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Agustin Martin G. Rodriguez

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How *Kristo* Democratized *Langit*: The Discourse of Liberation in Christianized *Katagalugan*

Agustin Martin G. Rodriguez

Abstract: This paper is a philosophical exploration on the native appropriation of the Christian rationality for the creation of a discourse of genuine liberation. This appropriation stimulated the native creation of the discourse of *Kaharian ng Langit* which shaped the millenarian revolts, the Revolution of 1896, and even subsequent reform and liberation movements in the Philippines. Through a hermeneutical reflection on the *babaylan* cosmology and the transformation of the concept of the ideal society during the Spanish colonization, the author will show how the indigenous rationality created a new vision of a good society from the imposed colonizing rationality which it appropriated to their own *babaylan* cosmology. The study will begin by articulating the native concept of a balanced cosmos where humans and spirits of nature are engaged in systems of mutual flourishing. It will then show how the imposition of the *Pasyon* cosmology enriched the *babaylan* cosmos by breaking heaven open for the *ducha* to consider such as a realm of power into which the *ducha* could tap into for empowerment. The paper will argue that this democratization of *Langit*, which made it accessible to the *ducha*, allowed them to imagine a better world that would liberate them from the *bayang sawi* created by the Spanish and this image allowed for the millenarian revolts and Katipunan revolution and continues to influence liberation movements in this nation.

Keywords: *Katipunan, Pasyon, Bayang Sawi, Revolution of 1896, Florante at Laura*

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I. Preliminary Apologia

As the world stands at the precipice of global catastrophe, with the Earth warming to dangerous levels, and the gains achieved in just and democratic governance eroding, we are called to radically re-examine how we have built the contemporary world order. In the age of the Anthropocene, it is the duty of thinkers to examine deeply the roots of our species' (self-) destructiveness and the possible paths of hope. By now, it should be clear to most thinkers who have studied the emergence and development of the various crises, threatening life as we know it, that the systems that orient human civilizations toward worldwide destructiveness were the fruit of certain developments from Western modernity. The ways of seeing and being that allow contemporary humans to reduce nature and their fellow sapiens to abstractions in totalizing systems need to be questioned or interrogated in order to expose their inherent destructiveness. At the same time, it is necessary to show that there are other ways of seeing and being—particularly seeing and being as creative communities—other than those rooted in Western rationalities. It is particularly ironic that as the world awakens to the limitations and totalitarian tendencies of Western rationalities, thinkers whose concern is to rethink civilization, still mainly use Western frameworks for critique. How radical can our critiques be if we seek for alternative ways of collective being modeled after the frameworks of European thinkers? Even the most radical Western philosophers are only as radical as their own effective prejudices allow.

This essay is an attempt to dialogue with possible sources of Philippine social philosophy to articulate the sources of our vision of the good society, originally known as the *Kaharian ng mga Tagalog*, that informs the Filipino reform and liberation imagination. Through a hermeneutical reflection on various literary works that give an insight into the *babaylan* cosmology to the Bonifacio and Jacinto writings, this paper will show how the indigenous rationality creatively subverted the colonizing rationality imposed upon them and created a discourse of genuine liberation by appropriating it into their own native cosmology. This appropriation stimulated the native creation of the discourse of *Kaharian ng Langit*, which shaped the millenarian revolts, the Revolution of 1896, and even subsequent reform and liberation movements in the Philippines. The study will begin by articulating the native concept of a balanced cosmos where humans and spirits of nature are engaged in systems of mutual flourishing. It will then show how the imposition of the *Pasyon* cosmology enriched the *babaylan* cosmos by breaking heaven open for the *ducha* and showing how heaven was a realm of power into which the *ducha* could draw from for empowerment. I will argue that this transformation toward the democratization of *Langit*,

which made it accessible to the *ducha*, allowed them to imagine a better world than the *bayang sawi* imposed by the Spanish and inspired the millenarian revolts and Katipunan revolution. The resulting vision of *Kaharian ng mga Tagalog* as an ideal society will produce the foundational image that will endure as we imagine and build the Philippine Republic.

We will examine creative works that have been embraced by various Filipino peoples as exemplars of literary production because these works concretize shared systems of valuation that define our collective existence. Classic works of art can be like model persons in a Schelerian sense. A model person is one who, in her concretization of self, makes present a system of values or the order of the heart that guides a people's self-realization.¹ Like model persons, classic works embody ethos-defining systems of valuation in such a way that attracts people to read, perform, and celebrate the work.² People cherish classic works because they make present the system of values and the conception of reality that guide their being in the world. Thus, if we wish to articulate our people's deepest understanding of what it means to be a people, and what kind of societies we aspire to build and dwell in, we need to engage the works that we have held dear or have held up as treasures of our cultures. For this particular exploration, the sources are mostly drawn from the canon of written and oral literature because this is the main form of expression of Tagalog social theory leading to the revolution, and even up to today's social and political reform movements.

This work is an invitation to the practitioners of philosophy in the Philippines and other colonized rationalities to philosophize with their people despite the absence of traditional forms of philosophical thinking. This essay is a philosophizing with the margins of philosophical thinking in order to bring their voice to the dominant philosophical discourse for the transformation of the global civilization in crisis. It uses a philosophical lens to articulate the social theory at the heart of their expressions of the good society, their idea of a good human life, and their cosmology, so that we can lay bare the theory of the good society which draws from other sources of wisdom. If philosophy is the kind of thinking that seeks to articulate the radical roots that ground the meaning of human existence, then we must draw from these alternate sources to realize a more critical and rooted philosophical thinking.

¹ Max Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 587.

