

# genuine antagonisms and the right use of reason

conditions to genuine democracy in kant

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## Abstract

This paper explores the difference between *realizing democracy* and *learning democracy* to explain the disparity between the *political experience* of the people and the *political system* that governs them. It introduces the idea that genuine democracy is *realized* only through the indispensable dialectic between a developed *enlightened reason* that recognizes human value and individual liberty, and the *moral obligation against social injustices* that violate human dignity as a *moral imperative*. First, it argues that reason is a natural predisposition which needs to be developed. Thus human reason has been used from its crude forms to conditions of genuine freedom from instinct. Kant insists that the development in the use of reason is brought about by the *unsociable sociability* of the human person as a natural social condition. Second, political systems develop relative to the development of reason among the species. Thus it suggests that democracy is a fruit of a later development in the use of reason. And third, this paper concludes therefore that Philippine democracy does not accord the people with the benefits of its liberal principles because the people lack the proper reason to understand it, and the strength of moral will to establish it.

## Keywords

Philippine democracy, Kant, sociality, political systems



... how can they be granted liberty? With Spain or without Spain they would be the same, and perhaps, perhaps, worse without her! Why should we be independent if the slaves of today are to be the tyrants of tomorrow?

--Padre Florentino, *El Filibusterismo*

## Introduction

Democracy has been considered, so far, as the ideal political system that could give the utmost human good to all members of the state who are all considered equal—that secular value system which upholds the unity of mankind, the importance of tolerance, personal freedom, knowledge, education, and equal opportunity.<sup>1</sup> John Locke defined it as “. . . the system of government of which sovereign power resides in the people, but where respect for the wishes of the majority is balanced by the respect for the rule of law, human rights, and regard for the rights of minorities.”<sup>2</sup>

The Philippines has been democratic since the establishment of the Malolos Republic in 1898 making her the first Republic in Asia, and the first country in Asia to be voluntarily decolonized by a foreign power in 1946 after America granted her independence.<sup>3</sup> Be that as it may, the people do not seem to enjoy the full benefits of this liberal system compared to other democracies. Filipinos fear their leaders despite the apparent corruption in which they would rather participate than avoid as in the presence of *jueteng* and rampant *vote buying*. Political families extend powers over their relatives while the people either thrive due to political connections or cower under a mere name even when they are oppressed. Procedures and protocols are circumvented at the behest of a ruling bureaucracy. Accused politicians bravely face the law even when guilty and still find ways to win the case in their favor and even get elected for another term or position. Elections are rigged in many ways even before COC's are filed when a strong opponent is bought off in favor of the incumbent's last term. Filipinos consider themselves lucky to shake hands with a politician that the experience usually is worth noting at homes. This political behavior of the governed very much resembles the bygone attitudes of unworthy

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<sup>1</sup> Roy Porter, *The Enlightenment, Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London, England: Penguin Books, 2000), Introduction, xxii.

<sup>2</sup> Dick Taverne, *The March of Unreason: Science, Democracy, and the New Fundamentalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 18.

<sup>3</sup> Jose S. Arcilla, S.J., *An Introduction to Philippine History*, 4th Edition (Loyola Heights, Quezon City: Ateneo De Manila University Press, 2003).

subjects in the presence of a sovereign monarch. So the people appear to be democratic in form but monarchic by experience. The experience of the people is incongruent to the basic principles upheld by the political system that governs them.

This paper would like to point out that this disparity between the system and the experience of the people is due to the process by which the Filipinos achieved democracy. There is a big difference between *realizing democracy* and *learning democracy*. Democracy is a fruit of a development in the use of human reason gained from years of political experience of tyranny, injustice, and rule of the elite at the expense of the poor majority amidst the enlightenment realization of human equality. It can never be bestowed as in a grant, and neither can it be acquired through training or education. The problem with Philippine democracy is not in its formal definition but in the kind of people in the system whose *political maturity* does not coincide with the *political system*. To leave each person in a democratic system at the hands of their own counsel is liberating to those living under conditions of genuine freedom but fatal to the politically immature whose pretense for freedom cannot be trusted. The good democratic principles intend is not guaranteed in the hands of a crude people. Every rational formula, even if civilized in form, can be turned to benefit the few at the expense of the powerless majority.

Realized democracy has pre-requisites. I would like to introduce in this paper the idea that genuine democracy is *realized* through the indispensable dialectic between a developed *enlightened reason* that recognizes human value and individual liberty, and the *moral obligation against social injustices* that violate human dignity as a *moral imperative*. By indispensable it means that, an enlightened reason cannot tolerate any social injustice, and any person who is morally obliged against social injustice cannot but have an enlightened reason. It is a *dialectic* because it cannot be established that enlightened reason precedes moral obligation against social injustice or vice-versa. It is true that moral obligation against social injustice can only be recognized by an enlightened reason owing to the historical fact that people once ago blindly followed the dictates of hierarchies backed by tradition that was never questioned. Only enlightened reason suspected tradition. Nevertheless, it is also true that civil strife has its own way of laying the foundations of a rational awakening to enlightenment. Negation has always been a catalyst for genuine progress. Wolfgang Schivelbusch cites Reinhart Koselleck:

There is something to the hypothesis that being forced to draw new and difficult lessons from history yields insights of longer validity and thus greater explanatory power. History may in the short term be made by the victors, but historical

wisdom is in the long run enriched more by the vanquished. . . . Being defeated appears to be an inexhaustible wellspring of intellectual progress.<sup>4</sup>

*Enlightened reason* is the realization that the human person is rational, giving any person an individual capacity and inherent potential to know the truth without the force, threat, and limits of *tradition*. History shows that liberal ideas on human freedom, equality, opportunity, inductive knowledge, and right to education drastically challenged Church authority in the Reformation, reformed the State and ended Monarchy, and changed the larger agricultural-based Economy into the mechanized system of fast-paced Industrialization. The concomitant realization of enlightened reason is the moral obligation against unjust systems in the past. The concept of civil freedom in democracy is not a direct fruit of reason alone but of insight arising from the *experience* of civil strife, oppression, inequality, and injustice that go against the inherent dignity of the human person. It is important to note that prior to enlightenment reason the people accepted these systems as proper—even God-ordained—and thus not regarded as unjust and oppressive. *Democracy* was realized at the cost of death and social strife and its proponents, under threats of persecution, empowered the people—who are by themselves are enlightened—to rise against injustice not merely because these people understood the democratic system theoretically but because they, themselves, had been in so much unbearable injustice.

