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In 1919, seven pioneering nationalist teachers opened a school to cultivate women ready to take part in an independent republic as active citizens. The Philippine Women's University was founded from the standpoint of gendered exclusion from the public sphere. The founders sought to create a school that would bridge the fragmentation of social life that conditions expectations that women belong only to the domestic realm, and that would provide differential access to the public sphere. This bridging of the domestic realm of kinship with the public sphere of civic action and citizenship endeavored to make the Filipino family—a traditional site of women's influence—into a primordial scene of social transformation. This transformative frame of social development straddled the continuing tensions between the discourses of family, gender and kinship and that of the citizen-subject.

It is thus appropriate that this edition of Sabangan tackles the ongoing difficulties in Philippine society to balance the frictions between kinship ties, affective filiation and citizenship—an enduring problematique with which the founding mothers of PWU had to contend. Affective filiation has always been a source of resiliency and strength of Philippine society, but brings with it its own
dilemmas and challenges. Given the contemporary ubiquity of social media and globalized labor's transnationalization of the Filipino family, this issue of Sabangan creates a space for debates around Filipino identity, transnational family structures, the role of culture in nation-building, the development of the nation, and the relationship between the nation and the state. The problem with culture-based explanations is that they often suggest that pre-existing cultural matrices become destiny, rather than see in culture potential changes in the future's conjunctural arrangements and structural relations. It generally foregrounds some sort of expressive causality at the expense of an analysis of structural causality. How then might we understand Filipino culture's complexity--both as overdetermined condition of possibility as well as a vector or force of change and transformation? Sabangan demonstrates the academy's commitment to public reason and the exploration of these important issues.
Introduction – Sabangan 3

This third issue of Sabangan features a major essay by Niels Mulder. Dr. Mulder has been conducting ethnographic research in the Philippines for over two decades, based mainly in the southern Tagalog region. His publications cover schooling/education, notions of personhood, the culture of everyday life, reflections on nationalism, and comparisons with similar topics in Indonesia and Thailand, countries where he has also conducted extensive research. Using his anthropological training, Mulder has been exploring elements of provincial middle class mentalities and lifestyles. His latest book is: *Life in the Philippines: Contextual Essays on Filipino Being, University of the Philippines Press, 2016*. Before his retirement in the Philippines, he taught at various universities in Europe (Amsterdam, Bielefeld, Passau and Scandinavia) as well as at Northern Illinois University. Apart from his various university attachments, Niels Mulder has mainly worked as an independent cultural analyst and guest lecturer.

Mulder's writings are often acerbic and come across as highly critical but are nevertheless insightful. His background in Southeast Asian Studies is well established and his work deserves close scrutiny by Philippine scholars. In an early essay *All Filipinos Go to Heaven* (1987), his analysis of provincial-urban society received recognition in Senator Leticia P. Shahani’s (1992) report on the state of Philippine
moral values. However, this senate report caused considerable division within the local academic community, often pitting left wing sociologists from the University of the Philippines against their more conservative colleagues at the Jesuit Ateneo de Manila University. Inevitably, Mulder's views were implicated in this local dispute and thereafter his research was often viewed in a partisan context.

Undaunted, Mulder continued his investigations into Philippine provincial culture as well as expanding his publications of Indonesian and Thai societies. The main focus of these studies of Southeast Asian cultures revolved around local perceptions and values of public life. While based on anthropological fieldwork, their orientation was phenomenological and reflected his respondents' views and experience of everyday life.

After his retirement, Mulder returned to the Philippines and
established himself in Southern Luzon, near his fieldsite of Lucena. His dealings with Manila-based scholars continued but became sporadic. This may explain his preference for literary and historical works rather than the daily encounters typical among Filipino academics. In certain circles, Mulder may have been considered with some disfavour but his continuing academic productivity obliged others to recognize his contribution to Philippine and regional scholarship. This recognition was finally validated in the publication of his work by the University of the Philippines Press in 2016.

Dr. Mulder's essay is entitled **The Philippine Enigma: Culture, Emotion, and Motivation – a personal view**. He examines the commonly expressed view that Filipinos often do much better overseas than in their own country. Generally praised for their competence, diligence and persistence abroad, Filipinos do not seem to practice these virtues in the Philippines, causing the country to fall behind its regional neighbours such as Thailand, Malaysia and even Vietnam. Quoting the now familiar refrain that the country was second only to Japan in the 1960's, it quickly fell behind South Korea, despite the country's devastating civil war. Despite the depredations of war, Vietnam now seems likely to overtake the Philippines in economic and social development. These examples indicate that a country can overcome the destruction of its material infrastructure if its population works together for a common cause.

Mulder begins his analysis by quoting James Fallows controversial article. Fallows caused uproar with his prophetic diagnosis of the Philippine condition as:

> The prospects for the Philippines are about as dismal as those for, say, South Korea are bright. In each case the basic explanation seems to be culture: in the one case a
culture that brings out the productive best in the Koreans (or the Japanese, or now even the Thais), and in the other a culture that pulls many Filipinos toward their most self-destructive, self-defeating worst. (“A Damaged Culture: A New Philippines?” The Atlantic Monthly: November, 1987: 49-58).

Is Filipino culture to blame for the country's problems? The strength and perseverance of most Filipinos, including their capacity to withstand natural and social calamities is often credited to their strong religious faith and family solidarity. Local communities often celebrate these ties of solidarity in fiestas and other occasions. But this solidarity mostly reflects the private sphere and is often contrasted with the chaos and lack of civility encountered in public life. This lack of public civility is often contrasted with the friendly hospitality extended to visiting strangers. This division between private and public life is the main topic of Mulder's essay. He explores the cultural and historical sources for this division using his own anthropological observations as well as the works of eminent writers such as Nick Joaquin, Francisco Sionil Jose, N.V.M. Gonzalez and others.

Mulder sees the main problem in Philippine society as due to the gap between the rich private sphere of family, friends or locality, and the relatively neglected public sphere involving national values, abstract-rational orientations and the inclusive incorporation of fellow-citizens. In his view, the private sphere is unable to adequately coordinate with public values, thereby preventing each sphere from enriching the other. While the private sphere provides satisfactory meanings for its members, it limits their aspirations to immediate practical goals rather than the universalizing possibilities of public
life. As a consequence, the latter is seen as a neutral and amoral field open for predation in the interests of its members. The possibilities of an inclusive and incorporative realm open to members on the basis of civil membership with its civilizing values transcending family or locality is aborted. The imagined community of the nation is prevented from achieving its full potential by the limited aspirations of family, friendship or locality. The latter constrains individual achievement in favour of familistic loyalties. Only the nation (in the context of an anonymous but active citizenship) is open to a Great Tradition typified in achievements in the arts, sciences and political life. In contrast, the Little Tradition is limited to market success, an exclusive religiosity and patronal power.

Mulder locates this hiatus between the private and public spheres as arising from the abrupt transition from the Hispanic past to the American regime. Despite the many limitations of Hispanic colonialism, its enduring presence generated an emerging national consciousness that replaced an earlier tribalism. This national consciousness is best exemplified in the generation of *ilustrados* such as Jose Rizal, Apolinario Mabini, T.H. Pardo de Tavera and Isabelo de los Reyes. Had the Americans not intervened, Mulder argues that the *ilustrados* could have provided a national imaginary linking both the private and public spheres. The European orientation of the *ilustrados*, combined with their strong local roots connected their private interests to their national aspirations. Most of them were fluent in their native dialects as well as in Spanish and other European languages.

Instead, this unforeseen American political and cultural intervention disrupted an emerging national imaginary in favour of more limited private interests. The democratic values, educational and bureaucratic reforms instituted by the Americans were not
adequately grafted onto local conditions. These reforms became props and legitimations for the continuing but selfish interests of the emerging class of Filipino leaders cut off from their colonial past. Not fully comprehending the spirit of American reforms and disconnected from their Hispanic heritage, the new generation of political and cultural leaders reverted to the familiar worlds of family, friendship and locality. They became, in the words of Tondo (see respondent's comments), a people without history.

Having provided the historical background for the lack of connection between the private and public spheres, Mulder examines contemporary issues preventing the full development of a national imaginary. He draws on the work of Nick Joaquin and novelists such as F. Sionil Jose to explain why Filipinos limit themselves to relatively minor tasks rather than the more demanding visions of a national civilization. The latter require intellectual and sociological skills non-existent in a culture limited to immediate needs. Moreover, these skills are not developed in schools and other institutions of learning that prefer rote memorization or blind conformity. In such circumstances, it is no wonder that many ambitious and competent Filipinos go abroad in search of wider opportunities.