² Alfons Deekens, *Process and Permanence in Ethics: Max Scheler's Moral Philosophy* (New York: Pauline Press, 1974), 94.

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II. The Catastrophe of Colonialism

In “The Turning,” Heidegger wrote about how salvation can be found in the rising of the danger. He was talking here about the rising of the modern, enframing mind of Western rationality and how it brought humanity to the danger of the forgetfulness of Being.³ He argues that the coming of the danger brought with it the potential for salvation, as if going through the forgetfulness was necessary for humanity to enter into a more authentic relationship with *Sein* which ordains. Catholics have a similar conception of the fall of Adam. In the Easter exclamation, “Oh happy fault,” the fall of humanity in our sinfulness made the incarnation necessary. And with the incarnation, human beings were able to share in God’s being.

The fall that brings about salvation is an archetypal frame for understanding human history. As the story of humanity continues to unfold, there seem to be epochs of danger where a threat to human flourishing and becoming defines the times which brings with it a potential for the flourishing it impedes. Colonialism is a particular danger that shaped the world, the destructiveness of which echoes in many of the continuing disasters of the contemporary world. Much of the conflicts we see in Africa and the Middle East are legacies of the thoughtless plunder and impositions of Western civilizations. World poverty, whether we wish to admit it or not, is a legacy of the imposition of Western economic and political systems that allowed the West to maintain its global extraction system. In this paper, I will discuss how in the catastrophic danger brought by the imposition of colonization, there was an ambiguous gift given to the conquered people. It seems that through the system that imposed the catastrophic global extraction world order, fertile ideas would be appropriated by the natives from the colonizer in the natives’ creative reimagination of their cosmology. The introduction of *Kristo* and *Langit* were germs of ideas that would stir the people to imagine and articulate a good society rooted in the promise of the absolute—the transcendent fullness of being—which was not in the imagination of the pre-Hispanic rationality. Certainly, the pre-Hispanic world order was an original naïveté—a functional world that has its own balance rooted in the people’s solidarity with each other and nature. However, with the destruction of the native’s world and their original naïveté, the Spaniards unwittingly brought the germ of an idea that would allow a quantum leap in our imagination that would awaken our people to the infinite good as the ground of a just society.

In the Philippines, the lives of the native peoples were disrupted to the extent that large portions of its population were rendered marginalized.

³ Martin Heidegger, “The Turning,” *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1977).

It has been established that before the Spanish incursion, the various peoples of the archipelago had functioning, if not flourishing, civilizations. Scattered across the archipelago, organized into trading networks, were viable communities that had their own economic, political, and social systems. Various Filipino civilizations had organized themselves in a way that conformed to the archipelagic geography, taking advantage of the water systems for transportation and trade.⁴ The small, variously affiliated communities suited the archipelago because of the difficulty in building centralized governments across separated islands. Governing each community were community leaders led by the *datu* (who was the village chief), the locksmith (who was the creator of tools of life and war), and the *babaylan*.⁵ *Babaylans* were particularly important because they were in charge of the well-being of the community. They were herbalists, healers of body and psyche, story tellers, musicians, and culture bearers. They knew well the culture of their people and passed it on from generation to generation, teaching their people a particular cosmology that believed that communal solidarity, cosmic harmony, and the ability to build a fruitful relationship with all beings would lead to the realization of a good life.⁶

By most accounts, the people of the Philippines did not suffer from any catastrophic hardships. The world of the natives was meaningful and could be successfully navigated by anyone immersed in its systems of meaning.⁷ The marginalization of massive sections of the population still has to occur in pre-Hispanic Philippines. It was a world where it was possible for people to flourish if they knew the cosmology well enough and could build fruitful relationships with the persons in their community, including the spirits that had knowledge about nature and could effect changes in it. Nature too was abundant enough to support the small civilization that dwelt in the archipelago. In these times of equilibrium between the people and their world, they had a sense of a world at balance. Whenever it was disturbed,

⁴ Patricio N. Abinales and Donna J. Amoroso, *State and Society in the Philippines* (Pasig City: Anvil Publishing, 2005).

⁵ Zeus Salazar, "Babaylan sa kasaysayan," in *Kababaihan sa kalinangan ng Pilipino*, ed. by Mary Dorothy dL. Jose and Atoy M. Navarro (Quezon City: C&E Publishing, Inc., 2010).

⁶ Mary John Mananzan, "The Filipino women: Before and after the Spanish conquest," in *Essays on Women*, revised ed., ed. by Sr. Mary John Mananzan, OSB (Manila: The Institute of Women's Studies, St. Scholastica's College, 1989).

⁷ This is borne out by the fact that no major historian discusses prehistoric Philippine society as suffering from any major forms of marginalization and exploitation. Although the *alipin* system was practiced, the *alipin* (even those captured in battle) were socially mobile as long as they could navigate the socio-political system. Of course, we cannot know exactly how life was lived in those times, however, it is clear that there are no expressions among these people of any sense that their world faced great challenges that made the natives express the need to imagine a better world order. Abinales and Amoroso (2010) and Luis Francia (2010) are some of the more recent histories and they describe pre-Hispanic Filipino life similarly.

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equilibrium could be restored through negotiations effected through ritual. And when the world was in equilibrium, life was good. I draw these insights from the cosmology attested to by living *babaylans* interviewed by the ethnomusicologist, Grace Nono.⁸ I use her interviews because they present primary texts which reveal the indigenous people's conception of the universe articulated by these *babaylans*. Their songs are primary texts that clearly reflect the perspectives of a traditional rationality that survived centuries of being imposed upon.