Class struggles, civil strife, oppressive systems, inequality among peoples, along with enlightened reason pushed societies to realize *individual liberty* and *equality*, and to achieve it even at the expense of lives. The Greeks, for example, had to face wars and antagonisms to have Pericles—the symbol of Athenian Democracy—describe the Athenian Democratic ideal<sup>5</sup> which is quite far from the Filipino democratic experience. The Roman *Law of Twelve Tables* arose out of the class struggle between the plebeians and

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<sup>4</sup> Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat* (New York: Metropolitan Books Henry Holt and Company, LLC, 2003), 4.

<sup>5</sup> The following is an excerpt from Pericles' speech: "We are called a democracy, for the administration is in the hands of the many and not of the few. But while the law secures equal justice to all alike in their private disputes, the claim of excellence is also recognized; and when a citizen is in any way distinguished, he is [selected for] public service . . . as the reward of merit. Neither is poverty a bar, but a man may benefit his country whatever may be the obscurity of his condition. . . . There is no exclusiveness in our public life, and in our private intercourse we are not suspicious of one another, nor angry with our neighbor if he does what he likes, we do not put on sour looks at him which though harmless are unpleasant . . . a spirit of reverence pervades our public acts; we are prevented from doing wrong by respect for authority and for the laws. . . ." [this is shown in Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, trans. B. Jowett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1881), bk. 11, chap. 37.]

the patricians as well; the former struggle for political and social equality to establish a republican liberty<sup>6</sup>. The Medieval period is a litany of wars and antagonisms between nobles and commoners, Lords and serfs. It will be only until 1066 that William, Duke of Normandy, took hold of the English crown and laid down the *parlays*<sup>7</sup> which would later be the foundations for the establishment of the *Parliament*. How many more wars thereafter did human societies face until the Enlightenment and the American Revolution?

To understand the disparity between the experience of the Filipino people and the liberal principles of the system that governs them, the following questions then are in order: Is Filipino democracy a *realized* democracy, or was it merely handed down to them as some concept that was *learned*? Is it a product of the dialectic between enlightened reason and moral obligation against social injustice? Are they worthy to wield its power to yield its benefits to the people? Do the people lack some requirements to be able to really benefit from it? To answer these questions, I would like to explore in Immanuel Kant's work, *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim*, discussions on the teleological aim of nature on the development in the right use of reason and nature's way in developing such reason through *unsociable sociability*, which could explain the above *dialectic between enlightened reason and moral obligation against social injustice*.

This paper would like to first discuss man's rational nature and the use of reason as a human natural predisposition. Kant insists that while human reason is by nature endowed, the use of human reason is developed in time through *unsociable sociability* and never given or instinctual. Second, this paper would like to argue that the mature use of human reason has varied implications to the human world and that democracy is its concomitant political system. And third, this paper would like to argue that Philippine democracy does not seem to work according to its formal definition because it lacks the necessary pre-requisite—the mature use of human reason. A political system arising from

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<sup>6</sup> The plebeians had one power: the threat to secede from Rome; withdrawal of taxes, labor, and military service very much needed by the Roman Republic.<sup>6</sup> It is a good example of the power of the people. Both Greek democracy and Roman republic arises out of the need to establish a more just and humane society that can remedy the pervading social strife. (Both, however, were later destroyed by power seekers with personal ambitions.) This is followed by the long line of medieval monarchies originating from the Germanic tribes that settled in the territories of the Roman West after 476 AD. [This is shown in Marvin Perry et. al., *Western Civilization: Ideas, Politics, and Society*, Eighth Ed. (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 118.]

<sup>7</sup> The policy established by the Norman Kings as the process of consultation with their powerful subjects such as Archbishops, Bishops, Earls, Barons, Knights, Burgesses, including later the less-than-noble but wealthy people. The Parliament was subservient to the crown but has the right to question royal decisions. This is the growth of limited monarchy and constitutionalism in England as stated in *Western Civilization*, p. 374 [already cited].

an enlightened reason working under genuine conditions of freedom cannot work substantially to a people who merely accorded themselves such system *by definition* without the necessary pre-condition.

### **The Development in the Use of Reason**

Immanuel Kant philosophized during the rise of modern science which challenged first human traditional cosmic meaning, rendering human existence thereafter rather something cosmically displaced. The human person is no longer a creation of a supreme deity but a product of this meaningless and impersonal universe by chance. Even consciousness, which was believed to permeate the world from the very beginning, is a mere result of an evolution and a mere characteristic of an insignificant and ephemeral specie in the world—the *Homo Sapiens*. This makes the human species a highly successful animal which simply evolved ahead of the others and with a very uncertain destiny just like a number of already extinct species.<sup>8</sup> Under this deterministic worldview, Kant endeavored to situate this nonsensical course of human experience vis-à-vis *freedom of the will*. Kant wrote:

One cannot resist feeling a certain indignation when one sees their doings and refrainings on the great stage of the world and finds that despite the wisdom appearing now and then in individual cases, everything in the large is woven together out of folly, childish vanity, often also out of childish malice and the rage to destruction; so that in the end one does not know what concept to make of our own species, with its smug imaginings about its excellences.<sup>9</sup>

Kant's indignation is that, the human experience can neither fit in instinct-based nor reason-based guidelines. Kant here presented an implied dilemma. The difficulty Kant finds in understanding the human species is that, while it cannot be accepted that humans behave according to instincts alone because human individuality defy generalizations compared to animals which can be outrightly generalized, they too cannot be said to behave according to a rational plan alone as history shows lots of deviations from many rationally laid plans. Kant wants to arrive at a concept that can be used to understand the human species, which produces excellences in individual cases as in a Kepler and a Newton in his time, against the equal fact that, *on the great stage of the world*—the

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<sup>8</sup> See. Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas That Have Shaped Our Worldview* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), 326-329.