Mulder has set himself a difficult task – how is one to explain a nation whose members succeed abroad but often fail to develop their potential locally? Incompetent leadership and restricted opportunities may be a ready answer to the question – this has been suggested by visiting Southeast Asian leaders such as Malaysia's Mahathir Mohamad and Singapore's Lee Kwan Yew. But why has the Philippines failed to produce its share of competent politicians, given its open political structure and its vibrant democracy? The answer may indeed lie in the lack of a historical consciousness – the inability to draw on the understandings and accommodations of the
past for shaping visions and strategies of the future. In Mulder's words: an ignorance of the history of Filipino becoming. Like other societies, the Philippines has a long history of its own becoming (e.g. the Hispanic past, diverse cultural minorities), but which is often unexamined, distorted or mystified. We owe Mulder the favour of, at least, providing tentative answers.

Briefly, Mulder makes the following points:

1) The American transition disrupted the slowly forming national imaginary following Spain's long colonial rule. The *ilustrados* were laying the basis for such an imaginary but the American interregnum prevented its fruition.

2) Lacking an effective national imaginary, the gap between private interest and public good widened.

3) Given these conditions, a cultural orientation prevented the further development of a national imaginary. As a consequence, many Filipinos seek their futures abroad, where conditions favour their particular familial interests.

Following earlier issues of Sabangan, we invited established and emerging scholars to comment on Mulder’s essay. Their response provides a rich and varied discussion of the topic. We also asked Mulder to comment on their responses in order to provide a degree of closure in what is evidently an incommensurable question.

Mary Racelis provides a masterful summary and analysis of Mulder's argument. Deploring the vitriolic and often impressionistic claims of Mulder, Racelis succeeds in distilling useful insights other readers, reacting to the essay's combative style, may have overlooked. Racelis provides a systematic and clear presentation of Mulder's complex and often chaotic claims. Having shown that the essay merits serious scholarly attention, Racelis then proceeds to explore its central claim about the lack of an effective linkage
between the private and public spheres. Other respondents have also commented on the problematic nature of the private/public domain in Philippine society. While mainly agreeing with Mulder's position, they point out the necessity for further theoretical and empirical investigation of this complex relationship. Racelis provides us with many examples of a growing civic culture initiated by NGOs and their associated organizations. While arising from private and local concerns, these NGOs include public interests and the general good in pursuit of their aims. Moreover, this involvement stirs public interest and requires an appropriate response from people in authority. Perhaps the classic (Western) distinction private/public no longer operates in today's interplexed world. Or if so, they may be linked in particular ways that may require detailed empirical research. Like many of the other respondents, Racelis wonders why Mulder neglects the voluminous sociological and anthropological studies of local society and culture in favour of literary interpretations, albeit of established novelists.

Being himself a trained anthropologist and having conducted prolonged fieldwork in Southeast Asia, including the Philippines, it is indeed surprising that Mulder does not confront his own research with the findings of his fellow anthropologists, local and foreign.

Fernando Zialcita mostly agrees with Mulder's claims but also points out shortcomings in the essay. The problematique relationship linking the private and public spheres lies deep in Philippine prehistory, sedimented in the present. Zialcita provides telling instances of this neglect of the public sphere such as the parlous state of public buildings and amenities despite repeated calls for their improvement. He also agrees with Mulder's assessment of the poor standard of textbooks used in primary and secondary schools which, instead of providing informed knowledge about the nation's
past, confuse students with potted histories and irrelevant perspectives. The neglect of the Hispanic colonial period, which provided the basis for a national imagination as suggested by the generation of ilustrados such as Rizal and others, prevents students from appreciating their considerable achievements. Instead, students are led to believe that nationhood preceded the Spanish conquest despite the lack of historical evidence about the presence of state-like organizations. But Zialcita criticizes Mulder for neglecting the rich sources for imagining the nation found among the cultural minorities or first peoples. He also points out that the American period was not as culturally bereft as Mulder argues - Joaquin and de la Costa being outstanding products of an American education. Finally, Zialcita cites the case of Philippine art, which from the 19th century to the present provides rich images of a public imagination. It seems that, at least in the aesthetic realm, Filipinos continued to link private perspectives to the general good. This linkage survived the cultural disruption of the American period. A similar claim may be made about Filipino music, dance and perhaps other aspects of folk culture.

Clement Camposano accepts many of Mulder's views about Filipino culture but points out that more detailed empirical and historical evidence is needed before making grand generalizations. It seems that pre-colonial Filipinos were not as isolated nor as undeveloped as claimed by Mulder. Moreover, many of the features of Hispanic society were continued and even reinforced during the American period. One may even claim that the democratic aspirations of the Americans for Philippine society were thwarted by the ilustrados and their descendants as they continued the privileges enjoyed during the Hispanic period. Perhaps the transition from the Hispanic to the American period, including the present political situation may not have differed much, contrary to Mulder's claims.
While Filipinos may have formally forgotten their Hispanic past, they consciously exploited American reforms to reproduce traditional elitist practices. Camposano also questions the adequacy of the concept of mana to explain Philippine animist notions. Ethnographic evidence must be provided before linking a general Malayo-Polynesian concept to its supposed local counterpart. Even if the concept of mana and animism share similarities, their practical consequences could be very different.

While Racelis, Zialcita and Camposano largely agree with Mulder's analysis, given certain reservations, the next set of respondents are more critical about Mulder's claims. They point out both theoretical and empirical limitations of Mulder's arguments. Their tone is more strident and their objections more substantial. This may reflect a generational perspective less tolerant of the views of a critical foreigner.

Roderick Galam provides us with a good theoretical alternative to examine the issues that Mulder raises. While agreeing with many of Mulder's observations, Galam locates them in another explicatory model. This allows him to rephrase issues such as the Hispanic/American transition, the centrality of the family and the heritage of smallness as well as the culture of demotivation. Galam points out that the ilustrados were not necessarily models of western democracy and it seems unlikely that they could have transformed the Philippines into a modern polity. The Americans may have given Filipinos the model of a western democracy but the latter seemed more inclined towards an oriental despotism. Galam accepts the centrality of the family but argues that it serves as a substitute for the absence of an effective state. Rather than the lack of a private/public connection, it is the absence of the state that explains this gap. In this sense, the family connects the private and public spheres. The family
is experiencing resurgence even in Europe in the current economic decline. Using the notion of social navigation and sedimented histories, Galam is able to explain the concept of demotivation using an alternative theoretical model.

Alwin Aguirre points out the importance of looking more closely on how metaphors operate – they both clarify and generate concepts and practices. For this reason, Aguirre suggests that we examine Joaquin's and Mulder's understanding and use of the concept of smallness. This concept may indeed limit the aspirations of Filipinos and confine them to petty projects that prevent grander visions but it may also act more positively, allowing poor Filipinos to craft an acceptable lifestyle given their limited resources. It may not be culture but practical life that shapes everyday behavior. Moreover, Aguirre points out that other cultures such as Australia and New Zealand also share notions of inferiority when compared to their colonial betters. These cultures also share a tall poppy syndrome. However, this does not prevent the latter from achieving impressive civilizing projects. In addition, Aguirre also argues that Filipinos don't always see themselves as small and powerless. While the metaphor of smallness may limit the aspirations of some people, greater care must be taken before using the metaphor to explain Philippine culture. More than a literary allusion, albeit from an established novelist like Joaquin, is required before this metaphor is used to explain Filipino culture. In its place Mulder should provide ethnographic evidence.