In the *babaylan* cosmos, the world is filled with spirits. Nature is the dwelling place of persons who share the world with us. They are powerful because they have certain forms of knowledge about nature and the world that we do not have. They are also powerful because they are of the same world but in a different plane from us. The spirits understand nature in a different way and can bring about fortune and misfortune for us. They are not necessarily beings of power themselves, but spirits can communicate with other spirits who are powerful. Beings of power in this cosmos are beings who can affect things in nature because they know how to free up creative energies in our bodies and in nature's body. These beings are not gods, but are persons just like us. Their power comes with their ability to know how nature works and how to make things happen either through the manipulation of nature or the ability to negotiate with those who can manipulate nature.⁹

The well-being of these other persons of nature is just as dependent on our attendance. If we do not engage them with rituals and offerings, they feel neglected and perhaps weakened. They need our attention and devotion and receive it through ritual offerings. Thus, there is always the *tampo*, or making manifest of their sadness and displeasure, about their being forgotten in the ritual discourses.¹⁰ It is in the interest of humans to keep attending to these spirits because humans' well-being is tied to the good relations humans have with the spirits. The spirits can ensure a good harvest, good health, protection from bad luck or the effects of ill-will from powerful persons, and even protection against the more disastrous effects of nature. Thus, one wants powerful or capable spirits to be bound in a relationship of mutual benefit with one's self. Spirits can be pleased and appeased so that they can make things happen in the world—in one's body, relationships, and fortunes.

⁸ Grace Nono, *Song of the Babaylan*, (Quezon City: Institute of Spirituality in Asia, 2013).

⁹ This picture of the Babaylan cosmology I draw from the Tagbanua and Tausug babaylan whom Grace Nono interviewed. These are babaylan from indigenous communities that are closer to pre-colonial conceptions of the world. However, reading the book, one will see that the *babaylan* who are influenced by the Islamic and Christian traditions bear similar cosmologies that are populated by different, but similar spirits. I use Nono's texts because they are the closest we have to living oral traditions closest to that of our ancestors. (Nono, *Song...*)

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Spirits are generally not good or evil. They are persons like us, who need respect like all persons of power do. The key is to learn the ways of making spirits helps us. Spirits themselves reveal these ways to the community through the *babaylan*.

In this *babaylan* cosmos, the community seeks equilibrium with the community of persons in order to attain well-being. The spiritual world is just another plane of the cosmos and is not a transcendent or fuller realm, but is attuned to powers or energies that govern the world. The *babaylan's* role is to keep the community in balance with the spirits because people desire to maintain well-being and the *babaylans'* connectedness to the spirit world is particularly focused on doing this. Traditional rationalities do not seem to have any particular ambitions beyond the maintenance of well-being by maintaining the community of persons that supports it. As long as equilibrium is maintained, the community is sustainable and people do not seem to have any intense desire for development or expansion. This is reflected in their world picture. Let us take two examples.

In the Agusan, Manobo cosmos, the highest order is Yangit where Magbabaja (the creator) lives. The realm below it is Inugtuhan where *nayugoy no utow* or ancestral mythic heroes and *gilibong* or the immortal *babaylan* go straight to from life on earth. Pasak is where human beings dwell. Here, humans dwell with *diwata* who are invisible persons, as well as *teabobong*, who are mountain spirits that care for forests. Didayon to pasak is below Pasak. It is the place where Maibuyan, the city of the dead, is situated. The eaters of the dead (*tegbusaw*) live in Didayon to pasak.¹¹

In an alternate cosmology of the Tagbanua, the highest realm is heaven where the creator god, Magindusa, and the female god, Tabod, live. Earth is where *diwata* or unseen spirits (*tilad manen*, *Kyapuon-puon nit mosa*) live. The *Tilad manen* are the dead who assist the living by revealing the causes of sickness and their cures. *Panyaen nga Kasurigan* are forest dwellers or underworld spirits who can do harm and are hard to talk to but are very powerful and can be made allies who can mediate for people. The souls of people (*kirarurwa*) join Tubod and Mangindusa in heaven when they die. They cultivate their relationship with their helper spirits through offerings called the *pagdiwata*. It is an act of thanksgiving, as well as an occasion for healing and problem solving. It was performed before sowing and harvesting activities, for curing sickness, as an act of thanksgiving for good health and for a good year. They must be performed properly so as not to offend the *diwata*.¹²

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

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This immersion into the *babaylan* cosmology gives us a sense of how the world was like for the pre-Hispanic population. For the *babaylan* rationality, the world is a web of interconnected persons, a web of mutual dependence, where persons need each other to flourish. But one needs to know the terms of relations between beings, what is appropriate and inappropriate, hurtful and respectful. There are always feelings to be considered, a hierarchy to maintain, and the good of others to serve. And so, there is a general need to be mindful and a constant need to preserve and restore relationships. The whole cosmology of the *babaylan* is about maintaining the order of mutual respect and help, of which one is a part, whether one is alive or dead. It seems the gods or the creator gods are not so involved in this world order. They are the original creative beings but they are not involved in the daily lives of people. In this cosmos, human beings continue to live in a particular plane of reality. There is no way past it nor is there a desire to hope for or aspire for a transcendent life. The only important concern of people is to keep the balance of well-being by preserving relationships among persons or being in this world. There was no need for a transcendent heaven. One lives life according to its cycles of life and birth, good fortune and tragedy. There is no heaven promising eternal, beatific life to look forward to. There were no catastrophic events the community could not recover from or needed salvation from. Death was no great catastrophe but a movement to another life, which according to most accounts was just like this life, only in another plane.