<sup>9</sup>Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, ed. Gunter Zoller and Robert Louden (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 109.

human species as a whole—everything seems to be a product of folly, vanity, malice, rage, and without reason. But instinct and reason cannot just come together.

On one hand, if humans are absolutely instinctual, then human behavior is purely deterministic and thus it must follow a natural order as in animal *cyclical* behavior. This instinct-based guideline could account for a number of generalities among the species which could actually stand as a guideline but it could not account for inherent *tangential* individualities as in large scale irregularities in human society such as excessive vanity against oppressive poverty, and evidential developments of any kind in the species like dwelling in caves to building towering sky scrapers at present. On the other hand, if human behavior is a product of reason, then it can also be determined according to rational principles evident to any rational agent. Under such reason-based guideline, rational principles inherent in every rational agent would be enough to establish order. It could account for *tangential* individualities and developments in the species, but not for irregularities that stand against the presence of reason as in *cyclical* and continuous human imperfection in varied forms. That means either *instinct* or *reason* could have produced *order*. But that is not the case with human beings who displays *freedom of the will in the light of reason* and *a-rational control by instinct in the light of teleological laws of nature* just the same. These polarities are reminiscent of the nature of the epistemological problematic of his time—empiricism (instinct-based) and idealism (reason-based); the world of *necessity* and the *freedom* within.<sup>10</sup> In like manner, Kant here will reconcile<sup>11</sup> the two by arguing that both apply in the case of the human species; from a deterministic *Aim of Nature* as a point of departure to an understanding of the concept of human *freedom of the will as Aim of Reason*.

Kant attempted to break the above dilemma by bringing the perspective *in the large*—the human species as a whole. That means to say that, the dilemma appears only in two conditions: (1) if the human species is viewed from the perspective of individual members as in the contrast between a Newton and a Hitler, and (2) if a *regular course* cannot be established if viewed in the large. Thus, Kant's project is to arrive at an idea for a universal history that could stand as a *guideline*—a *regular course*. History for Kant is the narration of the appearances of the freedom of the will among the human species.<sup>12</sup> He

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Samuel Enoch Stumpf and James Fieser, *Socrates to Sartre and Beyond: A History of Philosophy* (New York: McGraw-Hill Higher education, 2003), 282.

<sup>11</sup> This is implied when he wrote that if nature produced a Kepler who subjected the movements of the planets into determinate laws, and a Newton who established these laws according to a universal natural law of gravitation, then he would try if nature will produce a person who will compose such a universal history as stated in the *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim*, p. 109 [Already cited].

<sup>12</sup> Otherwise, what is there in the past that is to be recounted in the cyclical nature of anything natural? History is possible only due to the unpredictable nature of anything human.

thus hoped that investigations on human history as a whole could yield a *regular course* which can be a guideline in understanding the human species.<sup>13</sup> Kant's project builds on nature as point of departure without undermining the role of reason:

Whatever concept one may form of the *freedom of the will* with a metaphysical aim, its *appearances*, the human actions, are determined just as much as every other natural occurrence in accordance with universal laws of nature . . . Individual human beings and even whole nations think little about the fact, since while each pursues its own aim in its own way and one often contrary to another, they are proceeding unnoticed, as by a guiding thread, according to an aim of nature, which is unknown to them, and are laboring at its promotion, although even if it were to become known to them it would matter little to them.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Teleological *Role of Nature* as Unintended Starting Point**

The advance of science and the growth of the evolutionary theory in Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744-1829)<sup>15</sup> coincides with Kant's *first proposition*, "All natural predispositions of a creature are determined sometime to develop themselves completely and purposively,"<sup>16</sup> which renders humanity as a whole (in the large)—just as all organisms are—as simply following a guideline set forth by nature towards an end or purpose. If no definite plan can be deduced from *reason* since humans do not act according to their plans; if in individual situations there seems to be randomness and uselessness of talent and ingenuity that usually ends up ultimately in human foolishness; if programs and principles of development remain in paper and mere appearances; then perhaps, despite this irregularity, a *regular course* as a guideline in understanding anything human can only be established from the *Aim of Nature* which acts lawfully and never playfully *teleologically* speaking. Contrary to *reason* and freedom of the will, which forsakes even well laid plans, defeating most of the time the very purpose why such plans were even made, nature can provide a *teleological doctrine* of a direction which may be rationally repulsive but naturally plausible. Besides, Kant clearly states that the education of the human race is based only on Providence, ". . . a wisdom that is not his, but still an impotent idea of his own reason. It consists in bringing forth the good which the human being has not intended . . ."<sup>17</sup> A

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<sup>13</sup> Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education.*, 108.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Jean Baptiste Pierre Antoine de Monet, Chevalier de Lamarck was a French naturalist who proposed a full blown theory of evolution in 1801 prior to Charles Darwin ["Understanding Evolution," *University of California Museum of Paleontology*, accessed April 28, 2016, [http://evolution.berkeley.edu/evolibrary/article/history\\_09](http://evolution.berkeley.edu/evolibrary/article/history_09).]

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 423.



wisdom that is *not his* is something he is never naturally born with. *Something-good-without-being-intended* points to the many cases in which human experience showed us that *new realizations* can come from unintended actions—not all good come from rationally laid plans. This points to a *principle of order* that is beyond the will of human reason. It is a *principle of order* that is not created by reason itself but blindly followed by it.