Josefina Tondo takes strong issue with Mulder's often acerbic style and the absence of confirmatory data to support his assertions. She begins by questioning the adequacy of the concept of a 'damaged culture' – seeing culture instead as a practical adaptation to a way of living rather than its determinant. This 'damaged culture' becomes a
resource for Filipinos overseas to adapt to and construct a viable lifestyle. In addition, Tondo argues that the complex issue of migration, apart from being a universal human tendency, requires both macro and micro analysis. People's personal intentions may not be a good way to understand massive flows of migrants. Instead, external and often global forces provide the motivating circumstances for migration rather than a particular cultural orientation such as demotivation. Tondo also takes exception to Mulder's claims about the isolated nature of the Philippines in pre-Hispanic times, pointing out extensive bartering relations in the region. She questions whether the _ilustrados_ could have provided a viable basis for a modern polity in the absence of American intervention. Echoing Racelis, it seems Mulder often overlooks the inadequacies of the Hispanic past as well as the genuine social and political advances provided by the American colonial authorities.
Paul Mathews is the only foreign commentator in this issue of Sabangan. Like Mulder, Mathews has also been conducting research on aspects of Philippine society and culture over several decades covering areas such as family planning, compadrazgo and more recently, online sexuality. He agrees with many of Mulder's claims but points out their often arbitrary and empirically unsupported basis. In turn, Mathews draws on his own research regarding the social and political perspectives of his young and often uneducated respondents. Their views express a more pluralistic understanding of a Philippine reality. Mathews supports the other respondents' views about the unsystematic and impressionistic analysis of Mulder. Moreover, he questions what model of a civilized, modern society Mulder has in mind in his critique and why such a model would necessarily benefit the Philippines. Others have pointed out the orientalist perspective of Mulder, including the assumption of a western model as ideal. This is puzzling, given Mulder's knowledge of non-western but successful Asian polities. Mathews also questions the lack of suggestions for improvement provided by Mulder, including the feeling of hopelessness found in the analysis.

Like in previous issues of Sabangan, we have sought to include both local and foreign perspectives in examining contemporary issues. While we do not privilege the views of foreign scholars, we feel that an outside view is necessary to enrich local understandings and to overcome the prejudices of the over-familiar. In fact, all of the respondents in this issue have spent considerable time abroad as part of their training or practice as scholars. In this sense, Mathews' views are no different from the others.

We are grateful that the Philippine Women's University continues to support Sabangan. We look forward to future issues extending the analysis of Philippine society and culture. Philippine
Studies is a global project and we intend to contribute our share towards its development.

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The Philippine Enigma: culture, emotion and motivation – a personal view

Niels Mulder 2017
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Prefatory

A year-and-a-half after the euphoria of February 1986, James Fallows caused uproar with his prophetic diagnosis of the Philippine condition as The prospects for the Philippines are about as dismal as those for, say, South Korea are bright. In each case the basic explanation seems to be culture: in the one case a culture that brings out the productive best in the Koreans (or the Japanese, or now even the Thais), and in the other a culture that pulls many Filipinos toward their most self-destructive, self-defeating worst. (“A Damaged Culture; A New Philippines?” The Atlantic Monthly: November, 1987: 49-58).

In answering questions Abinales asked in preparation of the Philippine edition of Benedict Anderson's Imagined Communities(2003), Ben observed, Why did the benighted backward Spanish colony produce Mabini, Rizal, Luna, De Los Reyes, et al., and the “progressive” American one produce nothing comparable?
Why was the US-established political system so lousy and so long lasting? … How could a country with so many gifted, so many nice people, end up in such a mess?

Our quest

The present set of observations is inspired by my search for basic, theoretically relevant answers to “How come that people, many of whom are applauded for their talents in the seven corners of this world, are not driven to succeed in their home country?” In our quest for leads, we’ll explore the setting of the complex problématique of a culture of demotivation in a polity that fails to provide positive prospects. Subsequent despair drives ordinary workers overseas and bleeds the nation dry of talented achievers.

In our quest, we'll spotlight national becoming, the culture of Philippine public life, Sionil Jose's conclusions, intellectual climate, and the heritage of smallness that provide the setting of experience; only then, we'll consider socialization, the dominant type of personality, focus on the molding of emotion, and propose answers to the cultural-psychological question that is our preoccupation.

These considerations tie in with the description and interpretations that I presented in Life in the Philippines: Contextual Essays on Filipino Being, University of the Philippines Press (2016b) and that this essay aspires to support with a theoretical foundation. In retrospect, we'll realize that the search picks up from the contradictions in Philippine society and culture that I noted in Inside Philippine Society (1997). In the present essay, the apparently radical separation of the private and the public spheres of life and the cultural contradictions this cleavage calls forth will provide the key to my theoretical musings, and hopefully shed light on the question of individual motivation and behavior.
1. From becoming to vacuity

2. The undress of the public sphere: the culture of Philippine public life

3. F. Sionil Jose's conclusions

4. Intellectual climate

5. Smallness triumphant: the Filipino pioneer

6. Socialization: culture and personality

7. Cultural psychology: culture, emotion, and motivation

8. Summary: substantial findings and theoretical premise

1. From becoming to vacuity

Prefatory

How come that the crowning feat of Philippine becoming is hushed up? Instead of the flourish of trumpets, it is a deafening silence of willful forgetting while drowning the Filipinos' world-shaking victory in a sea of masochist complacent inferiority.

Philippine becoming

The Islas del Poniente were to become the western most outpost of the world-encompassing Spanish Empire. Soon after claiming the Western Islands for Spain, these were named in honor of then Crown Prince Felipe, and in the process of imposing a state on the multitude of scattered, often mutually antagonistic tribes, the latter were brought under one and the same umbrella, thereby establishing the possibility of building a civilization. The least that is needed for such a feat is people who are no longer tied to subsistence production. The opening of the islands to Asia and the rest of the world was accompanied by culture contact that brought the plow,
new crops and technology that not only freed people from subsistence and famine, but also provided the impetus to expand the mental horizon beyond the circumscriptions of Malayo-Polynesian Animism, and to include and respect others.

In the complex, dialectical process of the transfer of culture—Catholicism thriving in native Animism; opening up through the printing press, trade and world-wide communication; expanding the material world through building in stone; immigrating Chinese craftsmen—a native estate of owners and rich bosses could come into being that developed a characteristic civilization in which local and imported elements fused. The people concerned came of age following the shock of the murder of the three Philippine-born priests Gomez, Burgos and Zamora. This formative event gave birth to the idea of the Filipino nation and was expanded by the Europe-inspired *ilustrados* as these began to refer to themselves as Filipinos. The crowning event was to be the first Asian nation to defeat a Western power, and to free themselves of the humiliation of being a colonized people. The success of the Philippine Revolution inspired nationalist leaders from Sun Yat Sen to Sukarno, while giving hope to the down-trodden people of Asia; as such it is still acknowledged in contemporary Indonesian school texts.

Enters the new imperial power on its first step towards global dominance. Arrogantly trampling on the fact that the Filipinos dominated the country beyond Manila and ignoring the Philippine Declaration of Independence of June 12, 1898, the Americans claim the victory over Spain following Admiral Dewey's sinking of the outdated and outnumbered Spanish fleet in Manila Bay.

Subsequently, the Philippine-American War was on. To the Filipinos, their republic, as the successor state of the whole of the Spanish colony, was real, such as abundantly evident from the nation-
state's Second Congress in Tarlac (July, 1899) where, for instance, the Pampango Servillano Aquino represented Samar at the time that the Yankee was turning the island into a howling wilderness while spreading its brand of 'civilization' in the rest of the country with the Krag gun.

Initially, the war against the Americans fired the spirit of nationalism, such as celebrated in so-called 'dissident' theater plays in native Tagalog and the social-utopian novel of Lope K. Santos, *Banaag at Sikat (From Early Dawn to Full Light)*. When the last guerrilla against American imperialism gave up in 1912, the word *boondocks* had become the Philippine contribution to American English, the war-weary population had been 'quintumated', and as pride and self-confidence petered out, the nation was relegated to the doldrums of going nowhere, of aimlessly floating without direction or purpose. The only thing that remains of the glory of the Revolution is the belated change of the date of independence from the day the Americans 'granted' it to June 12 on which Aguinaldo proclaimed Philippine Independence in 1898, such as ratified by the Malolos Congress on September 29 of the same year.

**Collective amnesia**

In the 1920s, a new generation of American-trained, future-oriented students was taking over. The nationalist Tagalog of the 'dissident theater plays' was forgotten. Instead, the American school subject 'creative writing' brought forth a flood of immature short stories, imitative of the exalted example, and in a strange language, to boot. About this, it is enlightening to quote N.V.M. Gonzalez's, “My merest jottings were notes not so much from an underground as from

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1 Macabre pun on 'decimate,' to kill one in ten. Quintus (Lat.) is five, 'quintumate' – killing one out of five.
another world. ... Rendered in an alien tongue, [that] life attained the
distinction of a translation even before it had been made into a
representation of reality ... even before becoming a reality of its own”
(*Work on the Mountain*, in Mojares 2002).

It is as if the notion of self had gotten lost, and taking pride in a
dependent mentality had cut out the humiliation of being a
vanquished people. With the loss of their history of becoming, of
growth, of civilization, self and nation, the new generation was an
orphaned foundling adopted by Mother America which molded it
into Little Brown Brothers who, according to a school text, 'took to
the American way as ducks take to water', and who, in complacent
inferiority, accepted the American revision of their history as Gospel
truth.

