

is philippine politics machiavellian?

the fox, redeemer, and citizen in doubled philippine politics

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Abstract

Is Niccolo Machiavelli's *The Prince* relevant in interpreting Philippine politics? Yes. But not the way we expect or have been told. Although Machiavelli advises the new prince to emulate the fox and the lion, he will not approve of our beastly politics full of *buwaya*, *buwitre*, *baboy*, *ahas*, and *tuta*. He will also not approve of our duplicitous system of politics wherein traditional political means beget putative democratic goals and democratic talk hides away the standard operating procedures of realpolitik. For Machiavelli, the new prince must eventually give way to citizens. But there is an impasse in this messianic task. In political history, the redeemer consumes his own children. Also, the state of political theory in Machiavelli's time cannot imagine citizens generating citizens. Did we succeed in doing such in 1986 EDSA?

Keywords

Philippine politics, Machiavelli, *The Prince*, notional democratic politics, traditional politics, messianic politics, citizen



Introduction

Is Philippine politics Machiavellian? Is there a basis to using Machiavellian concepts in an attempt to theorize Philippine politics? Can it be justified? Perhaps, with intervention from contemporary interpreters of Machiavelli, and parallel or connected works of other philosophers. For example, Hannah Pitkin's identification and characterization of the three exemplars of autonomy and manhood in Machiavelli's works¹ serves as a model that structures the development and unfolding of this essay. Indeed one finds equivalents of the fox in Philippine (traditional) politics. And if we exert some extraordinary effort, we may find counterparts for the Founder and the Citizen² (as well). Meanwhile, a problem that Pitkin identifies with Machiavelli's image of the Citizen –that it cannot father itself³ – necessitates bringing in Hannah Arendt and her works on revolution and political action.⁴ This is because Machiavelli was unlucky enough to have lived before the age of revolution (starting with England's glorious revolution in 1688, the American revolution in 1776, and the French revolution in 1789) and was unable to theorize it (and thus was denied the chance to make such as examples). Happily, Arendt's idea of citizen politics coincides with that of Machiavelli. This fortunate happenstance enables this essay to look at and interpret the 1986 EDSA people power revolution as a founding wherein, at least theoretically, citizens beget themselves. That the "peaceful" revolution failed to produce Machiavelli's or Arendt's ideal politics is a function of how efficiently and effectively foxes (and lions), working against the common good, have taken over and consequently continue to define Philippine politics. So much so that we dream of strongmen, messianic movie personas, and stand-ins for democratic icons to redeem 1986 for us and finally found the democratic politics of our imaginings.

The occasion that necessitated, for Machiavelli, *The Prince* was a political crisis that threatened the autonomy of Florence, in particular, and the whole of Italy, in general. The last chapter of the book identifies this crisis as an untenable condition wherein Italy was "more enslaved than the Hebrews, more abject than the Persians, more widely dispersed than the Athenians; headless, orderless, beaten, stripped, scarred, overrun, and plagued

¹ See Hannah Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman: Gender and Politics in the Thought of Niccolo Machiavelli* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), Part 2.

² Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman*, 52 and 80. This essay follows, for now, Pitkin's (1984) capitalization of the first letters of founder and citizen here as I see them also as ideal types.

³ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁴ See Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: The Viking Press, 1963) and *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

by every sort of disaster.”⁵ Italy needed to be freed “from the cruel insolence of the barbarians” whose occupation of the *patria* “stinks in all our nostrils.”⁶

The crisis was brought about by both internal and external elements and their dynamics. Within Florence itself, both the republican rule that Machiavelli served (in the period 1494-1512) and the Medici rule that undermined and supplanted it bred intense factional politics that, in massive events in public squares and in the grassroots of the cobblestoned alleys, embroiled the city in “constant ferment.”⁷ Machiavelli himself, who highly values plurality in republican politics, criticizes this factionalism via the political conflicts in the Roman republic in his *Florentine Histories*. He notes with dejection that Florence’s ferments weakened its republic while conflicts strengthened the Roman republic.⁸ Within Italy itself, the five dominant and competing powers of Florence, Milan, Venice, Rome (the Papal States), and Genoa postponed the whole territory’s consolidation into a nation-state for a few more centuries. This, however, did not slow down such development in the rest of Europe.⁹ The rivalry between Italy’s powers led to the influx of foreign armies into the country, starting in 1494, when Milan (under Sforza) invited the French armies (under Charles VIII) in order to help assert its claim over the kingdom of Naples. The ease with which the French armies swept through the country led to several French, Spanish, and Imperial invasions (each in turn supported by the Swiss mercenaries and prompted, at times, by the invitation of one of Italy’s powerful cities) that turned northern Italy into a battlefield. Meanwhile, the military weakness of the five Italian powers made them dependent on mercenaries in order to defend their territories and their citizens.¹⁰

This dire situation must have been so urgent and intolerable to Machiavelli. After all, in 1494, Italy led the world in economic and cultural accomplishments.¹¹ That it could not match the foreign armies (mere barbarians to Machiavelli) militarily must have been

⁵ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince: A Revised Translation, Backgrounds, Interpretations, Marginalia*, ed. and trans. Robert Adams (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1992), 70; original publication 1513.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 70 and 72.

⁷ *Ibid.*, “Historical Introduction,” viii-ix.

⁸ “The enmities that at the outset existed in Rome between the people and the nobles were ended in debating, those in Florence by fighting; those in Rome were terminated by law, those in Florence by the exile and death of many citizens.” Quoted in Pitkin, 91.

⁹ Martin Van Creveld, *The Rise and Decline of the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 108. Except for Germany, which was stuck in a situation similar to Italy.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 108-109; see also Machiavelli, *The Prince*, “Historical Introduction,” xii.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 108-109.

galling and prompted his insistence on the training of armies and the military duties of the new prince¹² in *The Prince*.¹³

Meanwhile, Philippine politics has been described to be in constant crisis. It is instructive how this crisis appear and reappear, especially in relation to the origins (or emergence) of our *hayop na politika* (or our traditional politics that is a den of beasts: *mga buwaya, ahas, tuta*, etc.). But the more relevant crisis for the moment stems from post-1986 EDSA and its failed promise. It has led to the loss of agency for the forces that made it possible: the middle class and the *masa* –together the *people* that comprised the social power that was EDSA. This lost agency renders our current indignation impotent as we watch our politicians plunder the nation and then make a mockery of our justice system, and as we watch our oligarchs control both our nation's economy and politics. It has also led to the loss of that briefly enjoyed post-people power international recognition as our corrupt and inept national government cannot help but depend on the military power of our putative longtime ally, the United States of America, to counter Chinese incursions into our national patrimony. This in exchange for putting their security interest ahead of ours: hunting for and eliminating US terrorist targets while risking and incurring the death of forty-four (44) Special Action Forces in Mamasapano and scuttling a possible peace agreement with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (and consequently, a fantasized Nobel Peace Prize nomination for the President).