III. The Babaylan Cosmology

Without romanticizing the precolonial world order, one can say that the natives had a sense of well-being in precolonial Philippines. Based on traces of their cosmic imagination, they did not have to escape to a better afterlife to complete this one. With the coming of the Spaniards, this general state of equilibrium seems to have been disturbed. Firstly, the benevolent spirits on whom the people's well-being was dependent, were labeled demons, and the old "religion" demonic and ineffective. The new imposed religion rendered useless all their own rituals that ensured equilibrium, survival, and freedom from suffering and want, because they drove the *babaylan* into hiding.¹³ In this way, the people lost their connection to the spirits and the means to ensure their spiritual, psychological, and physical health.

Secondly, livelihood systems and production systems were transformed. From active trade and farming economies that allowed for the

¹³ Salazar, *Babaylan*.

flourishing of centers of trade in Manila and Cebu, local economic activity was refocused to serve the extraction activities of the Spaniards. Local populations that were unfortunate enough to fall under Spanish rule were made to produce food for the colonials to support their main settlement in Manila and for the wealth accumulation of Spaniards whom the crown saw fit to reward with native land and labor.¹⁴ Instead of a world of mutual responsibility, their cosmos became exploitative. Thus, people began to experience their world as the land of suffering and strife.

With the new world order, the locals had to toil harder for the needs of the colonizers. The people were also thrown into strife when the Spanish used the local leaders to become part of their extraction system as collectors of imposed tributes. Because of this new situation, the colonized population experienced their world as a *bayan ng dilim* — at least that is how the Spaniards defined it. For the Spanish, it was a world deprived of Heaven's light. And so, as the Spanish imposed their rationality upon the populace, the suffering of the natives was initially framed as the torments inflicted on the ignorant by the demons of this world. As the friars taught the natives about Christ and the light of Heaven, and the evil that demons do, the natives were taught to attribute their suffering to the evil spirits in the world, and not to the colonial impositions of the Spaniards. In this regime, natives were taught to look at themselves as ignorant children who needed the friars to teach them the ways of the Spanish to protect them from evil.¹⁵ In various texts, like the *Pasyons*, the *sermones*, and catechisms from various friars, the natives were referred to as ignorant victims of demons.¹⁶ Thus, the conquered were made to attribute their suffering to the malice of powerful, evil spirits. However, in time, the native populace awakened to the less supernatural cause of their suffering.

In the classic poem *Florante at Laura*, the actual, human cause of the natives' suffering was articulated for the first time.¹⁷ For the first time, the ills of good people were seen as the fruits of the acts of evil men in a perverse society. In a world where the deceitful were valorized and ruled over the good people, good people suffered. Instead of a community of solidarity

¹⁴ Abinales and Amoroso, *Philippine State*.

¹⁵ Almario, *Pag-ibig ni Andres Bonifacio*.

¹⁶ See for example Francisco Blancas de San Jose, OP, *Sermones*, ed. by Jose Mario Francisco, S.J. (Quezon City: Pulong: Sources for Philippine Studies, Ateneo de Manila University, 1994) and Juan de Oliver, OFM., *Declaracion de la Doctrina Christiana en Idioma Tagalog*, ed. by Jose M. Cruz, S.J. (Quezon City: Pulong: Sources for Philippine Studies, Ateneo de Manila University, 1995) where they teach the natives the necessity of clinging close to the rituals of the church as a protection against the temptations and the afflictions of the devils. The beginning of the Pasyon Genesis which begins with an invocation to the Virgin for her protections against all evils. These works propagated the image of the world as one that was ruled by malicious spirits which caused their suffering.

¹⁷ Francisco Balagtas, *Florante at Laura*, (Quezon City: Adarna Publishing House, 2003).

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where persons were engaged in systems of mutual responsibility defined by the values of communion, they began to see their world as ruled by the negative values of greed and self-aggrandizement.

In the poem, the deceit of Conde Adolfo allowed for Florante to be exiled from his land and from the woman he loves, essentially from his joy and well-being. Being exiled, he languishes in a dark forest tied to a tree. Virgilio Almario claims that this is the experience of the native in the colonial world. The people suffered because their *bayan*, or the dwelling of their community, is captive to a darkness which is the reign of negative values in the hearts of the populace.¹⁸ Balagtas expresses the inversion of values in the *bayang sawi* in the following verses:

- 14 *kagalingan at bait nililibing sa dusa at pighati*
15 *magandang asal pinupukol*
 balang magagaling ibinabaon at inilibing ng
 walang kabaong
16 *lilo't masamang loob/sa trono ng puri ay iniluklok*¹⁹

In Florante's world there is an extreme reversal of the values of the good. Who will restore the *bayang sawi* to its right order?

Langit or Heaven is the ultimate power that can restore the good. In this lament, we can see that he calls on *Langit* to bring things to right. He is actually astonished at how *Langit* is allowing this darkness to prevail. For Florante, the *bayan* is the realm where righteousness is upheld, goodness is rewarded, love realized and fulfilled, and genuine communion binds the people. Thus, he expresses his astonishment at how the violations of the will of *Langit* go unpunished and are even rewarded. However, following the logic of the cosmos of fairy tales, all good is restored in the end. The people realize how deceived they were. Friends ultimately come to the rescue of good people. The valiant are sent to save the victims of evil. The land is restored to its true order.²⁰

This sense of evil and the land in darkness is absent from the *babaylan* cosmology. In their world order, good and bad things happen, tragic and fortunate events come from the order of nature without a moral overtone. Spirits do good or bad because that is what they do. The world yields fruit or withholds it because that is how things are. But the people do not fall into a state of suffering or *pagka-sawi* because of the prevalence of moral evil that

¹⁸ Virgilio S. Almario, *Ang Pag-ibig sa Bayan ni Andres Bonifacio*, (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2012).