This collective amnesia induced the cultural lethargy that
caused the Filipino nation to languish in a limbo of resignation and
ennui, of self-doubt and self-denigration up to this very day. This
situation left ample room for soothsaying 'nationalists' to counter
cultural vacuity with their peculiar brand of myth-making. Haughtily
dismissing Philippine becoming and the nation's gestation period as
Spanish history, they invented the eternal original Filipino and
'history' that predates all contact with the West. Whereas their
influence has worn, their a-historical legerdemain still saturates
schoolbooks and public opinion (Mulder 2000; 2014).

Summarily, let us consider the 'collateral damage' of the
American intrusion. In passing, we noted the emergence of a native
estate of owners and rich bosses that, with their offspring of Europe-
inspired *ilustrados*, had developed a Europe-derived civilization of
their own. If these self-confident *ilustrados* or 'enlightened ones'
would have had it their way, and if the Americans had not betrayed
the Revolution, ilustrado cultural leadership could have created a
transcendent civilization with the guiding ideas necessary to unite Filipinos as a nation. What comes to mind, for instance, are the ideas of José Rizal as to what is not desirable, the prescriptions of Emilio Jacinto, the forward-looking ruminations on the State of Apolinario Mabini, the establishment of the Old Catholic Iglesia Filipina Independiente, Lope K. Santos's dream of social justice as unfolded in his then widely-read *Banaag at Sikat* (1906), and the ideas of Pedro Paterno, T.H. Pardo de Tavera and Isabelo de los Reyes as 'the brains of the nation' (Mojares 2006); (Joaquin 1977 [2005]).

**Cultural calamity**

It would not be. What B-52s could not accomplish, that is, bombing the Vietnamese back to the Stone Age, Yankee Arrogance achieved in the Philippines: the history of becoming and with it identity, budding civilization, self-confidence and nation were effectively obliterated, with the result that country and people were set back to the Age of Animism, to pre-civilization and mental isolation characteristic of tribal existence. So, in order to understand the public sphere of life, we need to explore the spirit of Animism that informs it.

**Animism**

Animism is the cult of the animus—soul, soul stuff, or the immanent cosmic energy that enlivens all phenomena; in the Malayo-Polynesian context, it is known as *mana*. Possessing *mana* means having power, that is, having the most desirable of social possessions; it calls forth honor, prestige, awe; to appropriate it is the way to greatness.
Bossism

Subsequently, people strive to acquire the mana (read 'charisma' or plain self) necessary to be or become boss, man/woman of prowess who can command the lesser souls and who is surrounded by his/her camp-followers, sidekicks and cronies. Consequently, the social-political process is driven by competition—and eventual coalitions—among individual caciques or local strongmen.

Mana/Power

In the context of socio-political dynamics, we should be aware of the fact that having power or mana is a personal attribute, a private possession that carries no moral weight outside of the circle with which the power-holder identifies; this is to say that its exercise in the world outside is free of moral constraints. Power exists per se, in and for itself, and according to its own mechanics, such as when incorporated in a shrine; if the incorporation is correctly implored, it has to acquiesce in the plea, whether it concerns the smooth delivery of the wife or success in a hold-up.

Scope

Social life in the sphere of Animism unfolds in physical and mental isolation. The inner core of the own, the tribal/familial community is enclosed in the domain of nature, be it the wilderness of the forest into which one went out to catch prey and to appropriate its produce. Whatever its shape, that space is a no man's land where one moves anonymously, but where one also needs to have one's guard up. It is an unruly, risky place, where it is politic to seek the favor of its spiritual owners—tabi po—or to go there under the aegis of a patron.
In modern parlance, if we call the inner-circle of life—family, relatives, friends, mates, face-to-face community—private, we note that it is surrounded by a public realm that is contrary to the private sphere. The latter means home, identity, and moral order in opposition to a place to forage, to anonymity, and anarchy. The non-connectedness of the private and the public means that there is no common weal in sight—there is no such thing as 'the common interest', no such thing as a shared Civilization. In other words, whereas Animism excludes, the evolution of civilized life as a process of inclusion, of an expanding mental horizon open to take in the anonymous other, or, in Biblical parlance, to include one's fellow-man and to love him as one loves oneself; it is the state of finding each other under the same moral canopy, of living together as a nation. In brief, under civilized conditions, private and public are connected.

Here and now

In observing the exercise of political power, the mentality that informs it, and the fantastic competition in the quest for it, we see the Animistic heritage. Also at present, worldly power is morally neutral, as amply illustrated by political praxis and the ubiquitous “What are we in power for”. It still is, “Right or wrong, my party, family, group,” which evokes a fair picture of to-day's cacique democracy that is merely representative of itself and not an administrator of the common good (Anderson 1998). It is power first, and a patron knows that his wealth will serve the acquisition of power, or 'the art of addition', and so his followers get their share. In modern parlance, the public world surrounding the private is only public in itself, but not of it-self, and in this no man's land, everybody can do as he/she pleases. The ideas the Americans introduced were about the democratic—
consensual ordering of the public realm through establishing a technical order of impersonal control, that is, the rule of law and an impartial civil service as the means to achieve it. In the Philippine context these ideas, in isolation of their original moral-consensual milieu, stood at right angles to the Animistic mentality that resuscitated through the annihilation of home-grown civilization.

Moreover, the idea of democracy as a joint enterprise, of sharing purpose and to work together to get there, is absent. In 'public' space, people are abandoned to themselves, 'autonomous' so to say; they are 'equal', one man, one vote, but equality, as the very opposite to the hierarchical moral order of the inner world, means chaos. If there is order, it depends on the cacique, the boss who imposes his will and vision, or, at least, who tries to enforce it. So, like the days when forest surrounded village life, public space is the free-for-all where inconsiderate behavior is to be expected, where corruption does not exist because people are expected to appropriate desired prey. The outside world is still an amoral jungle, a fact of which we were reminded with the inaugural wang-wang speech of Benigno S. Aquino (2010) who aspired to cut a straight path (daang matuwid) through it.

**Cultural vacuity**

Put differently, the American Great Tradition that was imposed on the Islands exists in a vacuum and is not organically connected to lowland Christian culture; the two do not inspire each other and fail to articulate. This disjuncture of ideas is at the root of the cultural malaise ensuing from the failure of state and political elite to provide cultural leadership, doubt about national identity, self-deceiving historical fantasies, and indifference in regard of the common weal and nation-building; altogether, this cultural vacuity
constitutes an effective barrier to the development of a civil culture of the common weal as an overarching civilization, at the same time that its void attracts a steady flood of inane mass-cultural entertainment that numbs the brain and gives the reins to anti-intellectualism and 'nationalist' myth making. In summary, it is Vaevictis!²

In honor of those who sacrificed their lives for our freedom, and to remind us of the urgency of resistance, Dutch poet Van Randwijk wrote the visionary:

a nation that gives in to tyrants
will lose more than body and goods
doused will be the light

I never fully understood the import of these lines until they became saliently relevant with

succumbing to demeaning American foolhardiness³
Filipinos lost more than their ancestral home
they lost their soul,

became traitors to what they had become, and their world-shaking accomplishment of defeating a Western power, lighting the torch of liberty in Asia, establishing their First Republic, inspiring leaders from Sun Yat Sen to Sukarno, and giving hope to the downtrodden nations of Asia, in brief, acts and feats that are, sixty years into the Second Republic, steadily withheld from the people,⁴ the Philippines, a tragic place indeed.

² Woe betides the vanquished!
2. The Undress of the Public Sphere: the culture of Philippine public life

In the past decades, a discussion seems to be going on among columnists and letter-writers that ask questions, such as “Have we lost our sense of citizenship in our pursuit of our individual freedom and rights? Have we become too individualistic and selfish, and reduced the state to a mere servant of our sovereign right to be free, without any right to protect itself even when it is threatened?”

I have my doubts about the validity of the question, at the same time that I have no doubt about civilizational loss. The point is the cultural vacuity that spells the Philippine condition and individual predicament. Of course, the vacuity has content. There exist the institutions of the state, and the state has specific departments to care for education, health, public works, and much more. People go out among buildings, office blocks, housing estates, struggle through the traffic, and much more. They send children to school, try to find work, visit a movie house or a theater, etc. So, what's the undress? The thing is, there is no overarching moral canopy, no civilization.