Is our crisis an enough of a crisis for Machiavelli and for the warranted application of Machiavellian concepts, however interpreted and extended, to Philippine politics?

But there is more to our politics than the mere crisis of impotence and of foreign soldiers on our soil. There is also something akin to the deception and hypocrisy that Machiavelli teaches the new prince in case he becomes the redeemer of Italy but is the opposite of the citizen *virtu* that he requires of the Florentine republic elsewhere in his writings.¹⁴ This deception is widespread and defines our politics. Machiavelli observes that men "in general judge more by the sense of sight" and thus "[e]veryone sees what you seem to be" and "few know what you really are." Thus it is only necessary for the new prince to "seem to have" virtue and to be the fox in cunning and trickery, concealing such carefully by being "a great liar and hypocrite."¹⁵ For this to work there must be two facets to reality: what seems to be and how things really are; and how things really are must be

¹² Here I follow the example of this edition of the books translation in calling Machiavelli's prince as *new prince*. The point is that Machiavelli addresses not the princes of hereditary principalities but the new prince of mixed type of principalities, especially that of Florence after the fall of the republic.

¹³ See Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chapters 12-14.

¹⁴ See Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman*, 80-105; see also Maurizio Viroli, *Machiavelli* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

¹⁵ Machiavelli 1992, 48-49

concealed allowing only the display of what seems to be. This recalls Karl Marx's concept of ideology as false consciousness, wherein "the ideas of the ruling class are the . . . ruling ideas" and wherein the ruling class "has to give its ideas the form of universality, and represent them as the only rationally valid ones."¹⁶

But contrary to this, we in the Philippines know how things are. We know that politicians are corrupt, that they are motivated by self-interest, that they are actively deceiving us during their term of office but especially during elections. Moreover, we not only know but we know that such is the case even if we do not personally know. We assume that deception is the how things are done, that it is the norm in Philippine politics. Thus, suspicion and incredulity are the default Filipino attitude when it comes to politics.

Is this it then? Or is there more to our politics than Machiavelli's deception?

Doubled Philippine Politics

Philippine politics is doubled. First, it is doubled in the Machiavellian and Marxist sense of deception, that there is something that is deliberately hidden. And second, it is doubled in the sense that what seems to be and what is hidden exist politically at the same time, parasitic on each other, constituting what we experience as the whole of Philippine politics.

It is not always the case that we are certain about the duplicity of our politics. Before 1986, there was only one kind of politics for us and it was wielded by the dictator Marcos and his cronies, imposed on us through the very endangerment of our properties, our freedom, and our lives. Immediately after EDSA, we believed that we left such tyrannical politics behind. We looked forward to political modernization, the expansion of democratic space, the redemption of the imagined politics that sustained us in the long struggle against the dictatorship. This imagined politics also sustained what turned out to be the second people power revolt in 2001, albeit also foreshadowing at the same time the split in the "people" of the original EDSA. But it was not the "third" EDSA¹⁷ that made

¹⁶ Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd edition, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978), 172-174. For example, the realities of worker exploitation are hidden by the ideology of the ruling class that paints reality in terms of freedom of choice; that is, workers themselves choose where they work. And wherein the inherent antagonism of how society is structured is masked in terms of the putative harmony of interests of all classes; that is, the interests of factory owners and workers coincide in the continued productivity of the factory that benefits both.

¹⁷ This EDSA revolt has been, for the most part, ignored by political analysis as it was ignored by the mainstream media when it happened. The middle class forces that made up EDSA Dos begrudge the opposed uprising the dignity of the EDSA appellation.

the split unequivocal, but the cheating and subsequent death of the presidential candidate and would-be *masa* redeemer Fernando Poe Jr. (FPJ).

It was during the presidency of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (GMA) that the facade masking our *hayop na politika* unraveled. Corruption and scandals headlined newspapers, and TV and radio news almost daily. The approaching election in 2010 offered more of the same and no viable alternative. In the midst of this weighty and onerous sameness was a palpable difference in the political atmosphere, a vague foreboding with no obvious cause and only a shadowed sense of things to come: we knew and we knew for sure. The problem of legitimacy that beset GMA's last years in office was a crisis of ideology (in Marx's sense, but also Machiavelli's), of a deception that was failing.

Back then we knew: Philippine politics is doubled. On one hand is the notional (or ideal) democratic politics best exemplified by the promise of EDSA in 1986. On the other hand is its obscene double, what we usually refer to as traditional politics. The democratic double performs an ideological function (in the sense that it hides the workings of its obscene double) and is failing. The obscene double underpins the former and is the politics of the shadows that makes its democratic double work (in the sense that democratic goals are achieved through traditional means), but is exposed.

In our doubled Philippine politics, we can think of Cory Aquino (and Ninoy) as symbolizing the rational hope for a democratic politics. We are socialized into this hope from our grade school social studies and history subjects to our college liberal education. We inaugurated this hope into a national aspiration through the 1986 EDSA revolution. Cory, beyond death, embodies this democratic possibility for our politics. Meanwhile, we can think of pre-2010 GMA as symbolizing the unacknowledged double of Philippine democratic politics: hello Garci, her husband's syndication of government corruption, her lavish dinners, spiteful SONA, scandals (obscene in so many ways), scams—all indicators of her embeddedness in traditional political culture. The problem then is that with GMA, what was unacknowledged was exposed, without shame. We were scandalized but left with no recourse because our democratic hope was then tattered with cynicism and apathy that cannot hide our shame. GMA is Cory's obscene double. Both are placed in the apex of Philippine politics by "people power" but ended symbolizing its opposite possibilities. GMA is people power's ironic twist, the embodiment of its extreme possibility: a neo-authoritarian figure of democracy's excess.