But how can this *Aim of Nature* be understood in the context of the play of human freedom? Does not reason defy nature in some respects? Kant, however, is not talking of *reason*, in itself, as a natural capacity of man. Kant's discussion on *reason* is focused on the *use of reason* not *reason* in itself. His second proposition can clarify this further: "In the human being (as the only rational creature on earth), those predispositions whose goal is the use of his reason were to develop completely only in the species, but not in the individual."<sup>18</sup> Kant does not deny the existence of reason and its capacity to defy everything natural. However, reason is not a naturally endowed fixed mechanism complete and perfect in itself. Since reason goes beyond what nature dictates or intends, it cannot be instinctual. Thus, it can be developed through *attempts, practice, and instruction*. Human history provides enough evidence about the cumulative levels of development in the use of human reason. Kant suggests that this development in the *use of reason* is nature's aim in the case of rational species, which by far, is man alone. Hence, with regard to rational species like man, the *Aim of Nature* to develop the use of human reason is that definite guideline Kant is looking for to solve the dilemma. The *use of reason* therefore, as a natural predisposition one finds in humanity alone, matures and each stages of maturity progresses only under this *principle of order* that is beyond itself. Under the guardianship of nature, humanity is guided towards the end which is the proper use of reason.

Kant defined reason as: ". . . a faculty of extending the rules and aims of the use of all its powers far beyond natural instinct, and it knows no boundaries to its projects."<sup>19</sup> By *powers* he means naturally given capabilities as in the use of hands and feet for example. Through reason therefore, which extends these powers, man progressed in the use of his hands and feet to more than what nature intends as in the hand progressing from a naturally effective gripping organ to an organ that can write. This capacity of reason to extend the capabilities of a naturally endowed physical organ is limitless as is evident in the data provided by human history. Humanity improved from a cave dweller—contented with a random crack on the earth—to a world builder who radically changed the contours of the earth due to his discontent. Humanity ventured out from being a fearful sailor avoiding the *edge* of the Mediterranean Sea to a fearless explorer of the vast universe

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

forever curious of its limits. Animals were abundantly endowed by nature for their survival but under the guidance of instinct there is no room for further improvements other than what evolution can offer. Human beings were less endowed but under the guidance of reason human existence is open to new horizons and new vistas. As such, only human beings can be said to rationally improve and change their way of life. And such is his only vocation—to find ways to always better himself through the use of his reason.

Those natural predispositions—arrangements nature has of man as aims—geared towards the use of his reason, however, is a development only in the species—*in the large*—and not in individual cases. Under the guardianship of nature, Kant's idea of the development of humanity in the use of reason does not refer to individual cases of remarkable acts of intelligence found in individual persons worthy of mention. The loss of a genius in every generation is a simple inevitable case of contingency on the part of individual members. A person does not live a considerable long life to exhaust the utmost potential in the advancement of his or her reason. Each achievement, therefore, of a generation, which appears to be shorthanded in the perspective of contingent beings, does not seem to be so in the grand scheme of nature as such must be transmitted to the next generation until the species, not the individual person, reaches a stage of development that is nature's aim—the full use of reason as a natural predisposition.<sup>20</sup> Each development in individual cases, therefore, are not actually wasted but are mere parts of a bigger scheme though not immediately evident to contingent perspectives, for otherwise it would run in contrast with nature's *teleological direction* making it purposeless when it comes to the human being alone.

### **The Developmental *Aim of Reason***

Of all creatures, Kant is quick to note that man lacks natural endowments with regard to nourishment, gratification, safety and defense, and the like but, nevertheless, man is the only creature endowed with reason. With reason, man is no longer guided by instinct or instructed by innate knowledge. Since reason, as defined above, is the capacity to extend the use of one's *powers* beyond what nature intends, and there is not much physical attributes given to him, nature intends therefore that he develops the *use* of this *reason* to cultivate his capacities more and beyond what is merely frugally given. Hence, the human reality is forced into a lot that demands labor before man is to live a happy life. By way of analogy, to be able to live a comfortable life amidst harmful temperatures, man must yet make for himself his clothing by contrast to animals that do not need so for they

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 110.

are born, by natural providence, with fur. Hence, human reality, if one is to develop one's situation, demands struggles and difficulties. In Kant's third proposition:

Nature has willed that the human being should produce everything that goes beyond the mechanical arrangement of his animal existence entirely out of himself, and participate in no other happiness or perfection than that which he has procured for himself free from instinct through his own reason.<sup>21</sup>

To be forced into this lot of constant labor to improve himself, man finds in his nature the *propensity to individualize* or isolate himself, " . . . the *unsociable* property of willing to direct everything as to get his own way, and hence expects resistance everywhere because he knows of himself that he is inclined on his side toward resistance against others."<sup>22</sup> But he finds in himself not only this propensity but an *inclination to socialize* through which he feels more a human being. Thus man finds in himself a natural opposition between his *propensity to individualize* and *inclination to socialize*; from the former he seeks to develop his own cause out of being ill-endowed by nature and from the latter he finds a need to be with others—Kant's *unsociable sociability*. Kant's concept of man's *unsociable sociability* points to the difficult situation that man finds in himself—in between opposing tendencies that are, at the same time, indispensable and neither is naturally amphibious. This *unsociable sociability* appears to be a dilemma in which one cannot simply choose the lesser evil or eliminate the disjunction. Sadly, this human lot is not a disjunction but a conjunction in opposition in which a denial of either conjunct is a denial of human nature itself. The inevitable situation is an association of men in which each can be said to further his own cause while he has to live with others—society.