Let me start with a metaphor. A baby comes into the world in a state of undress, doesn't it? Like an animal, it is guided by inbuilt instinctive impulses that, according to its parents, need to be brought under control. The little thing will be subjected to a lengthy process of civilizing, of building the apparatus of controlling impulses, of becoming human by shedding its basic animalistic nature. It has to develop a superego, a moral guide, and to operate in a culture of morality; in brief, it is in need of education to dress it up. And so it is for public life; from original jungle, it needs to be transformed into a

2 China admonishes students, “Never forget the humiliation”; in the Philippines, however, arrogant American self-justification is abjectly taught as official history, together with ‘nationalist’ legerdemain about pre-Spanish times—“Only in the Philippines!”
moral place, informed by the superego of civilization that reins in the impulsive 'might is right' and 'I do as I please'.

As the Philippines were set back to the Age of Animism, it became a 'tragic place', the culture of which is largely characterized in the negative. According to Tadiar, prostitution and overseas domestic labor are symptomatic of the country's 'perpetual crisis of culture' (2009). Melinda Quiros de Jesus refers to 'our national “culture of impunity”as it thrives in the makalusót atmosphere of taking and getting away with whatever you can: it reflects the failure of the state's judicial apparatus to control the endemic violence and
lawlessness of Philippine society, exemplified by the all-time high killing of activists and journalists under President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (2007).

The *New York Times* is saying that a culture of vengeful punishment is taking hold in the Philippines (August 2016). This is nothing new. It has always been like that in the Philippines. It is still a primitive country pretending to be civilized. Most people don't even understand the concept of rule of law. If they did, they wouldn't have tolerated how BS Aquino denied due process to his political enemies, which is why ordinary Filipinos have become frustrated with the Philippines' justice system. They would now rather take matters into their own hands (*Ilda*).

The 'back then' was given substance by Mahathir Mohamad when he commented on 'mediocre political leadership' and the endemic misunderstanding of 'democracy': "Democracy works only when the people understand the limitations of democracy. When people think only of the freedoms of democracy and know nothing of the implied responsibilities, democracy will not bring the goodness that it promises. Instead it will result only in instability and instability will not permit development to take place and the people to enjoy the benefits of freedom and the rights that democracy promises. No sooner is a Government elected when the losers would hold demonstrations and general strikes accusing the Government of malpractices" (2012).

This was when President B.S. Aquino had come to power. Six years later, with President Duterte at the helm, unsporting demolition behavior of the losers is no different. The spirit of democracy as a joint enterprise to care for the common weal remains totally alien from prevailing person-centered politicking of 'men of prowess' who,
in the amoral jungle of public life, never seem to have heard of the idea of 'Your Majesty's most loyal opposition'.

The media, in the main controlled by the previous dispensation, reflect the culture of celebrity, of personality, at the expense of expertise. It was commented upon as, “Unbridled senseless local media controlling the minds of star-struck hypnotized zombies.” It has programmed all to bow to the fake Yellow Saint-Queen and her “special child” Noynoy. To keep the masses from staging an uprising, the key strategy had been to dumb them down (removing English and education/intellect-oriented programs) with senseless romance entertainment and Tito-Vic-Joey folly (“yumaman kami ng dahil sa katarantaduhan”).

Expertise, brains, vision fall outside of the political scope of most, such as highlighted in the vice-presidential debate, when most of the hopefuls acted as a pack of attack dogs against Senator Marcos on the fact of being the son of a certain father; gracefully, Bongbong kept his cool and stuck to issues; he showed himself to be head and shoulders above the others who apparently condoned “The reign of deep-seated pocket-lining corruption and shameless incompetence” at all levels of government, all in the guise of decent politically correct bleeding-heart human-rights and rule-of-law-advocating public service. They brought Filipinos to the lowest ebbs of political taste when people became allergic to anything that had to do with intellectualism – considering it an association to dictatorship.

Of course, again, there exist endeavors to fill the cultural vacuity and to tame the modern jungle of public space, but we found that these are doomed because the political elite consists of a self-satisfied lot that abandons the population at large and offers no cultural leadership; as a result, the State that fits public space is devoid of the exemplary institutions necessary to resuscitate a
transcendent nation. Consequently, Philippine civilization remains little traditional in scope and is as such not even interested in developing a rational, self-distancing intellectual climate; it is emotion that reigns supreme, such as exemplified by the mutually exclusive partisan groups that fight each other tooth and nail. This situation leaves ample room to the myth-making legerdemain of historical falsification, and inane entertainment, such as confirmed by the self-defeating national school presentation of history and identity (Mulder 2016b: 145-74).

This condition in which emotion substitutes for reason is fuelled by the contingencies and ensuing individual insecurity induced by the experience of post-modern life that characteristically unfolds in Habermasian 'new obscurity' and Baumanian 'uncertainty'. At the level of the individual this means being subjected to ever more precarious situations and social dislocations that, in turn, drive the quest for a hold in life in individual-centered religion, in life-styling consumerism, and in the retreat to the private, trusted and surveyable inner-circle of life. Subsequently, the public domain remains out of sight, and with it withers the chance of developing an overarching, positive civilization that links the public sphere to private life. The public sphere remains an alienating place where self-respect and moral considerations are dispensable luxuries. As a result, the 'new obscurity' highlights the split in Philippine life, the separation of the real and the superficial; of the private and the public; of the vernacular versus English; of home and loyalty versus the 'democracy' of doing as you please.
3. Francisco Sionil Jose's conclusions

'Our times'

The picture national artist Francisco “Frankie” Sionil Jose paints of his society is striking and shocking. He points to the sham that passes for democracy and free press. These formally exist, yet in practice they are rotten and corrupt. As a result, the country is a tragic place where having conviction is an act of heroism. Besides, there is hardly anybody who gets excited about it anymore. It is as if people have been lobotomized by their own obstinacy. They are married to their degradation and do not want to see beyond it.

According to Sionil Jose, this condition is bound to continue because people have neither memory, nor sense of history, morality or identity to take pride in. Thus traitors are elected to office. Exploiters and torturers are forgotten. The powerful are admired; they are Spanish mestizos who do not intermarry with those Indio mongrels whom they consider incapable of creativity or leadership. It seems as if the country in its modern condition is beyond redemption.

Whereas this condition may be rooted in distant history, it is apparent that people are steadily losing identity, roots and dignity. They are no longer self-possessed but, in the absence of national leadership and moral guidance, overwhelmed by the forces of modernity. We simply live in 'crazy times' in which people—certainly those on their way up—are corruptible by nature. Lies are held for truth, ordinary people are denied their dignity, and as almost everybody has to struggle for survival, the feeling of shame becomes a luxury. The idea of moral order has gone lost; what remains are self-centered individuals, driven by greed or the desire for power, violence or anger, gullibility or ignorance.

In the absence of cultural identity or continuity, anything
goes—no matter how outrageous. Posturing and hypocrisy have been elevated to forms of art that pervade life and are instrumental in playing politics. After all, what people believe to be true is true and, in these uncertain, lonely times, people pin their hopes on irrational beliefs. Others simply seek escape from the harshness of existence or from their own confusion. These are golden times for soothsayers, amulet vendors and sectarian cult bosses.

When Jose writes about how the tentacles of the oligarchy reach through the whole of society, yeah, even into the classroom, he observes that the only things that count are money and power. Morally, the social edifice has become an empty shell; as a result, culture, civilization is violated. Instead of assumed Oriental spirituality, we see the shameless mix of business and politics presided over by a rapacious elite incapable of, and uninterested in, providing moral leadership. On the contrary, they corrupt society, rendering both olden ways and modern ideals irrelevant. (Sionil Jose 1992, 1993; Mulder 2016b: 175-89).

4. Intellectual Climate

My students do not want to think, they want to pass in order to land a job. They are not curious. People here just want to smile and forget to use their head – Lecturer at an autonomous university

Another teacher's opinion

The problem is that, despite of the number of students who excel with their grades in Philippine schools, we have yet to find a Filipino student who can inspire innovation or defy conventional
wisdom in Philippine society. As I have pointed out in previous articles, despite the many brilliant students produced each year by Philippine universities, the country has yet to produce someone who can inspire “greatness.”

Where can we find the great Filipino inventor? Where is our own Steve Jobs or Mark Zuckerberg? Where is the next Jose Rizal who is going to wake the majority of Filipinos from their long stupor? They are not in the Philippines because the society does not encourage individuals to stand out from the crowd and be unique [or, popularly, to be a nerd]. Everyone has to put their head down lest they get ostracized for being too “different” or in the local vernacular walang pakisama [not getting along with others].