Western studies of Philippine political culture assert that our politics is characterized by values and practices such as the primacy of kinship ties, patron-client relations, bossism/caciquism, *pakikisama*, and the cultures of poverty and corruption.¹⁸ We

¹⁸ See Carl Lande, *Leaders, Factions, and Parties: The Structure of Philippine Politics* (New Haven: Council on Southeast Asian Studies, Yale University, 1965); James Fallows, "A Damaged Culture: A New Philippines," in *Atlantic Monthly* (November 1987), Accessed

generally take these allegations with a sack of salt, an affront that we counter with accusations of Orientalism. We deny but we know. The insult really is being told what we already know and live but keep in the dark.

We are usually of two minds (or maybe more) when it comes to this unacknowledged underside of our politics. On the one hand, we view it as a kind of politics that we must overcome in our pursuit to approximate formal democratic politics. On the other hand, we are quite aware that our version of modern democratic politics thrives on this disavowed underside. It is how we make the political processes and institutions inherited from the American colonial government work for us. And thus we make our politics horizontally Janus-faced –facing up and lit, facing down and shadowed. It is not easy to find anyone who has not profited from such a system in one way or another. Who hasn't benefited from patronage, nepotism, corruption? Who hasn't condoned or ignored them?

All is well when what must remain hidden is hidden, and when we are optimistic about the prospects of our formal democratic politics. When the condition is the opposite, we get political cynicism and apathy: a politics waiting to implode.

To some extent, Noynoy Aquino saved us from this possible political implosion and returned us to the politics before GMA. Cory's death made his candidacy in the 2010 elections possible. We imagined him as representing, and thus substituted him for, the democratic icons that were his parents. His election and post-election rhetoric of "*kayo ang boss ko*" and *daang matuwid* set on the right track our doubled politics that got derailed by the crisis that was GMA. Then and now, we can comfort and console ourselves that all is well. GMA and her ilk still dominated Congress after the 2010 elections? Well, all became well with the impeachment of then Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez and Chief Justice Renato Corona. Senators, congressmen and countless local politicians plundered the nation's treasury through Janet Napoles' ingenious scheme of channeling pork barrel funds into bogus non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and foundations? All is well now that the Supreme Court declared PDAF and other forms of pork in the national budget illegal and that some of these politicians are imprisoned. Our sovereignty endangered and our police/soldiers dying in a botched US sponsored operation to retrieve or kill terrorists listed in the American order of battle? All is well as suspended Police Chief and Pnoy bosom buddy Purisima is finally fired from the PNP and as the many declared investigative bodies filed their reports incriminating even the

February 27 2016. <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/1987/11/a-damaged-culture-a-new-philippines/7414/>; Benedict Anderson, "Cacique Democracy in the Philippines: Origins and Dreams," in *Discrepant Histories: Translocal Essays on Filipino culture*, ed. Vicente Rafael (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995); John Sidel, *Capital, Coercions, and Crime: Bossism in the Philippines* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

President. We are desperate for the little of what is left of our notional democratic politics to hide what we know and always knew.

But why? Is it because we do not want to face the reality of our lost agency? Because we find that being consoled and comforted by lies is better than being confronted with the reality of our *hayop na politika* –that obscene¹⁹ other of our hoped-for politics? Because we can then ignore politics, escape it and enjoy other facets of our lives: being members of a family, being middle-class, being our online-constructed fantasy-selves in social media?

The identification and analysis of deceit and hypocrisy in Philippine society is not something new. Jaime Bulatao, S.J.²⁰ coined the term *split-level Christianity* to refer to the existence of two contradictory value systems within individuals –wherein adherence to the Christian faith and values is professed while actual action or behavior is determined by a contrary set of norms, beliefs, and ways of living that are primarily cultural and customary. In this particular duplicity, the Christian value system becomes an abstract construct, a notion or an ideal, that excuses, or that hides, actual conflicting behavior. While the concept of split-level Christianity is developed in the 1960's, it is still exceptionally relevant in the case of the "Pajero-Montero Bishops" who accepted luxury sports utility vehicles from then president GMA. The donated vehicles were purchased through PCSO funds that was supposed to be used for medical and health programs. The behavior of these church leaders ran counter to Christian values on two counts: the Catholic Church on the whole is against gambling (which is the business of PCSO) and frowns on the misuse of public funds.²¹

But the case of the Pajero-Montero Bishops also demonstrates political duplicity on two counts: it violated governmental prohibitions on the misuse of funds and the Constitutional prohibitions on the use of public funds to support any religious institution. The rationalization and cover-up that followed after the case was exposed completed the process of how our doubled politics actually work.

Analogously then, we can think of Christian values as corresponding to ideal democratic politics, and the opposed customary behavior as akin to traditional politics. But the opposing values in split-level Christianity do not make a system. Eventually, customary values and their corollary behavior is chosen over Christian values in a

¹⁹ See Slavoj Žižek, "Re-visioning Lacanian Social Criticism: The Law and its Obscene Double," in *Interrogating the Real* (London: Continuum, 2005).

²⁰ Jaime Bulatao, S.J., "Split-level Christianity," in *Phenomena and Their Interpretation: Landmark Essays 1957-1959* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1996).

²¹ Patricia Evangelista, "When the devil eats doughnuts." *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, February 10, 2010. Accessed May 20, 2015. <http://opinion.inquirer.net/inquireropinion/columns/view/20101002-295656/When-the-devil-eats-doughnuts>.

"distancing" that sees it as unrealistic and thus justifiably violated.²² Or if the conflict is unresolved, it leads into a crisis that eventually destroys the individual and society.

The political duplicity in Philippine doubled politics, on the other hand, is stable as both notional democratic politics and traditional politics makes a functioning system. At the beginning of the present administration for example, the President represented the move to impeach then Ombudsman Gutierrez as a democratic goal. If she is out of the way then the cases of graft against officials of the previous administration will prosper, *daang matuwid* will move forward. The same rationalization and framing was used in the impeachment of Chief Justice Corona, also an appointee of GMA. But investigative reports on Gutierrez's impeachment reveal that ways and means of traditional politics were used to convince Congress to impeach the Ombudsman. Pork barrel, budget insertions, the immediate release of funds, etc. were promised and given to those who voted to impeach.²³ In the case of Corona, the workings of *trapo* politics came straight from the horse's mouth when Senator Jinggoy Estrada stood up in a privilege speech to denounce the discriminatory application of justice, revealing in the process that all senators who confirmed the impeachment of the Chief Justice received (or were promised) additional 50 million pesos of PDAF by the administration. Notional democratic politics "hides" the workings of *trapo* politics. Traditional politics, on the other hand, is how our democratic politics work. Crisis only happens when *trapo* politics becomes too obscene and as such cannot be "hidden" as was the case with the crisis of GMA.