The human person's *inclination to socialize*—sociability—is very important to every individual since it is only in society where each can develop their own natural predispositions according to Kant. He referred to society as the only condition in which each can be more human.<sup>23</sup> To be more human here means to be given all opportunities to bring out the fullness of their natural predispositions. Since to be human is to be rational, and with reason man is less endowed, it is to be understood that to be human is to use reason to complement nature's frugal endowments. But the only way the actualization of these natural predispositions happens is through each one's *propensity to individualize*—unsociability. Unsociability breaks indolence to obtain a status among fellows. This marked the first steps from crudity to culture. Kant wrote:

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

. . . a beginning is made toward the foundation of a mode of thought which can with time transform the rude natural predispositions to make moral distinctions into determinate practical principles and hence transform a *pathologically* compelled agreement to form a society finally into a *moral* whole.<sup>24</sup>

A *pathologically compelled agreement* in Kant may refer to men's *crude* reasons for *sociability* stemming from their natural inclination to socialize. Every crude sociability they establish is threatened by their inherent unsociability as is their nature. This resistance against each other always threatens to break up society. But society is indispensable to the human person for only under this condition—sociability—can each develop himself. Thus, every individual resistance is met and will be met by the continuous effort of everyone just the same to save society—a state of realization when each one is ready to give up their individual propensities in favor of the greater good of the whole of society. The inclination to be whole resists the propensities of the individual parts—genuine antagonisms. Individual resistance is a *catalyst antagonism*; Society's resistance to individual propensities is *genuine antagonism*. This state of mind in every individual to give up their unsociability for the sake of the greater whole is of higher quality—*enlightened reason*—than the state of mind who insists on his/her individual propensities regardless of the consequences. Thus, the *catalyst antagonism* creates social conflicts of any sort resulting even to large scale complications until the members affected will finally realize the utter destruction they are in and finally unite to save the whole by eliminating the social conflict that threatens solidarity—*genuine antagonism*. The establishment of strict measures as *practical laws*, the recognition of human dignity, and the revaluation of the whole society would follow to prevent conflicts of the same sort in the future to safeguard the whole. Genuine antagonism therefore arises from one's *moral obligation against injustice* and the stark commitment to establish a better social order until the society transforms itself gradually into a *moral whole*. The dialectical and indispensable relation between *enlightened reason* and the *moral obligation against injustice* is referred to in Kant's *Metaphysics of Morals* in the difference between practical rules and moral laws:

Everyone must admit that if a law is to be morally valid, i.e., is to be valid as a ground of obligation, then it must carry with it absolute necessity . . . And he must concede that the ground of obligation here must therefore be sought not in the nature of man nor in the circumstances of the world in which man is placed, but must be sought a priori solely in the concepts of pure reason; he must grant that every other precept which is founded on principles of mere experience—even a precept that may in certain respects be universal—insofar as

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

it rests in the least on empirical grounds—perhaps only as its motive—can indeed be called a practical rule, but never a moral law.<sup>25</sup>

This personal antagonism arising from his natural tendencies, met by a genuine antagonism to preserve the whole, led man to conceive of a state of existence and a level of *reasoning*, therefore, that understands the need to move from *crude individuality* to the establishment of what is now called *culture*; a level of understanding that *nature* did not provide instinctively but a development in man's natural predisposition—use of reason—brought about by a nature-authored situation of *unsociable sociability*. Hence, Kant's fourth proposition: "The means nature employs in order to bring about the development of all its predispositions is their antagonism in society, insofar as the latter is in the end the cause of their lawful order."<sup>26</sup> Kant, however, did not suggest an ideal model that ends up in a utopia. This is a continuous thoroughgoing resistance that *develops an enlightened reason* and *heightens moral obligation against social injustice*. Thus, man finds himself in a series of antagonisms perpetually forcing the species to come to terms with these again propelling the species to further forms of associations better than the previous. Hence, human history is a story of one attempt to remedy the antagonisms one after another as one can see from the shift from Mercantile Monarchies to Feudalistic Fiefdoms, from Tyrannical structures of control to Democratic ideals of human freedom. In each stage man gains a *purified* sense of reason, not in individual cases but rather in the species. Kant wrote:

Thanks be to nature, therefore, for the incompatibility, for the spiteful competitive vanity, for the insatiable desire to possess or even to dominate! For without them all the excellent natural predispositions in humanity would eternally slumber undeveloped. The human being wills concord; but nature knows better what is good for his species: it wills discord. He wills to live comfortably and contentedly; but nature wills that out of sloth and inactive contentment he should throw himself into labor and toils, so as, on the contrary, prudently to find out the means to pull himself again out of the latter.<sup>27</sup>

## Reason and Democracy

The awakening in the use of human reason in the enlightenment period gave free reigns for science to develop. With new-found reason and the precise tools of science, man found a new essential characteristic of *truth*—evidence! Empirical verification

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<sup>25</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. James W. Ellington, Third Edition (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1993), 2-3.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 112.

became the hallmark of true knowledge. Thus is the rise of the evidence-based approach to all human concerns. The human person became free of unchallenged tradition and authority:

. . . a newly self-conscious and autonomous human being—curious about the world, confident in his own judgments, skeptical of orthodoxies, rebellious against authority, responsible for his own beliefs and actions, enamored of the classical past but even more committed to a greater future, proud of his humanity, conscious of his distinctness from nature, aware of his artistic powers as individual creator, assured of his intellectual capacity to comprehend and control nature, and altogether less dependent on an omnipotent God.<sup>28</sup>

The freedom of the will is an important concept in Kant's development in the use of reason and the achievement of a just civil constitution. The ideal society is that which allows the thoroughgoing antagonism among its members for only genuine antagonisms can cause the development of the use of human reason—the only vocation of a creature endowed with it. Kant referred to this society as the society which has the *greatest freedom*.<sup>29</sup> This freedom of the will of every member must inevitably co-exist with the freedom of others for otherwise there would be chaos. It is a safeguard against individual propensities and unjust systems that threaten the whole. The importance of the whole society as the only condition for human development in *sociability* is a necessary *condition of coercion* to keep each person from the destructive forces of *unconstrained freedom*. The *greatest freedom* allowed therefore is not doing anything one likes as the very freedom of one is limited by the same freedom of another. Neither is it constant peace as it must allow a certain degree of *unsociability*.

Kant made no reference to any specific type or form of society that could allow such greatest freedom other than a *description* of such socio-political situation. The *condition of coercion* does not come from external laws or practical rules written that inhibit individual will. Such condition must come from each individual person involved who favors above all the condition of sociability to such extent that individual propensities are sacrificed. This *social condition* is very dependent on the strength of *moral obligation*. But such must be combined with an *irresistible power*—a *perfectly just civil constitution* containing the most precise determination of the boundaries of such freedom. An irresistible power is relative to the kind of people governed. On one hand, autocracies were irresistible powers in the past. But such systems do so out of authority that elicits fear and hence lack the above *social condition* that is based on *moral obligation*. History shows

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<sup>28</sup> Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas That Have Shaped Our Worldview*, 282.