Philippine society also discourages individuals from expressing their dissenting opinion. I often get accused of being a “paid hack” for criticizing Filipino politicians. It would be hard to find a teacher who doesn't limit freedom of expression in class. As a matter of fact, students are taught to show deference to older people or to those who are in authority, including their teachers. Young kids are discouraged from questioning them. This is precisely the reason why timid behavior prevails and why many Filipinos are too sensitive to criticism and to people who have differing opinions.

Competition is part of the process of producing innovative and unique individuals. Without it, people will lack the motivation to strive harder to succeed. In the Philippines, however, students are told what to think and not how to think; as a result, the use of critical thinking is not so common in the country –Ilda
Early impressions

In the orienting phase of field research, newspaper reading was a daily chore. I remember the item on the handsome dividend Araneta University was paying its stock-holders. Coming from the Netherlands, I was shocked; providing education in order to make money was distasteful. I also learned that the country boasted some 1,450 institutions bestowing bachelor degrees, often in subjects that would not qualify as academic in Western Europe. Next to this, I noted that all sorts of craftsmen, opticians for one, shamelessly put “Dr.” in front of their names, often adding a gamut of unheard of distinctions, and that those practicing law were routinely addressed as 'attorney'.

Reconnoitering in 1983, I was soon irritated by inescapable noise, whether in public conveyances, restaurants, malls or streets; it made the Philippines the most clamorous country I ever experienced. So, go to the library to find peace to read. In Lucena City—my research site—the municipal library displayed “Do not let it be you who people will point out as destroying the quiet”. This admonition was backed up by the sound of an inane noon-time show on television, while some personnel entertained themselves with the titter of transistor radios on their desks.

On a bus, in a park or on campus, it struck me as weird to see somebody reading a book, with the remarkable exception of the kantinera of the students' canteen. The aversion to reading is highlighted by the absence of real bookstores. Whereas, in Manila, I found my way to three small shops that qualify for the distinction, so-called 'bookstores' normally sell school and office supplies, complemented with sundry merchandise that has no relation to reading.
After a total of five months 'in the field', I ventured to circulate a preliminary working paper, *All Filipinos Go to Heaven* (1987); it attracted an avalanche of responses and was approvingly referred to in the so-called Shahani Report, *Building a People, Building a Nation. A Moral Recovery Program*. The Report's wordy impressionism—the weaknesses of the Filipinos are extreme personalism, extreme family-centeredness, lack of discipline, foolhardiness, passivity and lack of initiative, lack of patriotism and an actual preference for things foreign, a selfish, self-serving attitude, insensitivity to the common good, lack of self-analysis and self-reflection (4-7) reminds me of what I then wrote:

Although rich in words, the intellectual standard of the media shines through in shallow journalism and the political use of words. Although the Philippines takes pride in high literacy, books do not sell, newspaper circulation is limited, authors remain poor, and in Lucena City, it is difficult to buy a novel or a college reader.

The least frequented room of its local university (8000 students) is the poorly equipped library. Campus discussion and controversy are actively discouraged; teaching content is transmitted by dictation and fixed by rote learning. Whereas the country produces a steady stream of fine minds, from Balagtas, del Pilar, Rizal and Mabini to Recto, de la Costa, Constantino and Joaquin, the development of their wit cannot be attributed to a rooted tradition of learning.

Many colleges and universities are mere diplomas mills, staffed by overworked teachers who are poorly paid for
teaching loads of 30 to 42 hours a week. Yet people have a high regard for education and parents sacrifice to see the graduation pictures of their offspring in academic gown and mortarboard.

In the absence of serious discussion, slipshod journalism, asinine noontime shows on television, political rhetoric, dictations, religion and delightful Filipino self-mockery reign supreme. The “mis-education” of the Filipino (Constantino 1966) draws attention away from self and home while emulating foreign examples; this is most clearly expressed in the culture of the 'bi-national' elite whose cultural capital lies way across the ocean, resulting in a dependent mentality, expressed in alien forms.

It would be ludicrous to expect that such an elite would take cultural responsibility and promote a national identity that inspires hope and pride in country. As a result, there is no positive counteracting of the unrestrained commercialization of media that offer advertising rather than reflection and critical socio-political analysis; what remains, is a vast market for mass-cultural entertainment that draws attention away from the issues that should really matter [currently, this is demonstrated through the AlDub telenovela and personal identification with its characters (Pertierra 2016)].

The Filipinos I came to know were almost invariably nice, kind and sympathetic people who rarely tried to take advantage of me and whose cordiality was sometimes embarrassing. They seemed to enjoy jocular and congenial
association in a sphere of relaxation. Within shades of distance and intimacy, I ventured that this style expresses unself-consciousness as the desired state of being.

This attitude fosters acceptance of life as it comes; one lives in and with and not over and against a 'public' environment that is divorced from life that really matters, from family and interpersonal relationships. As a result, the wider setting poses no obstacle to the dominance of mass cultural life with its indifference to social problems and active citizenship; taking an interest in these issues is unlikely since mental vagueness, a dysfunctional educational system, fully commercialized media and an apathetic government prevail.

Nosy Parker

Whereas my preliminary paper *All Filipinos Go to Heaven* drew an avalanche of positive observations, ironic corrections and constructive criticism, further research and deepening understanding resulted in a defensive attitude of many colleagues and informants. This can only be expected: the closer one gets to the heart of things, the more one is felt to be a Nosy Parker who peeps behind the scenes, who is intrusive and even wants to discuss the things he sees with the people concerned! He blusters into the privacy of his informants who often let him know that he should respectfully stay out of their affairs. I was quite upset when this happened to a reputable social analyst cum UP professor with whom I had developed a cordial relationship during my early research; from then on, however, I was no longer invited to share lunch at his home on campus. It was the tell-tale sign that I was on track.

Things really came to a head when, in 1990, I circulated
Appreciating Lowland Christian Filipino Culture. This time, however, most reactions were not constructive; instead, I was advised to stop with my research; my case was hopeless. The last chapter of this compound paper, “Symbolizing the Polity in the Philippines”—which I, upon rereading, still find humorous and to the point—was lambasted by the editor of Solidarity in a personal letter to me [NM]as your perceptions of this nation have been so colored by your ulcers, you have failed as a scholar, and failed miserably.

Among the social-science faculty at UP—who, according to Ateneo Professor Jaime Bulatao, S.J., mistake nationalism for science—the reception was a tempest. For instance, the chapter “The Great and the Little Tradition of the Philippines” drew the Dean's tart comment there is nothing little about the Philippines. This, despite the fact that the exemplary culture of Philippine everyday life is, by definition, the little-traditional ideology of family life—it is even enshrined in the Constitution of 1987—which results in the moralistic perception of things social.

Anthropology Professor Covar invited me to introduce my paper in his class, and so I went to Diliman campus in the hope of gathering critical comments. At the appointed venue, I found a note on the door, Regret! I am indisposed. I'll not meet my class today... It would have been reacted “violently”. Had he read the paper beforehand, I could have been spared that trip, even as without the 'indisposed', I would have enjoyed getting to know what students were taught to think. The outright refusal to further discuss became clear when the Dean refused to accept a subsequent paper; he pushed it back into my hands with the remark this is for European consumption.

So much for the intellectual climate among the so-called Filipinologists at the foremost state university who have, regrettably,
deeply influenced the teaching of history and social subjects. Thank goodness there are others not blindfolded by nationalism and related myth-making. An Ateneo-based Filipino Jesuit observed: *This is a very perceptive paper. I agree with most of what it says. My few problems of it would be in the details.*

**Anti-intellectualism**

Naturally, people think best in their vernacular. Hence, schooling should foster the vernacular in order to train critical reasoning. Only then, normally in the fifth grade, can second languages be absorbed without resulting in muddled thinking. In the Philippines, however, the premature introduction of English may well result in prevailing anti-intellectualism as it causes a permanent state of confusion through not cultivating the students’ mother-tongue first. Whereas the recent change in the curriculum is hopeful, the present generation of students at the autonomous university in Lucena City still joke that their mastery of English is no better than *Carabao English*, water-buffalo English. When they are allowed to formulate in their native Tagalog, even I, Nosy Parker, can point out the inaccuracies. The home language has been neglected, persists only as conversational and remains unfit for intellectual discourse, at the same time that English has been insufficiently developed.

Whereas there is no shortage of people who have studied at reputable American universities, most of them avoid intellectual exchanges with outsiders and foreigners, and show a dislike for ideological dialogue. Most often, they are averse to critical exchanges, even as many zestfully indulge in rhetoric. Examples in the flourishing field of cause-oriented organizations reproduce this situation: “Two Pinoys means two NGOs” is the standard joke.
Whereas they seemingly address similar societal problems, they shy away from getting their act together in an overarching frame, particularly because of person-centered leadership.