The words *hide* and *hidden* above are in quotation marks because, as already asserted, we always know. There is then a level of self-deception in political duplicity that is absent in split-level Christianity. Notional democratic politics is, in actuality, fantasy politics. Its promises are presented to be achievable but are, in reality, impossible with itself as means. *Trapo* politics is the other Philippine politics that must be disavowed in the affirmation of our fantasy democratic politics. As asserted earlier, the relevant concept here is ideology. But since Marx, this concept has evolved in the thoughts of Marxists like Antonio Gramsci (1971) to post-Marxists like Slavoj Zizek.²⁴ Beyond false consciousness, ideology works because we consent to it through the negotiations-like *quid pro quo* between domination and resistance, or because we console ourselves that we can choose

²² See Bulatao, "Split-level Christianity."

²³ See M.G.A. Go, "Deals pork behind impeach votes," in *Newsbreak*, March 22, 2011. Accessed May 20, 2015. <http://www.newsbreak.ph/2011/03/22/belmonte-carried-the-show-for-lp/>.

²⁴ See Slavoj Zizek, "Between Symbolic Fiction and Fantasmatic Spectre: Toward a Lacanian Theory of Ideology;" "Beyond Discourse Analysis;" and "Re-visioning Lacanian Social Criticism: The Law and its Obscene Double;" in *Interrogating the Real*.

otherwise, or because we accept the bribe of the putative post-ideological world: that we can enjoy without the guilt.²⁵

Zizek's point is that in this world-supposed-to-be-without-ideology, the form that ideology takes is disavowal: I know very well that it is not the case but I act as if it is anyway;²⁶ that is, I know very well that "pork barrel" did not go away with the Supreme Court decision to ban its incarnation as PDAF but I act as if it is gone anyway, life goes on.

Why do we this? We know but we act as if we don't know. Using Zizek's concepts, this essay offers the disparate real life examples of the fair-trade Starbucks coffee, the proxy-violence of boxing, and the doubled character of Philippine politics: Fair-trade Starbucks coffee is more expensive but it is fair-trade. Does it mitigate global poverty and the harsh life of farmworkers? Well, no. But we can enjoy our coffee guilt-free. We pay for the privilege. What about Manny Pacquiao? Every fight he says that he fights for us. We rarely experience being citizens of the country but when Pacquiao fights we enjoy the nation/-state as ourselves. We also enjoy violence (the kernel of the nation-state's power) through him. And our politics? Well we know very well that traditional politics is how our notional democracy does politics on the ground but we act as if they are opposed, that someday democracy will triumph and we will finally get rid of traditional politics. The point of this charade is for us to enjoy our politics. Did we not experience this enjoyment even if fleetingly back in 2010? Isn't this the point, at the outset, of the President's *daang matuwid*?

Hayop na Politika against the Common Good

In chapter 18 of *The Prince*, Machiavelli instructs the new prince that there are "two ways of fighting, one with laws and one with force." To fight with laws is properly human, to fight with force is proper to beasts. But if fighting with laws will not suffice, the new prince must turn to force.²⁷

Machiavelli then tells of Achilles and the other princes of old who had Chiron the centaur as teacher: "Having a teacher who is half man and half beast can only mean that the prince must know how to use both these two natures, and that one without the other has no lasting effect."²⁸ At this point, we can recall the previous discussion of our duplicitous politics. This particular passage in *The Prince* is theoretically thin but it can be a supplement the earlier explanation of our doubled politics. But then Machiavelli continues: "Since a prince must know how to use the character of beasts, he should pick for imitation the fox and the lion. As the lion cannot protect himself from traps, and the fox cannot

²⁵ Zizek, "Beyond Discourse Analysis;" 250-251.

²⁶ Zizek, "Between Symbolic Fiction and Fantasmatic Spectre," 234-235.

²⁷ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 47.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.

defend himself from wolves, you have to be a fox in order to be wary of traps, and a lion to overawe the wolves."²⁹ The two beastly traits that are relevant here is cunning and strength. To rely on strength alone is a mistake. Machiavelli concludes: "a prudent prince cannot and should not keep his word" when doing so goes against his interest or when the context of the promise no longer applies.

Pitkin, correctly identifies the beastly trait that Machiavelli prefers.³⁰ One can read the whole book as a manual for foxy cunning, from the early chapters on mixed principalities, how to keep and maintain them when they are conquered by a prince own strength or acquired by crime, and when they are former republics; to the mid-chapters on liberality and stinginess, on whether it is better to be loved or feared, on how to avoid contempt and hatred; and to the later chapters on how to acquire reputation, deal with counselors and avoid flattery. Machiavelli requires the new Prince to be cunning as a fox. But Machiavelli also emphasizes strength in the chapters that deals with prince's need to develop and train his own army. We will address this in the next section, when we discuss Machiavelli's redeemer.

Pitkin attributes Machiavelli's privileging of foxy cunning on his experience as a diplomat for the Florentine republic. His service coincided with the advent of foreign powers in Italy, when the country was shown to be weak militarily. Machiavelli and his cohorts' cunning then must compensate for the republic's lack of strength. The fox became a symbol of asserting autonomy (and manhood) in a condition of weakness. Pitkin is also correct as to how and for whom Machiavelli used his own cunning. It was directed against the enemies of Florence and it was deployed for Florence's good.³¹

In both the cases of the new prince and that of Machiavelli's diplomatic experience, foxy cunning is but means for a good. The good of Machiavelli's diplomatic maneuverings, duplicitousness, and dissimulations is not too problematic. Although Pitkin imagines it being so as enemies and friends within and outside of the republic blur into indistinguishability. This is especially so when Florence lost its republican government and was again under a Medici prince.³²

The problem is the good of the new prince, as Machiavelli seems to equate it with the prince's own interest in the maintenance of his rule over his principality,³³ what later interpreters and commentators termed as *reason of state*; that is, the good of the state is

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman*, 25-51.

³¹ Ibid., 28-29

³² Ibid., 28.

³³ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 5-33.

the state itself.³⁴ Of course this bodes well for autocratic and absolute rule but is an anathema to republican civic virtue.