¹⁹ Balagtas, *Florante at Laura*.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

throws the world into disarray. The bayang *sawi* is an imposition of the Spanish colonial incursion.

IV. Colonialism and the Gift of Heaven

When the colonials came, they brought moral evil on such a scale that it caused the catastrophic end of the world as the people of the *babaylan* cosmology knew it. This imposition was the first experience of the people of such catastrophic disarray that the world as a cradle of well-being was lost. The natives felt themselves to be exiled from their own realm of well-being. Thus, people became dwellers of the *bayang sawi*, which the Spanish created with their catastrophic colonization. But this catastrophe they caused brought with it the key to *Langit* because it helped the native people re-imagine their cosmos, to re-imagine what a just society is when it is rooted in the transcendent. The trauma of colonialism gave the colonized communities an experience of an event so catastrophic that it could be felt as a pervasive evil. This pervasive evil was felt as a permanent threat to their well-being that needed to be overcome. And with the imposition to that pervasive evil was given a worldview and a social theory that would frame suffering in genuine hope.

Ironically, the Spaniards brought with them a key concept for the emergence of a theory of liberation from the *babaylan* rationality. This key concept was the idea of *Langit* as articulated in the *Pasyon*. With the imposition of the Spanish/Catholic rationality, for it was a particular Spanish Catholicism, a *Pasyon* rationality emerged. The *Pasyon* is a poetic and prayerful rendition of the history of salvation. In it, the creation of the world, and the death and suffering of Jesus are rendered in an epic prayer that can be sung on Holy Week—or in other occasions depending on the region. The form of the song took on a European idiom but also resembles the *dalit*, or *babaylan* invocation in parts. Certainly, it was one of the main forms through which the faithful encountered the Gospels. Let us examine the *Pasyon* rationality as articulated by Ileo.²¹

In the *Pasyon* cosmology, the elite reign. They are the rich and educated who could be seen as a rendering of the Spaniards, and also the *principalia* or the former *datus* and *maharlika*. The *datus* and *maharlika* were the leaders at the time of colonization. They were leaders because they proved their abilities in trade and war, and were the class assigned to take care of their community. However, they, along with the colonialists, ended up being the cause of their people's suffering. The Spanish and the *principalia* rule over

²¹ Rafael Ileo, *Pasyon and Revolution*, (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2016).

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the land mainly to extract the resources from the people.²² These people were seen to bear the characteristics of the boastful, deceitful, greedy, and unjust characters in the poem. They are the highborn who are educated and wear the trappings of royalty but are dark and evil at heart. With their reign, they bring about the suffering of the *bayang sawi*.

Christ comes to his *bayang sawi* which is ruled by the Roman and Jewish elite in order to liberate it. Through his life as told in the *Pasyon*, *Kristo* models the genuine values of the powerful who will be able to liberate their world from suffering. He does this by demonstrating the basic characteristic of people of genuine power. Those worthy to rule are those whose inner disposition is Christ-like because his way of being gives him access to true power. In short, one ought not to be like the *principalia* or the colonizers, but must aim to be like the *hamak* at *dukha*.

The *hamak* (low born) and *dukha* (the poor) are gentle, simple, poor, not educated but not ignorant. These are the chosen peoples who are truly powerful because they emulate Christ, who models the behavior of the powerful and triumphant person. After all, he triumphs and rises from the dead. Thus, if one wants to have that power and to be part of the *Kaharian* or kingdom of the messiah, one must be like *Kristo*.

In the cosmos of the *Pasyon*, the *dukha* were the people of *Kristo*. Like *Kristo*, they belonged to *Langit*. Heaven here is not the land where the dead go, but the land of the powerful creator who is the source of creative power. God is a more involved *Diyos Ama* because he sent his son *Kristo* to save us from danger—unlike the distant gods of old. In the *Pasyon* cosmology, *Langit* is the ground of power and order, not just a place. People of *Langit* can participate in its power, the power that allowed *Kristo* to rise from the dead, raise people from the dead, and have control over the powers of earth. *Kristo* also comes from a realm of pure *liwanag* (wisdom and light), *guinhawa* (well-being), *pag-ibig* (love), and *kaligayahan* (happiness), as well as *kapatiran* (brotherhood) and *katarungan* (justice).²³

How does a person who is *dukha* become part of this realm? The most effective way is to be like *Kristo*. If one can genuinely emulate *Kristo*, then that person will belong to *Langit* and have the powers of *Langit*. For the *dukha*, the *Pasyon* presents a paradigm of hope. Although they dwell in a *bayang sawi*, *Kristo* opens *Langit* for them and offers the promise of a better place, where justice reigns and the values of goodness prevail. The life of suffering and exploitation is not the final word. There is a world beyond this, where light and good prevail. The *bayang sawi* can be transformed into a *bagong* (new)

²² Luis Francia, *A History of the Philippines from Indios Bravos to Filipinos*, (New York: The Overlook Press, 2010).

²³ Ileta, *Pasyon*.

Jerusalem or in the case of the Katipunan, the *Kaharian ng mga Tagalog* (Kingdom of the Tagalog).