This reminds one of the opinion pages of the English language press that address issues in an *ad hoc* fashion that is never followed up by 'investigative' journalism, as such reflecting the spineless social teachings in school. It is as if sociology still needs to be invented while seeking safety in conservatism and familial moralism. Whereas Rizal—our national hero!—shines as a keen social analyst, his translated writings are further demolished through using them for the study of Filipino/Tagalog. Adding insult to injury, school teaches that Filipinos are irresponsible, imitative, improvident, indolent, and dislike manual labor, have no self-respect, are not self-reliant and indulge in feelings of inferiority (Mulder 2000; 2014). With such journalism and training, only anti-intellectualism can be expected.

Because of all this and in spite of many exchanges with a limited number of outstanding intellectuals, in comparison with my researches in Thailand and on Java, I found myself in an intellectual desert. Whereas in the former countries faculty and students steadily demanded intellectual stimulation, in my more than thirty years in the Philippines I have only rarely been invited to deliver lectures and to enjoy subsequent discussions.

*Popular opinion about 'anti-intellectualism'*

In the quest for the deeper roots of this attitude, it is often observed that Filipinos feel uneasy with individual tasks and that reading, studying and ambition are discouraged within the family, especially if these do not lead to economic advantage. Moreover, instead of curiosity, respect for authority and complying with family
obligations is fostered among children. They do not value knowledge itself but only the college certificate that allows one to find a secure job. As a result, education as such is not an entry to high social status. To enjoy the latter, a person needs success, fame and money.

Anti-intellectualism feeds on the continuous need to be entertained, be it with karaoke, telenovelas or following the private lives of the rich and famous. People evade problems and derive comfort from celebrating ignorance, seeing high intelligence as a negative trait. Let us follow the highly acclaimed opinion of Julia Jasmine Madrazo-Sta. Romana in her “Smart-shaming and our Pinoy culture of anti-intellectualism”:

If you look at popular Filipino culture, there's a pervasive thread that seems to celebrate ignorance. I'm not saying that we Filipinos are dumb or that we don't value knowledge or education. I'm saying that as a culture, we tend to see high intelligence as a negative trait. The best example of this would be Philippine politics. When you look at the elections starting at the later end of the 20th century, we start seeing the word “intellectual” as an insult rather than a quality that you look for in public servants. We see candidates downplaying their academic and career achievements to appeal to the masses.

[After giving several examples of being “too intellectual” and contrasting these with the likes of former President Erap Estrada who arrogantly celebrated his being kicked out of school, she notes that “We playfully shame people when they're 'too smart' for our common tastes”. Upon this, she observes…]
It's the same with Filipino movies and TV. The Itchy Worms catchy hit, “Noon Time Show” was actually a serious criticism of how these shows exploit and celebrate ignorance. Five of the top 10 highest grossing Filipino movies of all time are self-admitted dumb comedies that rely more on slapstick and stereotypes than witty writing for laughs. … characters that display some degree of intelligence are either smart-shamed or portrayed as villains. What we value is conformity, empathy and social relationships, by themselves common traits among Asian countries.

In his *Hindsight*, F. Sionil Jose addresses the question “why are we shallow?” After giving an example of admiration for things facile, he scores points when noting “the nincompoops that are elected to high office because of popularity, of having a well-known name without being questioned about their qualifications”. It is reflected in the irresponsible media that offer no food for thought.

This corresponds with an educational system that does not foster scholarship, let alone the quest for excellence. The curriculum shies away from the humanities, especially history and philosophy, which results in a people without a past or without the memory necessary to build a nation. Another consequence of this neglect is that simple knowledge is taken for wisdom and that quantities of ego-driven know-it-alls shine in and on the media without any restraint or humility. Such are the ones who bluster their way to the top at the expense of the vast majority who will then suffer their arrogance and ignorance. It blatantly demonstrates the absence of self-knowledge, of knowing one's limits and the inability of accepting criticism.

In the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* of July 14, 2015, John Nery
asks the question “Filipinos, what are we doing wrong?” In step with what many Filipinos observe, he then notes that a huge number of Filipinos abroad make the grade or even excel in their jobs and command the admiration of the people they are working among, be it in hospital or bank, design or architecture. Yet, back home such excellence is hard to find.

Upon this, Nery notes the miserable circumstances, the political rigmarole, the corruption, the absence of discipline, the sluggish development of infrastructure, the privileged upper class that behaves as if the country is theirs and theirs alone, and the glaring truth that citizens are aware that their country is being left behind. Even Cambodia and Vietnam overtook the Philippines in poverty reduction!

In conclusion, he suggests the four deadly habits that lead to the anarchy and misery of life in the Philippines. In the first place, he notes that people think and behave as if the rules are not fixed, and even if they were, they would not apply in the home country. Secondly, a kind of fatalism that accepts what is wrong in the belief that nothing can be done about it anyway. Thirdly, Filipinos are selectively proud to the point of racism; in other words, they are incomparable and constitute their own measure. As a result, as deadly habit four has it, as a people Filipinos lack national ambition.

**Comfort in ignorance**

Long before I ever thought of doing research in the Philippines, eminent historian William Henry Scott observed that teaching falsehood and myth about Philippine history is self-defeating, because such teaching can never result in positive feelings of national identity and pride; on the contrary, it may merely result in ignorance and indifference (Scott 1968). Quite a few Filipino historians and Jesuits have since commented on the untenable
nonsense and perpetual sham taught in school that deprives young Filipinos of all sense of history. What they should be taught is the fascinating and constructive saga of Philippine becoming that would stimulate feelings of national identity and pride, while providing a solid base for the teaching of all social subjects. However this may be, keeping students ignorant seems to be more comfortable and in line with the prevailing intellectual climate.

5. Smallness triumphant: the Filipino pioneer

Introduction

The idea of smallness refers to Nick Joaquin's "Heritage of Smallness" that would be the mainstay characteristic of Filipino existence. Whereas many nations take pride in being part of one or another great civilization, the Filipino has been standing his ground, in spite of centuries of contact with the Great Tradition of the West. Meanwhile, with the haze of the 'new obscurity' choking the clarity of people's civilizational identity, the tendency to retreat to what is intimately familiar is spreading and retrospectively justifies the Filipinos' stubborn holding on to their heritage of smallness. It is fair to credit the Filipino people with pioneering this possibility.

The little and the great traditions of Philippine civilization

Within the wide scope of a civilization as a far-flung 'system' of dominant ideas, we'll find local little traditions characteristic of everyday life and praxis and the overarching Great Tradition (Redfield 1956). Normally, both traditions bear the mark of earlier days, at the same time that the great tradition qualifies the civilization concerned as a whole. If we take Western civilization as an instance of an ever-evolving Great Tradition, we see that it has grown from
recognizable roots in the past into a 'system' of incredible complexity, within which competing ideologies and various branches of Christianity, many literary and artistic traditions, science and humanism could develop. Within its vast scope, locally based civilizations developed on the basis of standards that, on the one hand, hark back to early Greek and Roman sources, and that have, on the other, been elaborated and localized through incorporating old traditions and historical accident in a vernacular canon with which the relevant literati and intelligentsia are familiar. As a result, it is fair to speak of, for instances, French, North-American and Russian civilizations as expressions of the Western Great Tradition.

The Great Tradition of the Philippines consists of canonical Catholicism and the world of ideas of the North-American branch of Western civilization. At the time the Spaniards arrived, there was nothing in terms of a common civilization or a political system that tied the islands and its multifarious populations together. There merely existed semi-self-contained local traditions that may have shared certain characteristics, even as the various populations were divided among each other and among themselves. Whatever unity evolved was the product of Spanish colonization; culturally, such unity resulted from the propagation of Hispanicized Catholic Christianity. Over the long colonial period, the latter could sink in and be Filipinized, resulting in a Catholicism that became a symbolic representation of family relationships (Mulder 1997). By the latter part of the 19th century, a distinct lowland Christian culture had evolved and secular European ideas obtained their foothold among the budding intelligentsia, the so-called ilustrados.