<sup>29</sup> Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, 112.

that autocracies were one-sided antagonisms towards the governed. On the other hand, liberal democracies are based on individual will and can be a *political condition* with irresistible power only through a *level of reason* that understands it and a *moral obligation* that upholds it. Thus it maintains freedom under external laws and protects the autonomy of each member. But since such socio-political condition is based on *reason* and the *moral obligation* that disciplines the will, the lack of which makes the achievement of such *civil society universally administering right* the greatest problem for the human species. The immaturity of the governed simply stands in the way.

### **Immaturity and Autocracy**

Kant's motto of the enlightenment, *Sapere aude*,<sup>30</sup> identified immaturity as the enemy of enlightenment. Immature people are those lazy and coward people who do not dare to engage the difficulty that comes with the use of their own reason. This is the reason why *Guardians*—those who took for themselves the supervision of men—exist to rule over them as in autocracies in varied forms from the ancient to the medieval periods. The immaturity of humanity in these earlier epochs in history in the light of *sapere aude* is accepted due to the normal development in the use of human reason—lack of understanding. Be that as it may, as each one is born rational with the obligation to develop in their use of their own reason, any immaturity that results from one's lack of resolve to use one's own understanding without the guidance<sup>31</sup> of another is a *self-imposed immaturity*. This type of immaturity among the governed points to the *lack of an enlightened reason* pertinent to a civil society universally administering right.

Genuine freedom of the will recognizes the freedom of others since an enlightened reason recognizes the importance of *sociability*; the sacrifice of individual liberties in favor of civil liberty. Inauthentic freedom is unconstrained freedom—a denial of others' rights in favor of the self. Kant identified here another form of immaturity in a person's crude behavior in misusing his/her freedom as an animal inclination. This type of immaturity among the governed points to the *lack of strength in the moral will* important to liberal social condition. Thus, the human person is an animal who is in need of a *Master*

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<sup>30</sup> "Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without guidance from another. This immaturity is self-imposed when its cause lies not in lack of understanding, but in lack of resolve and courage to use it without guidance from another." (As cited in *An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?* [Immanuel Kant, "Beantwortung Der Frage: Was Ist Aufklärung?," trans. Daniel Fidel Ferrer (2003), *Berlinische Monatsschrift* Book 4, no. 12 (n.d.): 481–94.]).

<sup>31</sup> The term 'guidance' here is not a formative moral concept of but a form of supervision or control over peoples who lack the personal will to act on their own behalf.

to break his stubborn will to obey a universally valid will in which everyone can be free.<sup>32</sup> But such master is no other than another human just the same who is as much an animal as he is who can misuse his freedom when there is no one over him.

In two accounts, Kant identified two types of immaturities of the governed: (1) the lack of resolve to use one's own reason and (2) the misuse of free will. The former points to an *unenlightened reason* and the latter is indicative of a form of *apathy towards unjust systems* that results to injustice. This runs in contrast with the dialectic between an *enlightened reason* and *moral obligation against social injustice* as pre-requisites to democracy. Thus, immaturity on the part of the governed invites the perpetual rule of the varied forms of autocracies. Kant did not however downplay the role of a leader. A supreme power can only be a human being and must be just in itself—an impossible unity in Kant. Hence, the ideal leader for Kant is only an approximation having three qualities that is difficult to find altogether: ". . . that it requires correct concepts of the nature of a possible constitution, great experience practiced through many courses of life and beyond this a good will that is prepared to accept it."<sup>33</sup>

### **Enlightened Reason and Democracy**

Historically speaking, the enlightenment was not an organized project but a gradual revolution of ideas in the light of reason which suspected the authority of Metaphysics, the tradition imposed by Theocracy, and the Divine rights of Monarchy in favor of individual liberty. Reason became the sole criterion for truth, ever suspicious of the baseless ancient and medieval truth-claims, establishing science and its evidence-based approach in Francis Bacon's *Novum Organon*, and inspiring the first steps towards liberal democracy in John Locke among others.<sup>34</sup> *Tolerance* was the first characteristic of liberalism found in Protestantism in relation to other religions. Respect for *rights of property* became important in Anglo-Dutch commerce. Baruch Spinoza articulated the importance of *freedom of speech* in public order. John Locke recognized the *equal right of every one to own property* subject to the constraints of the law. The modern triumph of the human spirit and the new optimism was congruent with the interdependence between science, democracy, and capitalism which gradually invaded Europe and America later. The grand result was *progress* which will dominate the *developmentalist* discourse during the period of colonization.

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<sup>32</sup> Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, 113.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 113-114.

<sup>34</sup> Taverne, *The March of Unreason: Science, Democracy, and the New Fundamentalism*, 17.



John Locke<sup>35</sup> (1632-1704) lived earlier than Kant but argued on the same themes when he philosophized on the origin, extent, and end of *Civil Government*. He started from the *state of nature* of man which is the *state of perfect freedom* to act as each thinks fit, and the *state of equality* being born with the same advantages and disadvantages, but neither is a *state of license* as an uncontrollable liberty because of the law of nature which obliges everyone—*reason*. Every rational being therefore, if the law of nature is to be followed, cannot subjugate another person or put another in a disadvantageous position. Autocracy therefore is against the *state of nature* of perfect freedom. A just civil government therefore must not violate the *state of nature* of every human person. He wrote:

The natural liberty of man is to be free from any superior power on earth, and not to be under the will or legislative authority of man, but to have only the law of nature for his rule. The liberty of man in society is to be under no other legislative power but that established by consent in the commonwealth.<sup>36</sup>

Locke accepted that there can be inconveniencies that could arise from man's *state of nature* that can go against the law of nature—reason—when people come together. Since any act of subjugation or any advantageous endeavor gained at the expense of another is against the law of nature, a civil society must be established based on the common ground of all individuals (state of nature)—the *Commonwealth*. That it is not up to anyone to wield his personal judgment but must quit this personal executive and legislative power and resign it to the public by authorizing society to act in his behalf—*established by consent*. That means, no one can impose their *personal laws* (legislative power) on anyone leading to subjugation against the natural *state of freedom*, or be the *personal judge* and impose punishment (executive power) on anyone leading to a more advantageous position against the natural *state of equality*. The origin, therefore, of a civil government is each free individual equal to all who consents to this personal resignation for the common good.<sup>37</sup> Reason is the cornerstone of civil liberties in Democracy; Democracy is the political expression of the development in the use of reason.