V. The Democratization of Langit

If we return to the cosmology of the *babaylan*, before the *Pasyon* and the *bayang sawi*, we will see that the people had a world of the dead where the dead migrate. The dead did not look forward to any perfect existence. Heaven was just another place where the mythical heroes lived. The place or places reserved for mythical founding persons and gods was inaccessible to mortals. This was the case until Christianity revealed to the natives another *Langit*. With that revelation, we were shown that there is a *telos* to human existence, a promise of a higher state of being. The cosmos is transformed from the *babaylan* cosmos—which is a community of equal persons seeking to realize a good life in this plane of reality—to a cosmos with a *Langit* as its founding order and *telos*. *Kristo* introduces a transcendent, eternal element to this cosmos. With the Christian vision, a fullness and perfection accessible to all human beings becomes a fundamental aspect of reality. And so, this world, which the Spaniards revealed as a world of suffering, is also revealed to have a greater fulfillment—a realm of perfection and fullness that is accessible to the *dukha*.

In order to escape or transcend the *bayang sawi* in this world, the *dukha* need to build the new Jerusalem by emulating the way of being of the one who comes from *Langit*. This is the path of the so-called millenarian revolts. They sought to restore the *bayan* to its status as kingdom of God by establishing a kingdom where *Kristo* would reign, and the citizens of this kingdom would live according to their interpretation of the *Pasyon* values. Communities, which resisted Spanish rule and its perverted values, were established. They would establish kingdoms ruled by *Kristo* in the person of their leader, like Hermano Pule, and live lives in prayer and communal solidarity.²⁴ They would cultivate their *loob* so that it would be receptive to the *liwanag* of *Langit*. This *liwanag* would be insight into the good, communion in mutual respect and love, and the power of the truth. If the people lived according to the values of *Kristo* and lived according to brotherly love, humility, mutual service, and obedience, the *bayan* would be permeated by the *liwanag* of heaven. If one's *loob* (core self, will, interiority) is filled with *liwanag*, then one would be wise and powerful—as well as a bearer of good will and love. Only the people of good will, or *liwanag* filled *loob* could realize

²⁴ Agustin Martin G. Rodriguez, "Mabini, Hermano Pule, and the restoration of the moral cosmos," *Centennial Commemorative Lectures 1998* (Manila: Philippine Centennial Commission, Committee on Internal Relations, 1998).

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the Kingdom of God on earth.²⁵ Early millenarian kingdoms were founded on the belief that if they emulated *Langit* on earth, they could build the *bagong Jerusalem* which would bring its dwellers *ginhawa* (state of ease and well-being) and *layaw* (being far from want and being able to access everything needed for human flourishing).²⁶ This meant that they would live a life of well-being and would want for nothing. Ultimately, the people strove to restore the land to its truth by living as virtuous persons.

Ileto paints a picture of this *Langit* as subscribed to by the Confradia de San Jose, which was one of the most popular millenarian revolts in the Tagalog region. This picture comes from the "*Dalit sa Caluwalhatian sa Langit na cararatnan ng mga banal*," by Pecho Herrera, SJ, which the group read in their gatherings.²⁷ In his *Langit*, all people will live according to the good ("*magaling at ang totoo na sundin sundin ng tao*"). It will be a state of union in *liwanag* because it receives its energy from this ultimate source. *Liwanag* in Heaven is intense and blinding such that the light of the sun and moon are nothing to this light. The pure *liwanag* in the *dalit* also embodies the unity of the perfect union or unity of the people. The unity in *Langit* is so perfect that people will be indistinguishable because they will have no class distinctions ("*ang mayaman at ang ducha may sising mga mucha*").²⁸ Thus there will no longer be any envy, arrogance, anger or selfishness. Love will bind the people. And this love is not based on kinship ties because the denizens of heaven are one family when God unites all. ("*Ang Diyos namang maycapal pinagcacaybiganan ang silang lahat ay banal nagcacaybig ybigan*")²⁹ We will be close to the angels and martyrs and all will be radiating the light (*ningning*) of unity and love. This *liwanag* is resplendent but is also a *liwanag* that is wisdom (*dunong*) and good judgement (*mabuting isip*). One radiates *liwanag* as on who is able to open one's eyes to the *liwanag* of God.³⁰

This discourse of *liwanag* carries over to the Katipunan. The two main visionaries of the Revolution, Andres Bonifacio and Emilio Jacinton, speak of the movement as the restoration of the *Kaharian ng mga Tagalog* (Kingdom of the Tagalogs), where Tagalogs refers to all persons born in the archipelago.³¹ In Andres Bonifacio's "*Ang Dapat Mabatid ng mga Tagalog*," he discusses the

²⁵ Zeus Salazar, *Ang Kartilya ni Emilio Jacinto at ang Diwang Pilipino sa Agos ng Kasaysayan*, Quezon City: Palimbag ng Lahi, 1999).

²⁶ Ileto, *Pasyon*.

²⁷ Pedro de Herrera, "*Dalit sa Caluwalhatian sa Langit na cararatnan ng mga banal*," in F. de Salazar, *Meditaciones, cun manga mahal na pagninilay na sadia sa santong pag eexercicios*, (Reimpreso en Sto. Thomas de Manila por D.C. Lopez, 1843.)