It is also a problem when one thinks of foxy cunning as widespread, deployed not only by the likes of Machiavelli against the enemies of their country, or of the new prince against his internal and external enemies, but by citizens in general. Ruth Grant³⁵ contends that the social necessity for hypocrisy arises when citizens are seen as competitors in a condition of dependence. The calculated inconstancy of a hypocrite is a means to autonomy. It is a means to free action in a condition of social weakness. But the good here becomes personal and subjective. We cannot expect everyone to be like Machiavelli's Ligurio in his play *Mandragola* in asserting that the "good is what does good to the largest number, and with which the largest number are pleased."³⁶ This case is unlike the case of the new prince wherein it may be argued that his own good is the good of the principality and, hence, is also the good of his subjects.

But in fact, in *The Prince*, Machiavelli tasks the new prince with a duty and an opportunity that sees the prince's maintenance of power only as a means to the highest of good. This task and opportunity is the liberation and unification of the whole of Italy.³⁷

Crucially then, Machiavelli only allows foxy cunning for the new prince in the role of a redeemer or Founder and within the strict confines of the highest good identified in the last chapter of *The Prince*. In this role, foxy cunning must be coupled with leonine strength in the form of the prince's own army, preferably a citizen militia. Beyond this, Machiavelli imagines a different kind of politics for that other exemplar of autonomy that Pitkin identifies: the Citizen.

Is there a counterpart to the fox then in Philippine doubled politics? If with "fox" we mean that cunning half of the new prince who must be manipulative to ensure his rule that is but a means to the highest good of liberating and unifying a divided country, then no. But if we mean Grant's Machiavellian individuals whose cunning inconstancies create a politics of hypocrisy in their vain attempt for autonomy in a condition of dependence, then yes.

In this second interpretation of Machiavelli we find rationalization for traditional politics, exemplified by the Philippine Congress that is usually described in critical media as den of insatiable crocodiles, vultures, and pigs (*buwaya*, *buwitre*, *baboy*), traitorous snakes (*ahas*), and spineless dogs (*tuta*) –beastly politics precisely. How this is the case has been

³⁴ Van Creveld, *The Rise and Decline of the State*, 174-175.

³⁵ Ruth Grant, "Machiavelli and the Case for Hypocrisy," *Hypocrisy and Integrity: Machiavelli, Rousseau, and the Ethics of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

³⁶ Quoted in Pitkin, 30

³⁷ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 69-72; see also Viroli, *Machiavelli*.

addressed and analyzed by a multitude of studies, investigative reports, and books.³⁸ The consensus is that our politicians are primarily motivated by personal and parochial concerns. Their conception of the good is limited by the socio-political institutions of the family or clan, and their political bailiwick. These, of course, run counter to the common good seen in terms of national interests: democratic institutionalization, economic and social development, the empowerment of the poor and marginalized, the defense of the national patrimony, etc. Our *hayop na politika* is precisely oriented against what we generally see as the common good.

One of the seminal and controversial academic accounts of Philippine traditional politics focuses on its historical development. Benedict Anderson³⁹ calls our politics *cacique democracy* and traces its roots to the rise of the *ilustrado* class during Spanish colonialism.

In 1898, the nationalist revolutionary movement became primarily a project of the Filipino elite to take control of the colonial government, questioning “neither its basic assumptions nor its rational purposes.” What the ilustrados wanted to achieve was a transfer of power “to direct the course of [Filipinas’] development.”⁴⁰

There were, of course, more fundamental reasons to this political objective. The ilustrados were, as a class, product of the new Spanish colonial governance that resulted from the Spanish loss of its New World colonies and the end of the galleon trade in the early 19th century. The colonial economy was transformed during this period from a Manila-centered dependence on the Acapulco-China trade into a larger economy that was fully open to international trade. This led to the development of export and commercial agriculture, which in turn spread the demands of the new economy to Manila’s surrounding provinces and also to the islands further south. The beneficiaries of this expansion were local elites, mostly mestizos (Chinese and Spanish), whose lands (inherited, usurped or land-grabbed) became the primary means of developing the economy. Moreover, colonial educational reforms that were aimed to produce a service sector for the economy enabled the sons of local elites, already enabled by their

³⁸ See Shiela Coronel (ed.), *Pork and Other Perks: Corruption and Governance in the Philippines* (Manila: Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, 1998); A.W. McCoy (ed.), *An Anarchy of Families: State and Family in the Philippines* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1993); Shiela Coronel, *Rulemakers: How the Wealthy and Well-born Dominate Congress* (Manila: Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, 2004).

³⁹ See Anderson, “Cacique Democracy in the Philippines.”

⁴⁰ David Sturtevant, *Popular Uprisings in the Philippines, 1840-1940* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), 41.

newfound economic power, to pursue university education within the colony and outside of it – first in Spain and then throughout Europe.⁴¹

The late 19th century colonial economic arrangement was therefore already profitable and advantageous for the Filipino elite. What was denied them were political rights and social status in the colonial hierarchy. The elite's interests as a class then, in terms of transforming relations with Spain and the colonial government, were reform and assimilation.⁴²

The same was true during the American colonial rule. The confiscation of Spanish friar haciendas and properties and their eventual sale enhanced the already secure economic position of the Filipino elite as they were presented with the prospect to further expand their properties. The Filipinization of the colonial national and local governments and the bureaucracy, on the other hand, eventually transferred the effective control of political power to the national and local elites.⁴³

This self-interested Filipino elite objective and strategy aptly conforms to what Frantz Fanon calls the "pitfall of national consciousness"⁴⁴ –the elite aimed at the realization of the Filipino nation through the capture and occupation of the colonial state. This strategy preserved the colonial state's repressive and exploitative structure, which remained useful to the new homegrown power. This eventually allowed the Filipino elite to achieve political and social supremacy without having endangered their economic power.

According to Anderson, the period following the reconstruction after World War II until the declaration of Martial Law in 1972 was the heyday of cacique democracy. The political dynasties of today were established and consolidated. Political elections were decided by guns, goons and gold. Local governments become bailiwicks that ensured places in national politics, especially in Congress. But the Filipino elite were then outmaneuvered and outgunned by Marcos who turned out to be the biggest cacique of all. The whole country became his bailiwick with the help of the military and the wealth that he confiscated from the elites and oligarchs and that he plundered from the nation's coffers.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Anderson, "Cacique Democracy in the Philippines," 5-8; see also Sturtevant, *Popular Uprisings in the Philippines*, 31-34 and John Schumacher, *The Making of a Nation: Essays in Nineteenth-century Filipino nationalism* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press 1996), 16-34.

