasizes the beauty of the country, not the spreading of venereal disease and child prostitution. The export of labor is praised as a precious dollar earner and the sacrifice of those who go to work in the Middle East is hailed as developmental heroism, again because of the foreign exchange it brings in. The insult to and exploitation of Philippine labor is never mentioned, nor are the pains of separation and broken homes. Export processing zones are developmental paradises, never mind the environment. Miracle rice is the solution to agricultural problems, never mind the pesticides, fertilizers, and property relationships.<sup>51</sup>

The reality of human right violations, vigilante death squads and civil war is covered up by the rhetoric about the rule of law. The reality of neocolonialism is called democratic revolution, economic exploitation becomes aid and assistance, the extreme maldistribution of income and privilege is buried under a picture of national unity. Elitist education is presented as the blessing of bilingualism, and free trade policy is justified in the name of the international division of labor.

The committed nationalists of the Education Forum are of course very conscious of the magnitude of the task to reform education in an essentially conservative social environment that has been brainwashed into the ideology of neocolonialism and that is characterized by a colonial mentality. Moreover, almost no member of the decision-making elite has any interest in changing things. The members of the Education Forum however try to push ahead by developing alternative instructional materials (AIM) and reeducating teachers through seminars and a teacher assistance program (TAP) that issues the enlightening series, *Issues Without Tears, A Layman's Manual of Current Issues*.<sup>52</sup>

50. L. R. Constantino, "Educating for Dependence," in *Issues Without Tears* 5, pp. 47-53.

51. These, and the following observations about the presentation of textbook content, have been culled from the various publications of L. R. Constantino, Doronila, and Constantino, 1986. See references.

52. L.R. Constantino, ed., *Issues Without Tears, A Layman's Manual of Current Issues* (Quezon City: Karrel Inc.).

It is ironical that the very theory of the relationship between an economic base and education/cultural development that the Education Forum espouses, must preclude the success of its endeavors, at the same time that its anti-elitist stance alienates it from the people whom they need most, namely, those who have the power of making political decisions and are in control of symbolic production. To this comes the polemical style of the nationalist discussion that does not make friends in a society that cherishes good form and the avoidance of confrontation.

Yet the Education Forum, which is an organization of the Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines, is not exactly advocating the revolution, although social transformation is its aim. One of the means toward that transformation appears to be cultural engineering, such as the raising of historical consciousness, consciousness of the Philippine predicament as a neocolony, its place in the world capitalist economy and the consequences thereof for its social order. Such consciousness is essentially a counter-consciousness, an alternative way of thinking about a historical situation that suppresses social justice, nationalism, and pride.<sup>53</sup>

DECS is of course not so convinced about the rootedness of Filipino values in a historical situation and would rather make a direct approach through values education that aims at "re-aligning his (the Filipino's) basic life values and . . . restructuring his priorities in order to function effectively in a genuine and lasting democracy."<sup>54</sup>

*The democratic way of life for the Filipino will survive if it can be sustained by those same values that gave it birth: that it be a democracy solidly anchored on the supreme and inviolable value of the person of the Filipino, that this personhood continue to be nurtured within the family that is a community of genuine love shared with the larger world outside, and that this person keep his abiding faith in his God.*<sup>55</sup>

Leaving rhetoric aside, the approach to instill the necessary values should stress "the process of the total-person experiential learning and growth" and not rely on the traditional cognitive aspects of learning that handled values as an information or concept course.<sup>56</sup> This traditional approach is apparent from the values education that is offered in the school books. Values are presented as rules that lie outside the self and that are not anchored in a social context either, such as:

53. M. L. C. Doronila, "Values Education," in *Issues Without Tears* 6, p. 59.

54. A. V. Ulgado, "Towards a Basic Education for Democracy of the Filipino at the Turn of the Century," 1987, first page.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid., second page.

Respect the elders. Obey your parents. Help take care of your younger brothers and sisters. Help in doing some household chores. Keep things in their proper order. Maintain proper behavior in school. Always study your lessons. Maintain silence in the library. Learn to wait for your turn. Take good care of school properties. Respect and obey the school personnel. Cross the street properly. Use the pedestrian lane. Help keep the surroundings clean. Throw the garbage in the trash can. Always clean your backyard. Follow traffic rules and signals. Always obey signs. Help in making our community clean. Always respect the rights of others.<sup>57</sup>

The idea of values education is not new, and while the newest idea of DECS is to implement a "person-centered, family-life oriented" program of education,<sup>58</sup> previous programs were directed at economic growth and the development of human resources, and earlier still at creating good colonials or good members of the Spanish guided Roman Catholic church, characterized by resignation, obedience, and endurance. The values education programs of the past seventeen years typically developed from a hypothetical self-image characterized by "passivity," "materialism," and "small-group mentality." Consequently,

Our family should not train its members to depend always on others, to be passive to authority, and to conform to society, but should teach them instead to be self-reliant, to assert their rights, and to remain steadfast in their convictions and principles. . . . Our family should also guard itself against consumerism, excessive spending, and developing a colonial mentality. A fierce pride for Filipino products and culture should also be inculcated.<sup>59</sup>

The locus of the negative (and the positive) values appears to be the family as a self-sufficient universe that exists free from a wider social context. Thus, "Finally, our family should learn to think of itself as a member of other groups—the school, the community, the nation, the human race, and the People of God."<sup>60</sup> The key, therefore, to a desirable society seems to lie in the development of the consciousness of belonging together, of being part of an encompassing whole.

57. Carmona-Potenciano and Battad, *Our Country and Its People* 1, pp. 179–84.

58. Ulgado, last page.

59. "How Valuable, the Philippine Value System," in *Signal, A Primer on Social Issues*, *Signal No. 1* (experimental edition, 1985), forelast page. The two articles (Ulgado and *Signal*, no page numbers) in which the latest DECS approach to values education is explained are part of the materials that were distributed by the Department at its reorientation workshops in 1988. These workshops in values education were meant for those selected teachers who are expected to train their colleagues in turn.

60. *Ibid.*

The DECS current integrated social science curriculum does not seem to inspire convincing feelings of national identity, of belonging together. The teaching about the social world sidesteps historical and theoretical social analysis, thereby disjoining society. This disintegration is reinforced by the teaching of an individual-centered ethic that presents good behavior as the following of rules that are devoid of reason. While the Education Forum possibly exaggerates that culture is a mere dependent variable of the political economy that needs to be changed before consciousness can change, the person-centered DECS approach to value change is even less convincing. One may still wonder whether the formation of a counter-consciousness is the necessary and sufficient condition to create a vitalizing sense of identity, pride, and nation, or whether there are other ways to build a sense of community and self-confident nationalism.

For the time being, DECS holds the key to curriculum content and there is much that can be improved, in spite of World Bank supervised textbook projects or the official rhetoric about values education. To begin with, it might help if Filipino children were taught less nonsense about themselves. What is the use of studying historical fantasies about waves of migration and percentage points of blood that bastardize descent or about the gifts bestowed by all kinds of foreigners that hybridize culture? Filipinos are pictured as passive receivers and imitators, forever indebted to others who are greater and more advanced.

Why is it necessary to teach a negative self-image? Why destroy Rizal in school? Why such uninspired teaching of history? Why present a vague, fake world that belies reality? If the Education Forum is right, and if World Bank assistance is all that perfidious, DECS will not change anything, but will continue to present society as an aggregate of individuals to which history happens and where persons are individually responsible for the mess they are in. With so little to identify with, it may still be a long way before Filipinos imagine themselves as a community, as a living nation.<sup>61</sup>

61. B. R. O'G. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Ed., 1985).