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Footnote to the *Kartilya* found in Jim Richardson' *Light of liberty*. (Quezon City: Ateneo University Press, 2013).

pre-colonial situation of the Tagalogs (or people born in the colonized archipelago) as one of “*lubos na kasaganahan at kaginhawaan*.”³² This we lost because of the situation of Spanish *kataksilan* (treachery). The colonizers caused us blindness (*binulag*), infected us with their lack of virtue (*hamak na asal*), and destroyed our own virtue (*mahal at magandang ugali*).³³ Spanish rule was a time of darkness of the *bayang sawi*. But the Katipunan heralds the end of this dark time because with them comes reason rising in the East: “*katwirang sumisikat sa Silangan*.”³⁴ It is the time when the deceived rise against unreason and negative virtues. Clearly, the lack of virtue is the cause of the lack of *kaginhawaan*. And the reason it has reigned so long was the people’s being drawn into complicity as people who are lacking in virtue (“*ganid sa asal*.”) To regain the time of *kaginhawaan*, *katwiran* teaches us to unite our hearts and minds in order to counter the evil in our land (“*magkaisang-loob, magkaisang-isip, at akala, at nang tayo’y magkalakas na maihanap ang naghaharing kasamaan sa ating Bayan*.”)³⁵ Strength here is the strength of a unified people who are bound by virtue and the insight into truth. The Tagalogs will confront the *kasamaan* or evil that pervades through solidarity—a solidarity which is the fruit of our being ruled by *liwanag*. The light from truth and goodness itself will fill the people’s *loob* such that they will have the will to realize the good and dispel negative virtue.

In Jacinto’s “*Liwanag at Dilim*,” he speaks of the virtues that will help the Katipunan restore the state of well-being that the Spanish destroyed. This project of restoration or revolution demanded a populace who were capable of receiving genuine *liwanag*. This light is gentle and not blinding because it enlightens and allows us to see the truth of all things (*buong katunayan ng mga bagay bagay*).³⁶ The reason the *bayang* suffers (*hinagpis at dalita*) is because of the people’s lack of virtue (*masamang nauagian*) manifest as admiration of the fruits of unbridled greed (*kasakiman, katampalasan, kaliluhan*). The only way to restore the community of the Tagalogs is to embody good virtues (*maliwanag at magandang asal at matapat na loob*). Basically, a pure heart that is true to the light. And in order to be genuinely open to the light, one must be humble and have a pure heart (*pag-ibig na dalisay*).³⁷

For Jacinto, freedom (*kalayaan*) and reason (*katwiran*) are closely tied. Freedom is the ability of persons to act according to good reason. It is the ability of persons to realize the highest good based on their capacity to act

³² Andres Bonifacio, “Ang dapat mabatid ng mga Tagalog,” in Virgilio S. Almario, *Panitikan ng rebolusyon (G 1896)*, (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1993).

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Ileta, *Pasyon*.

³⁶ Emilio Jacinto, “*Liwanag at Dilim*,” in Almario, *Panitikan ng Rebolusyon, (G 1896)*, (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1993).

³⁷ *Ibid.*

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according to *katwiran*. Thus, *puri* and *kagalingan* and *wastong bait* are all essential to realizing *kalayaan*. One acts genuinely as a free human being when one can exercise a free human will ruled by a mind that is rooted in the values of the good. With *Kalayaan*, one acts attuned to genuine *liwanag* and acts to build the good.³⁸

Purity of heart, solidarity, and love are always tied to the realization of a *bayan* of *kaginhawaan*. Living with genuine *kalayaan* or a will tied to the light of heaven is the path to building the *Kaharian ng mga Tagalog* where people live according to the values of solidarity and love. These values attune them to the *liwanag* which governs the cosmos ruled by *Langit*. The Katipunan's great minds call for a return to *tamang pananampalataya*, which is a faith in *Langit* where *liwanag* reigns. Genuine freedom tied to reason is attuned to the will of God. ("Dahil kanyang itinakwil at pinayurakan ang *Kalayaan ipnagkaloob ng Maykapal upang mabuhay sa kaginhawahan; at dahil dito nga'y nawala sa mga mata ang ilaw at lumayo sa puso ang kapatak mang ligaya.*")³⁹ One should never forget the true light of God for the false light of riches and social standing. Thus, in the Decalogue, Bonifacio states that the Katipunero has these traits:

1. *Sumampalataya sa MayKapal ng taimtim sa puso.*
2. *Gunamgunamin sa sarili tuina, na ang matapat na pag sampalataya sa Kanya ay ang pag ibig sa lupang tinubuan, sa pagkat ito ang tunay na pag ibig sa kapwa.*
10. *Lubos na pag sampalataya sa parusang ilinalang sa balang sowail at magtaksil, gayon din sa pala na kakamtan ukol sa mabuting gawa. Sampalatayanan din naman na ang mga layong tinutungo ng K... K... K... ay kaloob ng Maykapal, sa makatwid ang hangad ng bayan ay hangad din Nya.*⁴⁰

Ultimately, the *Kaharian ng mga Tagalog* is founded on love. Love is the overarching value which makes people responsible to and for each other and respectful of the order of the good. Thus, true love can only bring about true happiness and contentment. The being *sawi* of the people is rooted in their forgetting of genuine love and being misled by false riches and honor. ("Ang tunay na pag-ibig ay walang ibinubunga kundi ang tunay na ligaya at kaginhawaan. Kailan pama't sapin-sapin ang dagan ng pinapasan ng Bayang lipos sa kadukhaan at lungkot ay dahil ang tunay na pag-ibig ay di siyang naghahari kundi

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Andres Bonifacio, "Katungkulang Gawain ng mga Z. Ll. B.," in Virgilio S. Almario, *Panitikan ng Rebolusyon (G 1896)*, (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1993).

ang taksil na pita sa yama't bulaang karangalan.")⁴¹ Fundamentally, the Katipunan was a revolution made possible by the discourse of liberation founded on the aspiration for *Langit* that the Pasyon rationality held dear. But the important idea to take note of here is how *pag-ibig* and *liwanag* are actual transformative powers, and liberation is realized when people of light become conduits of this power through the attunement of their deepest selves or *loob* to that power.