⁴² Schumacher, *The Making of a Nation*, 30.

⁴³ Anderson, "Cacique Democracy in the Philippines," 10-13; see also Michael Cullinane, *Ilustrado Politics: Filipino Elite Responses to American Rule, 1898-1908* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2003).

⁴⁴ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1968), 151-153.

⁴⁵ Anderson, "Cacique Democracy in the Philippines," 21-23.

Cory's revolutionary government that came into power immediately after the EDSA revolution was the site of struggle between the multitudes of social forces that participated in the people power revolution. From the side of the traditional elite that were marginalized during the dictatorship, there was a big push for national and local elections. National elections were held in May 1987 for twenty-four senatorial and 200 congressional seats. The results was eminently satisfactory for them as they once again dominated Congress. The local election held early the next year (in January 1988) led to the "fuller revival of the ancient regime" as the traditional politicians overwhelming took control of former bailiwicks.⁴⁶

The promise of EDSA, starting at this early point, must now depend on the ways of traditional politics, it's supposed opposite, for its realization.

Messianic Politics and Democratic Fantasy

In the previous section, this essay asserts that Machiavelli only allows foxy cunning for the new prince in the role of a redeemer or Founder and within the strict confines of the highest good identified in the exhortatory last chapter of *The Prince*. In this role as redeemer, foxy cunning must be coupled with leonine strength in the form of the prince's own army, preferably a citizen militia.

This reading of Machiavelli's new prince as redeemer is dependent on interpreting the whole text of *The Prince* in the light of chapter 26, "An Exhortation to Restore Italy to Liberty and Free Her from the Barbarians," precisely the point of Maurizio Viroli⁴⁷ in his recently published book *Redeeming The Prince*. According to Viroli, "Machiavelli did not intend to reveal to the people the prince's vices and incite in them anti-monarchical sentiments. . . [h]e seriously wanted to instruct a new prince, a special sort of new prince. . . " He wrote his masterpiece in order to "design and invoke a redeemer of Italy capable of creating, with God's help, new and good political order, thereby attaining perennial glory."⁴⁸ In another work, Viroli describes Machiavelli as a supreme republican patriot who equates the common good with *patria*. For him, "love of country is a moral force that makes the [individual] capable of understanding what the common good of the [patria] consists of."⁴⁹

Viroli's redeemer, while similar to Pitkin's Founder, is more realistic than "a male figure of superhuman or mythical proportions, who introduces among men something new, good, and sufficiently powerful so that it continues beyond his lifetime on the course

⁴⁶ Ibid., 28-29.

⁴⁷ See Viroli, *Machiavelli*.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 1-3

⁴⁹ Viroli, *Machiavelli*, 156-157.

he has set.”⁵⁰ Thus, the new prince must not only be an innovator or founder⁵¹ by creating new laws or establishing new rules but he must also “follow the example of those excellent men who redeemed their native lands” and soon as “Italy has been waiting too long for a glimpse of her redeemer.”⁵²

Thus, in *The Prince*, “what Machiavelli is therefore telling his readers is not that politics is autonomous from ethics but that the redeemer, because of the moral excellence of his task, deserves special consideration.”⁵³ Machiavelli’s supposed and off-repeated supreme political value then, that the end justifies the means, only applies to one particular end and to one particular actor. If you are a leader aiming to found a new polity and at the same time to redeem your country, then surely the means justifies the end for you. If not then, of course, your end will not justify your means. Grant’s cunningly inconstant individuals jockeying for their own personal autonomy and our very own political versions of foxes, crocodiles, pigs, vultures –traditional Philippine politicians working against the common good– will find no support and justification in Machiavelli’s political theory.

Both Pitkin and Viroli note that Machiavelli’s image of the new prince quickly merges with the founder and the prophet right at the outset of his masterpiece. The Athenian founder Theseus, the Persian founder Cyrus, and the Roman founder Romulus are all exemplars to the new prince. But while seemingly dismissing Moses because he was ostensibly only implementing the plans of God, Machiavelli returns to him again in his concluding assertion that the new prince must be an armed prophet to win.⁵⁴ Viroli, emphasizes this connection to God as Machiavelli himself invokes it for the new prince in his role as redeemer in his exhortation: Italy “implores God to send someone to free her,” the prince’s own “illustrious house. . . favored by God and the Church,” his potential for greatness that rests on his own *virtu* as “God will not do everything lest he deprive us of our free will. . . .”⁵⁵ These connect to an important assertion that Viroli makes; that is, the model that Machiavelli outlines in his exhortation “shows some features of millenarianism.”⁵⁶ The “Machiavellian founder, and the people devoutly following him, are instruments of God, [and t]he glory that they gain goes also to God. . . . [i]f the exodus is the paradigm of radical emancipatory politics, then Machiavelli’s *Prince* is surely a book on political emancipation.”⁵⁷

⁵⁰ Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman*, 52.

⁵¹ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 17.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 71-72.

⁵³ Viroli, *Machiavelli*, 18.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 26; Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman*, 52-59; see also Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 14-18.

⁵⁵ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 70-71.

⁵⁶ Viroli, *Machiavelli*, 14.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

Is there a counterpart to Machiavelli's redeemer in Philippine politics? Virolí's point about the redeemer's millenarian characteristics shows the way to possible reinterpretations of particular political events in the country. In the light of the importance of faith in the 1986 EDSA revolution, the redeemer is present in our democratic politics that we experience at the same time as messianic. Here, messianic politics is understood to refer to the view and experience of political emancipation as political salvation, a kind of redemption.

Prior to the 2010 elections, two deaths symbolized and encapsulated the widely felt political foreboding: FPJ's and Cory's. These deaths were and still are symbolic of democratic political salvation in its death throes: with the death of FPJ is the dying of the mass hope for political salvation; with Cory's death is the dying of the democratic hopes of the middle class. The question then, especially with regards to GMA and the coming elections was: Is political salvation for both the middle class and the masa still possible in the failure of the many attempts at people power (even when Cory was still alive and calling for GMA's resignation) and the lack of alternative among the possible presidential candidates for 2010?