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<sup>35</sup> Dick Taverne argued that John Locke can be regarded as the Father of Liberal Democracy by arguing that the bedrock of liberal democracy is total opposition to dogmatism and extremism and recognition of the right of all individuals to own and use their property subject to the well-defined constraints of the law (cited in *The March of Unreason*, 20).

<sup>36</sup> Elizabeth Smith and H.Gene Blocker, *Applied Social and Political Philosophy* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1994), 63.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 61-67.

Though there can be no certain causal links between reason and democracy, the co-existence between science and democracy is indicative of an essential connection between the two. First, the development in the use of reason and democratic politics is *gradualist* and never extremist or dogmatist. Science dwells on tentative knowledge by using hypotheses. This characteristic involves critical examination, testing of hypotheses, and replacing them when disproved. The same is true with policies in democracy. The three most essential elements of democracy are: “. . . freedom to criticize, tolerance of different viewpoints, and willingness to compromise.”<sup>38</sup> The advantage of the democratic system is in its capacity to allow change through acceptance of assertions of different proposals in the light of criticism, just as science grows by way of induction and negation of previous theoretical assumptions.<sup>39</sup> Second, Science and Democracy operates under the evidence-based approach. The electorates base their choices on evidence. Politicians win arguments by citing evidence. Transparency and accountability are both demands for evidence. The electorate is the jury who decides based on evidence. “. . . democracy is the only means through which the process of deciding by evidence can find political expression, unlike dictatorships where fiat and authority rule and choice is banned.”<sup>40</sup> And third, Science and democracy are both open and pluralistic. Scientific experiments and innovation allows all people to participate and openly investigate. No scientific truth can be established without the warrant of a disinterested criterion—evidence—never allowing anyone to tweak their truth-claims in line with self-interest. Democratic elections operate in like manner by allowing the personal choice of everyone then enabling the same people to remove those vested with power to govern when evidence goes against their performance. Thus, democracy also adopted an open market system which is decentralized and encouraged free enterprise—liberal capitalism.

### **Filipino Democracy**

In the light of the foregoing discussions, I will now proceed to examine Filipino democracy in the light of the indispensable dialectic between *enlightened reason* and *moral obligation against social injustice* as pre-requisites to genuine democracy. This will shed light to the disparity between the experience of the Filipino people and the political system that governs them.

### **The Filipino Social Condition: Crudity in the use of Reason and Will**

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<sup>38</sup> Taverne, *The March of Unreason*, 257.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Fifth Edition (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971).

<sup>40</sup> Taverne, *The March of Unreason: Science, Democracy, and the New Fundamentalism.*, 256.

From the thesis that all natural predispositions are indeed bound to develop eventually and purposively, the Filipino people can be said to be merely on the way to the development of their natural predispositions and that the *purposelessness* every indignant Filipino finds in individual cases is mere shortsightedness—this *purposelessness* in the eyes of the individual critic may just be *purposeful in the large*. The individual decisions each make, from individual choices to decisions having political ramifications, is reflective of the level of reason at play at present—an application of their *still-developing reason* to every difficulty they encounter. These are not products of an individual's direct intent to destroy but reflective of their maturity as a people relative to their use of their still-developing reason. That is to say, nature, by far, has not led the Filipinos to a stage of development in the use of reason that can, for example, value electoral honesty over a five-hundred peso bill.

The rampant violation of the many practical rules established for the people indicates a lack of *moral grounding* which is possible only with an enlightened reason. But that is not to say that the people have no moral grounding at all. The moral grounding is directly proportional to the level of reason. Thus, the moral obligation of the people against social injustice is not that intense compared to more matured democracies. That is not to say just the same that the Filipinos are less rational than other democracies. The use of reason here does not refer to the intellectual aptitude but its dialectical relation with moral obligation. That is the reason why the Filipino justice system can be bribed regardless whether the presiding judge excels in his knowledge of the law. Politicians buy votes without fear because voters willingly sell theirs just the same. That also explains why signs had to be so direct to warn people: *Huwag tatawid may namatay na rito* (Do not cross the road for people who tried have died).

The present Filipino *social situation* might well be *civilized* with regard to social decorum and propriety but being civilized is different from being *moralized*. Both are products of culture but love of honor and external propriety are mere resemblance of morals. Kant wrote, ". . . everything good that is not grafted onto a morally good disposition is nothing but mere semblance and glittering misery."<sup>41</sup> The Filipino people is rich in civilized discourses from fearsome heroes of liberty to contemporary ways and means of living, but being moralized is yet a distant project that nature has to bring the people through genuine antagonisms in unsociable sociability.

From Kant's concept of man's *unsociable sociability* therefore, there is meaning in every difficulty the Filipinos encounter. These, therefore, are not random follies that drown every individual ingenuity in a stream of overwhelming purposelessness and idiocy of the majority. These are, rather, pre-requisites that bring out from their experiences the good that nature intends. The present Filipino situation is a fruit of genuine antagonisms in the

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<sup>41</sup> Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, 116.

past and whatever difficulties they have encountered were *catalyst* antagonisms that result from their unsociable nature and whatever level of society and reason they have gained from these experiences came from their need for sociability just the same. The people just have to labor their way out of such chaotic conditions, opening for themselves a consoling prospect for the future.