VI. *Langit* and Social Theory

Although the horrific suffering colonialism imposed on the peoples of the world will never allow those who suffered it to subscribe to the still prevalent idea among former colonizers that colonialism was the awakening of primitive rationalities to the higher consciousness of the West, it is undeniable that the Spanish incursion did, beyond their best and worst intentions, enrich the Filipino discourse of social justice and the idea of a communal world order. Because of the appropriation of Christianity, the traditional *babaylan* cosmology was able to imagine a Heaven that was the source of perfect goodness and light. This Heaven is the state of pure *kaginhawaan* and *layaw*. Although life on earth was seemingly content before the coming of the Spaniards, the vision of heaven gave them a discourse with which to imagine a better world than that which colonialism made them suffer. It was possibly a better world than that which they imagined with the *babaylan* cosmology because it offered them an afterlife that transcended the finitude of human existence. Clearly, it gave them a framework for building a society founded on the good which is founded on the transcendent.

Following the historical emergence of the conception of a good society from the *bayán* of the *babaylan* cosmology, to the *Bayán ng Dilim*, through to the *Bayang Sawi*, which would find liberation in the *Kaharian ng mga Tagalog*, we can see how the Tagalogs who were at the epicenter of the colonial disaster, were able to construct a creative response to it. The utopia envisioned as the *Kaharian ng mga Tagalog* is an earthly society, established in space and time by finite persons, but rooted in *Langit*. The violent and exploitative social systems imposed by the Spaniards was confronted by the local imagination with an alternative system founded on reason and love. This utopian society constructed by the Filipinos was rooted in the *babaylan* values of solidarity, mutual aid, mutual respect, and discourse. Leadership was provided by one who could maintain and establish systems of mutual protection and aid, and members were bound by this mutuality. However, the idea of the Christian *Langit* brought an aspect of transcendence and in the

⁴¹ Jacinto, "Liwanag at Dilim."

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sense of a fullness of being. If in the *babaylan* cosmology, *Langit* was an inaccessible place where *Batahala* lived, *Langit* now was the source of the fullness of being experienced as *liwanag*. *Liwanag* is how the Tagalog imagined the power, good, and truth that emanate from *Langit*. In our Western philosophical terms, this is the overflow of the fullness of being.

The *Kaharian ng mga Tagalog* is a society infused with that overflow of being which brings *kaginhawaan* or the well-being brought about by dwelling in the *liwanag*. The citizen of the *Kaharian* is *maginhawa* because their collective and personal existence is realized in attunement to *liwanag*. Thus, the ideal society is not one that is opulent but one that is attuned to the transcendent source of being. But for a society to be founded on the *liwanag* of *Langit*, all its citizens must be conduits of *liwanag* by being persons of *pag-ibig*, or the love that is selfless, infinitely responsible for the other, and works for the welfare of the *bayan*, of nature, and fellow citizens.

Ours is a social philosophy that recognizes the destructiveness of Western systems, understands the roots of its violence and seeks the most radical reform of it by reimagining society from the lens of a Filipino *Langit*. The *Kaharian ng mga Tagalog* is the concretization of that *Langit* into a viable *bayan*. Here we see that the encounter between the *babaylan* rationality and the Christian conception of a good society brought another vision of society that the Filipino people can aspire for. It is not the same as the *bayan* of the *babaylan*, but it embraces the *babaylan* ideals and Christian conception of *Langit* which led them to intuit a way of realizing a society that promises a fullness that transcends finitude and brokenness and may promise a more genuine *kaginhawaan* for the human person. It is a political and social philosophy that is rooted in the Filipino imagination which aspired for a *bayan* that is *maginhawa*, built by persons who are effective conduits of *liwanag*.

This framework for building a good society shaped the Katipunan and continued to influence the Partidong Sosyalista ng Pilipinas, the Hukbalahap, the different iterations of socialism in the Philippines. It can be gleaned from the reform agendas of many non-government organization, people's organizations, and alternative political parties. It is a vision that clearly drew us to EDSA in 1987. It is a vision sung by some of our best reform artists like ASIN,⁴² Joey Ayala, Buklod, and Jess Santiago. It is the heart of the social critique of beloved social realist films like "Sister Stella L," "Aguila," "Heneral Luna," and "Bayan Ko." The *Langit* that can be built on earth as a *Kaharian ng mga Tagalog* is a utopian vision by which we measure our existing institutions. Because of the socio-political vision of the Katipunan, Filipinos

⁴² Agustin Martin G. Rodriguez, "The Blessed Land and Asin's Prophetic Vision," in *The Cordillera Review*, III, no. 1, 2019.

have a fundamental belief that poverty and unjust relations are the fruit of a corrupt *loob*. Only a people attuned to the good or the *liwanag* are capable of building a society where all people will be just. Injustice is not just the fruit of institutions, but of the *loob* of people. People of light create a just world because they are vessels of light.

For the Westernized, academic mind, this frame of analysis may not be the most fruitful for socio-political reform. After all, in a Westernized world order, good societies are defined by the abstract principles of a systematized machinery that characterizes this world order. Hence, our philosophizing turns to the Marxes, Habermases, and Rawlses to provide a philosophical scaffolding. However, this alternative foundation of a just society must also be turned to because it offers an insight into a deeper ground for development and human flourishing. Perhaps this is worth looking into if not to present a feasible framework for social reform, at least to help social reformers understand the perspective of those who do not subscribe to the Western vision of the world. And whether there is a *Langit* that is the ground of order that promises the fullness of life or not, people of the *Pasyon* rationality intuit that there is a cosmic order that genuinely promises a fuller human life for those who live according to it.

Department of Philosophy, Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines

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