FPJ is a messianic figure in a way homologous to Cory's messianic significance among the Filipino middle class. In FPJ's films, he is always portrayed as a hero who embodies and not only represent masa aspirations. FPJ's candidacy in the 2004 elections made his messianic movie persona available for political appropriation by the masa. The popular middle class view then was (and still is) that the masses are easily misled because they lack the capacity to critically understand society and their role in it. They are better represented and their interests mediated by government, civil society, and the elite. But what scholars and pundits who questioned the rationality of the mass vote⁵⁸ missed then was precisely that FPJ's popularity among the masses was an expression of their longing for a rational democratic politics of their own.

This kind of thinking directed against the masa is what Reynaldo Ileto⁵⁹ criticizes in his historical work on popular movements and uprisings during the colonial times. The uprisings are generally dismissed as "blind reactions," irrational, primitive and counter-revolutionary. They are usually understood through a historical narrative that centers on the rational and liberal aspirations of the Filipino middle class and elite. Thus compared or seen through the lenses of the elite led revolution that established the first Philippine Republic, the account of mass uprisings were relegated to the fringes or completely

⁵⁸ See for example Randy David, "The Middle Class and the Poor," in *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (January 10, 2004); and "The Making of the 'Masa' Vote," in *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, (February 7, 2004).

⁵⁹ Reynaldo Ileto, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910* (Quezon City: Ateneo De Manila University Press, 1998).

excised from official Philippine history. Iletto seeks to understand mass uprisings during colonial times “in their own terms.” What he presents then is a “history from below,” drawn out from popular culture of the time, poetry, songs and myths, which he asserts as indicative of the workings of the popular mind.⁶⁰

Iletto’s history is of particular importance to this essay because of the parallels, then and now, in how the elite and the authorities perceive the Filipino masses and their traditions. The masses were, for example, dismissed then by some ilustrados as *pobres y ignorantes* and therefore stumbling blocks to the revolution because of their belief in fairy tales.⁶¹ Colonial authorities, meanwhile, dismissed rural rebellions as “unimportant local phenomena attributable in large part to peasant naiveté or to the nefarious activities of a few self-styled leaders.”⁶² These “self-styled leaders” are popes, messiahs, Christs, and living gods.⁶³

Indeed, one can trace continuity between FPJ’s messianic movie persona and the popular production and appropriation of the messianic figure recounted in Iletto’s work. And with FPJ’s death as political passing, one thing was made clear to the masa: their political salvation is no longer possible. And thus we are now confronted with a Filipino mass living up to its name: politically indiscernible, fractured into many impotent subjectivities, incapable of agency.⁶⁴

The death of Cory was threatening to do the same to the middle class. People power is no longer a weapon if it can result to someone like GMA. The problem was that all the then presidential candidates for the 2010 elections were tainted with traditional politics. There was also no assurance that they will not turn out to be traditional politicians as our politics is precisely defined by it. After all GMA was supposed to be a technocrat first and a political family’s daughter second.

We know how this story of redemption and loss redemption turned out. Cory’s death made her son, a so-so Senator, into winnable presidential aspirant. We ignored Noyonoy Aquino’s credential as scion of two prominent traditional political families and instead pinned our hopes on his substituting for the democratic symbols that are his parents. To some extent this failed redemption succeeded. It resuscitated a democratic

⁶⁰ Ibid., 3-8.

⁶¹ See note 9 in Reynaldo Iletto, “Tagalog Poetry and Image of the Past during the War against Spain” in *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, ed. Anthony Reid and David Marr (Singapore: Heinemann Educational Books, 1979), 381.

⁶² Iletto, *Pasyon and Revolution*; see also Sturtevant, *Popular Uprisings in the Philippines*, 141.

⁶³ Iletto, *Pasyon and Revolution*; see also Sturtevant, *Popular Uprisings in the Philippines*, 120-138.

⁶⁴ See Jean Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities . . . or The End of the Social*, trans. by Paul Foss, Paul Patton and John Johnston (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983).

hope that is encompassing enough to once again hide our shame exposed by GMA's obscene politics, to once again hide what must be hidden. It allowed our doubled politics to work again.

Political Salvation without a Messiah

Is political salvation without a messiah possible?⁶⁵ The point is not to extricate ourselves from the politics of emancipation but to free such emancipatory politics from the image of the founder or redeemer. After all, Machiavelli himself reserves his highest praise for the autonomy and manhood, not of the fox nor the Founder but, of the Citizen.⁶⁶

According to Pitkin, the "manhood of Citizenship is clearly tied to Machiavelli's republicanism, his deep commitment to politics, and his passionate love of Florence."⁶⁷ Being a Citizen means "interaction in mutuality with others like oneself," it lies in "shared taking charge of one's objective connections" with other citizens. As Machiavelli puts in chapter titles in his *Discourses*, "Each Man by Himself is Weak" but "The Populace [*la plebe*] United is Strong."⁶⁸ It is through Citizen mutuality that the shared public good is sustained and pursued. This mutuality is practiced as participation that must be "genuine active and independent, with each individual exercising his own judgement and

⁶⁵ The contradiction inherent in the concept of a political messiah is, of course, not only limited to Pitkin's formulation; that is, that the Founder murders his brothers and children, and that the Citizen cannot beget himself. There is also conflict between the dual roles of redeemer and founder/legislator in the sense that one who redeems harks to a paradise lost and one who founds begins something new. There is also the conflict between the religiosity of redemption and the secular-political character of founding. But a more fundamental paradox on the seeming impossibility of the messianic task is identified by Walter Benjamin ("Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. with an introduction by Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968) and extended by Giorgio Agamben ("The Messiah and the Sovereign: The Problem of Law in Walter Benjamin," in *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999). In Benjamin's formulation, the messianic time identified with the "real" state of exception is presented with the impasse of the normality of the "state of exception" in which we live. Agamben traces this to the structure of Sovereign power embodied in the Law that neither commands nor prohibits but that effects itself as such (it effects itself through its suspension: the state of exception or martial law). Applied to the (political) messiah, how can he redeem us back to this empty originary Law that is also the basis of a new order?