### **The Filipino Political Condition: Crude Democracy**

Each antagonism the Filipinos encountered in the past resulted to an association that they never previously had. In classical and pre-colonial Philippines, loose confederates of Sultanates came up with laws of alliances and trade relations—a better association than autonomy and constant tribal wars. From this loose confederation of tribes under the rule of *Sultans/Datus* (Chieftains), the Spaniards came and enforced monarchy. Would Filipinos have progressed later to form their own way of monarchy? That will never be known. Spain offered a genuine antagonism to the Filipinos through *fear* from a terrible force of arms beyond their capability to face and the promises of *religious bliss* in an afterlife ignorantly accepted by the people if they remain meek, selfless, and humble enough to love an enemy at that.

At the later part of the three hundred years Spanish rule, some Filipinos were exposed to liberal ideas already proliferating in Europe. But Kant was very clear about the development in the use of reason among the people as requisite to a rational appreciation of, say, a political system. It can happen only authentically in the species and never among few members. So while Rizal and many other *Propagandistas* may have a rational appreciation of the Democratic system, the Filipinos in the large may not necessarily have such rational level to understand it and a moral strength to uphold its principles. Hence, the rational appreciation of the people for Rizal's work may have remained in the realization that they are abused as exposed allegorically in his novels, but too limited enough to understand Rizal's project to fight not for independence but for equal rights and status before Spain. Rather, the people took solace not from an intellectual Rizal, though enlightened by it, but from a charismatic warrior in Bonifacio and later from a victorious general in Aguinaldo—a characteristic of the next step that should follow a loose confederate state of autonomous sultanates. This long-awaited development in the use of reason, enough to understand the abuses from Spain, revived by antagonisms awakened by the Propaganda Movement, is nevertheless limited to the next form of association the political consciousness in the large can really accommodate so far. The Filipinos in the large are not ready for democratic independence.

Not so long after this, the Filipinos came up with a form of civil constitution that is not a result of their experiences but borrowed from other nations with different history and contextual antagonisms—from the KKK to the Malolos Republic. The Democratic

system is born out of a people whose experiences of tyrannical structures are essential preparations for intellectual maturity needed for the authentic appreciation of democratic principles and ideals. Rizal simply did not see this among his people yet. What obviously happened after that is the defeat of Spain but not the system, for the same oppression remained although no longer under Spain but under many names one after another until the *slaves* really became the *tyrants*.

What follows is the Filipino education in the art of Democracy as expressed by US President McKinley in his message to the US Congress, "The Philippines are ours not to exploit, but to develop, to civilize, to educate, to train in the science of self-government."<sup>42</sup> The Spooner Amendment started this education to Democracy as the Americans allowed the sharing of civil authority and power with Filipino leaders. The Filipino independence missions to the US Congress introduced the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Law and the Tydings-McDuffie Law that had provisions for the Philippine independence and the inauguration of the Philippine ten years Commonwealth Government.

After Spain, Rizal thought the Filipinos were not ready, ". . . how can they be granted liberty? With Spain or without Spain they would be the same, and perhaps, perhaps, worse without her! Why should we be independent if the slaves of today are to be the tyrants of tomorrow?"<sup>43</sup> After America, Quezon thought the Filipinos should nevertheless try it by themselves and learn from it after suffering perhaps from trying, "I would rather have a government run like hell by Filipinos than a government run like heaven by the Americans. Because, however bad a Filipino government might be, we can always change it."<sup>44</sup> Both are invitations to further antagonisms. Rizal wanted education which may mean perhaps that out of Spanish oppression and inequality as an antagonism, the people may progress in the use of their reason. Quezon wanted to be left alone which *may* perhaps mean to let the people mature in their use of reason through experiencing antagonisms on their own out of their contextual experience. At present, Filipino democracy had a series of tyrants one after another running the government like hell and the electorate has a political will and maturity that resembles that of lowly royal subjects who cower under the might of regal majesties. In here lies the disparity between this socio-political situation of the people and the type of system that governs them.

The substantial definition of democracy came from the west. These democratic principles, however, are products of their use of reason arising from their experiences and

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<sup>42</sup> See House Documents, 67<sup>th</sup> Congress, 4<sup>th</sup> Session, Doc. 511, 42.

<sup>43</sup> José Rizal (1861–1896), "The Reign of Greed," January 1, 2004, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/10676/10676-h/10676-h.htm>, 361.

<sup>44</sup> Sonia Zaide, *The Philippines: A Unique Nation*, Second Edition (Quezon City, Philippines: All-Nations Publishing Co., Inc., 1999), 319.

antagonisms which may be totally alien to the Filipino context and hence may be inapplicable although these principles protect what is universally right to all persons regardless of context. The disparity therefore is between the foreign definition of democracy and the Filipino unique context, and partly on the system that is both a *realized* and a *learned* democracy. But following Kant, the kind of democracy the Filipinos have is still a fruit of the dialectic between the present Filipino reason and moral strength. The disparity presents itself only if perceived from the colonial definition of democracy laid forth by the Americans. Instead of looking, then, at the Filipino situation from the perspective of the outsider, as in adopting measures from other contexts, it would be best, therefore, to look at this situation from within, and out of the struggles that they experience the people may arrive at means—that genuinely arise from their context—to remedy their unique predicaments.

The application of sourced-out *reason* to these experiences, in an effort to understand what is wrong with their situation, along with the strong indication that the adopted systems should have worked properly although apparently they really do not, is precisely what Kant meant by no guideline for understanding history can progress from the perspective of reason. Kant differentiated *to know the world* from *to have the world*. *To know* the world is simply to *understand* it while *to have* the world is to *participate* in it.<sup>45</sup> From the perspective of the *Aim of Nature* therefore, the Filipino situation is merely undergoing a natural developmental stage and the natural predispositions that would fit this unique situation will eventually and purposively develop themselves completely relative to their own *time* and experience if they *participate* in their world more than merely trying to *understand* it from sourced-out perspectives. Crude as it may seem to be in the eyes of the western superstructure, this is still Filipino democracy and the only form they have from the present maturity in their use of reason and the present strength of their moral will. The hope lies in the thoroughgoing genuine antagonism which the people have to submit themselves to in order to progress in their reason and moral will.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 232.

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