⁶⁶ Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman*, 80-105.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 81.

initiative.⁶⁹ The required context or condition is plurality and opposition. For Machiavelli: "A republic, being able to adapt herself, by means of the diversity among her body of citizens, to a diversity of temporal condition better than a prince can, is of greater duration than a principedom and has good fortune longer."⁷⁰

Is the image of the Citizen the way then for political salvation without the need for a redeemer? But in Machiavelli's political theory the Citizen is precisely borne out of a founding by a redeemer or Founder. It is the hope of the last chapter of *The Prince* that a new Italy of new laws and new order may be found at last by the new prince. Pitkin recognizes this when she characterizes the Founder as "only a means to Machiavelli's real good: the new uncorrupted society to be created."⁷¹ Viroli echoes this as he asserts that the prince "of *The Prince* is not the founder of a reigning dynasty but the founder of an independent state with good armies and good laws that may evolve, and that Machiavelli would like to see evolving, in a republic."⁷² For Viroli, the founder/redeemer is necessary for Machiavelli's republic. He asserts that what Machiavelli does in his masterpiece is to "delineate the image of the founder and redeemer that republican political theory needs." He argues that Machiavelli expressly tells us this: "If princes are superior to peoples in ordering laws, forming civil lives, and ordering new statutes and orders, peoples are so much superior in maintaining things ordered that without doubt they attain the glory of those who order them."⁷³

Pitkin, however, finds irresolvable contradictions in Machiavelli's images of the Founder and the Citizen. Pitkin asserts that the Founder, in the act of founding, murders his own brothers and children. This makes the transition from Founder to Citizen impossible as the Founder is supposed to father citizens. Machiavelli, himself, is aware of this as he made exemplars of Romulus and Brutus who one after the other founded Rome and then its republic. Machiavelli saw the necessity of Romulus' murder of his brother Remus. Brutus, on the other hand, is argued to be right in condemning his sons to death after they conspired to bring monarchical rule back to Rome.⁷⁴ If the paternal Founder is to give way to fraternal citizenship, then the Founder must be overthrown.

If we are to believe Mary Dietz,⁷⁵ *The Prince* itself is Machiavelli's solution to the Medici prince. It is a book of deception and sabotage that aimed to unravel the prince's rule over Florence. The means to this are deceitful specific advices that when

⁶⁹ Ibid., 82.

⁷⁰ Quoted in *ibid.*, 82.

⁷¹ Ibid., 80.

⁷² Viroli, *Machiavelli*, 18.

⁷³ Ibid., 19.

⁷⁴ Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman*, 59-61.

⁷⁵ Mary Dietz, "Trapping the prince: Machiavelli and the politics of deception." *American Political Science Review* 80 (1986).

implemented will undermine his power. Actually, we can be justified in thinking this way. Machiavelli advises the new prince to ensure that he be feared rather than loved but elsewhere, he faults the failure of the conspiracy of the later Brutus (in Roman history) to bring back the republic against Caesar's rule as "the Roman populace loved" Caesar and thus "avenged him."⁷⁶ Did Machiavelli mean for the new Medici prince to be unloved and, as such, for the success of conspiracies against him to be more likely?

But even if this were so, the bigger problem of the Citizen that Pitkin identifies remain insurmountable: the Citizen cannot father itself.⁷⁷ He needs a Founder to father him but he must then risk his death at the hands of his progenitor.

But then, as asserted in the beginning of this essay, Machiavelli lived before the age of revolutions and as such was denied their experiences and lessons. The exemplar of revolution would have solve this paradox in Machiavelli's image of the Citizen as revolutions precisely are means for citizens to beget themselves. But Arendt herself credits Machiavelli as the "spiritual father of revolution in the modern sense." This is because he wanted "to revive the spirit and institution of the Roman antiquity which later became so characteristic of the political thought of the eighteenth century."⁷⁸

Here, it is helpful to recall a relevant assertion in Arendt's *On revolution*: revolution—as an appropriation of the political by individuals acting together— as an exemplar of political action.

Among human activities, Arendt favors action, the proper activity within the political realm because it is eminently interactive and interpersonal. Action places an individual among other humans. Action is how human beings mutually transcend nature, interact with others, create the new, and distinguish themselves. Practically, action is the disclosure of the agent through speech and deed; it is the distinction or differentiation of the agent from all others within the plurality of the public realm.⁷⁹ Action implies plurality: "While all aspects of the human condition are somehow related to politics, this plurality is specifically the condition —not only the *conditio sine qua non*, but the *conditio per quam*— of all political life."⁸⁰ Action, as it is the activity of a multitude of humans, is plural. It is always deployed in contradistinction with other actions. This is the basis of the earlier claim that politics is agonistic. This plurality engenders what Arendt calls the calamities of action—the unpredictability of its outcome, the irreversibility of its processes, "the haphazardness and moral irresponsibility in a plurality of agents."⁸¹

⁷⁶ Quoted in Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman*, 98.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁷⁸ Arendt, *On Revolution*, 30-32 and 197.

⁷⁹ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 30-31, 175-77.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 220-222.

Returning to Arendt's work on revolution, she asserts that what the eighteenth century Americans called "public happiness" can be equated to the French "public freedom," and the difference of terms indicate that what was but passion in France was an experience in America.⁸² The eventual changes in American governance, which came to value the private pursuit of happiness (turned private welfare) as enabled by laws and norms, do not reflect the revolutionary spirit that motivated the American Revolution. Public happiness is the actual practice of freedom, of being involved and finding pleasure in the conduct of public business, and in direct political action.⁸³

This is precisely what revolution is all about, according to Arendt. It is liberation from oppression that "aims at least at the constitution of freedom." It entails "a sense of a new beginning, where violence is used to constitute an altogether different form of government, to bring about the formation of a new body politic."⁸⁴

Here, we seem to have answered what Pitkin identifies as a fatal problem in Machiavelli's image of the Citizen. The Citizen can father itself into citizens through revolution. In such a case, the Citizen appears both as founder and redeemer. But not really, as we now need to drop the capital letter C in Pitkin's formulation. After all, in Arendt's formulation revolution is a practice and thus we must leave the ideal type of the Citizen behind. Through revolution, citizens found something new –a beginning. And through revolution, citizens redeem themselves.

Was 1986 EDSA such a case then? Are we citizens that can be confidently likened to Machiavelli's imagined republican citizen? Do we possess the republican citizens' virtues. Do we have *virtu*?

If there is one fatal failure in the EDSA revolution of 1986 it is that as Citizens of a hoped-for democratic politics, we failed to beget ourselves as such.

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⁸² Arendt, *On Revolution*, 115.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 124-125.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

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