As custodians of Catholicism, Spanish friars tended to guard their monopoly of knowledge. When they left at the demise of Spanish empire, the Church suffered a heavy loss of prestige and little
remained of canonical Catholicism. Contrarily, grounded Catholicism was a folk religion, very short on personnel that, in the absence of clerical control, became its own measure. Because of the American separation of church and state, religion also lost its legitimizing functions in relation to the state that henceforward was founded on democracy, liberty and constitutionalism. However, whereas Catholicism had shaped and adapted itself to the practice and ethics of Philippine life, American ideas about political procedure, rule of law and the order of public space have remained dissonant to everyday praxis, even as they are recognized as exemplary.

Through energetic promotion of secular education and English, the Americans easily won the cultural battle. By the 1920s, the Spanish order and the reactions it provoked, such as nationalism and even literature in Tagalog, had lost out and were rapidlyretreating, which resulted in a generation of America-oriented students who had lost their anchor in the past. The Great Tradition the Americans brought was eagerly and uncritically accepted but could, in such short time, not be absorbed, adapted or become exemplary for the home-grown traditions of the life-world. It remained a strange set of ideas, a measuring rod irrelevant to life as it is lived.5

Basically, the Americans introduced a set of ideas about the order of the public sphere, about government and politics. Through rapidly delegating administrative and political power to the economic and educated elites, a ruling class was brought into existence for which independence and nationalism ceased to be profitable issues once the Commonwealth was inaugurated (1935). As of then, American ideas about good government and the

5The irrelevance of American standards to Philippine life has often been argued, for instance, by O.D. Corpuz in “The cultural foundations of Filipino politics”. He reasons that in Filipino practice, nepotism is ethically normative and that party loyalty is subject to family interests because of this. “We do [should] not judge ourselves by the irrelevant idiosyncrasies, eccentricities, and even wishes of alien nations”. In other words, family ethics justify the privatization of ‘public’ affairs—which indeed seems to be the practice. In a different vein, Lumbera insists that Filipino literature should be judged by Filipino standards and measured at its relevance for life in the Philippines.
imperativeness of nation-building degenerated to opportunistic rhetoric. By appropriating the 'public' sphere as its private backyard, the elite aborted the American legacy, so splitting the potential nation into privileged and commoners, while encasing each segment in its own life-world tradition.⁶

Put differently, the American Great-Traditional legacy exists in a vacuum and is not naturally connected to lowland Christian culture; the two do not inspire each other and fail to articulate. This disjuncture of the ideas that guide Great and local traditions is the cause of grave cultural problems, such as perennial uncertainty about Filipino national identity and the related bent for self-denigration (Mulder 2015). As a result, Filipinos live with historical falsification and fail to articulate the common weal in a convincing national doctrine.

In the Philippines, the nominal acceptance of the North-American Great Tradition opens the country up to the world outside. As a result, most members of the power elite and an open-minded intelligentsia are multilingual, participate in international cultural life and accept such openness as a matter-of-course. They discourse in terms of a dominant culture to which they are provincial and dearly lack an idiom grounded in their national being. Normally, they are ignorant of home-grown literature, whether in the vernacular or English, with the exception of the school-taught lines of Balagtas and Jose Rizal. If historically conscious, they are radically divided in interpretation.⁷

⁶ Among the so-called Filipinologists this situation is referred to as The Great Cultural Divide.

⁷ Historical consciousness is seriously debilitated in school through fantasizing about Filipino society long before the advent of the Spaniards and colonially-inspired reasoning that presents outsiders as the main movers of Philippine history. In the last decades of the 19th century, Filipinos momentarily surface as agents of their history, soon to be subordinated to the benevolence of American imperialism. Altogether, it results in the spineless 'history' most educated Filipinos are familiar with. Next to this uninspiring school history, we find the works of authors writing 'history with a purpose', such as Agoncillo and Constantino who invented the 'masses' as the movers of history or, more recently, Veneracion who maintains that the nation is on the way to becoming a kind of an intimate community. Against this legendary, militantly nationalistic mainstream we find, thank goodness, Nick Joaquin’s cultural approach of Philippine becoming that opens the possibility of positive identification with the past. This may also be said of certain other historians, such as William Henry Scott, whose interpretations provide perspective. Even so, the availability of such works fails to stimulate serious debate and does not change an iota of the nonsense taught in school.
Generally, the political elite creates a nation through propagating a narrative of national becoming, backed up by emotion-laden symbols and institutions. The elite concerned may also choose not to do so. Instilling national consciousness and ideology, or effective nation-statehood and cultural self-sufficiency seems to go against the very interest of the ruling class. In order to understand its world of ideas or the dominant ideas propagated in school and media, we need to understand its historical position in the political economy.

The ruling elite, the so-called “old oligarchy” has its roots in the Spanish colonial period and consists of a mixture of Filipinos, Chinese and Spaniards. The Americans gave what it demanded from Spain, that is, political power. This power reinforced its grip on the means of production, especially land. Colonial history justifies and legitimizes its position, such as expressed with the prominent Stars-and-Stripes in the picture of the transfer of independence in 1946 to President Roxas that features on the 1986-issued hundred-peso bill. Nowadays, the elite is largely English-speaking, culturally bi-national, oriented to the outside, and often trained at American universities.

No wonder that the example it sets leads to negative appreciation of things Philippine which is even expressed in approved school texts (Doronila 1986; Mulder 2000, 2014). Naturally, foreign products, especially 'state-side' are preferred. Together, this is known as “our colonial mentality” that is reinforced by the free-for-all propagation of 'American lifestyles' in the media and a consumerism that is dressed up in American mass-cultural symbols. As a result, the capital Metro Manila merely represents the phraseology and politics of a self-serving elite and a mushrooming mass culture that should in no way be seen as expressive of the overarching idea of 'Nation'.
Of course, there are people who deplore this situation. There are the various cliques of militant nationalists whose inbreeding or person-centered exclusivity fosters controversy rather than meaningful discourse. They promote causes as diverse as 'the national language', anti-Americanism, popular democracy, Marxist analysis, regional cultural expressions versus Manila-centeredness, or grand designs for re-education. Whoever they are, all of them deplore the cultural dominance of the United States. Even so, to be educated still means fluency in English and familiarity with Western civilization. In terms of a Great Tradition, there is no alternative, and so the 'nationalism' the militants propagate suffers from an inner contradiction, and from the failure of developing a visionary discourse that brings the nation as a whole to life. So, in parallel with official quarters such as the Department of Education, the 'nationalists' do not provide cultural leadership, and so Philippine life remains devoid of an indigenous exemplary center.

The heart of lowland Christian culture lies in the little tradition of home and locality. There one finds the shared and distinctive symbols that express the Filipino ethos. These symbols belong to individual families and communities, such as the diplomas on the wall, graduation pictures, the cute Santo Niño, the serene Lady of Lourdes or the stark Mother of Perpetual Help, the plaza with its diminutive Rizal statue, the town hall and the church, the basketball court, the band, the bus waiting shed (donated by a politician or a Rotary clique), the fiesta and processions.

All these symbols do not refer to a center of culture. As little-traditional Filipino expressions of the vast sway of Western civilization, they merely refer to themselves and do not transcend their referent. Up to the present, therefore, lowland culture is expressed in a concrete style of life rather than in the more abstract
'imagined community' of the nation as encompassing moral order.

Summarily, it is fair to conclude that Philippine culture as we know it today developed from tribalism to a nation-wide, family and community-based little tradition that, according to Pertierra, ensures a strong sense of self rooted in practical life; there life is taken-for-granted and beyond question, at the same time that it results in a sense of identity that is limited by its lack of self-consciousness (2002: 74).

6. Socialization: culture and personality

The above considerations about the setting of the individual predicament invite us to focus on Filipino psychology; to do so, we'll review Bulatao's pioneering work on Filipino personality. According to his early writings, Filipino family-type relationships, socialization practices, and inescapable togetherness foster the experience of oneself as a part of an encompassing whole or as a part of a closed group (Bulatao 1964). This state of being results in a low level of "individuation" (if compared to members of other nations) and an interpersonal world that becomes the primary source of emotional gratification, reassurance, recognition, and acceptance (Lapuz 1972).

Accordingly, one's self-esteem depends on how one is regarded by relevant others, thus making for conformity to group opinions, timidity and unassertiveness (or what is known as "Filipino tolerance"), while leading to the satisfaction of role fulfillment. As Bulatao surmises, this situation, in which the self finds no room for development, often results in a low level of self-esteem or an inferiority complex (Bulatao 1964). This is why Bulatao describes the Filipino as somebody whose individual core is identifiable but whose ego-boundaries blend with others (ibid.). In the words of Arellano-Carandang, this can be summarized as “a relative low
degree of ego-differentiation” (Arellano-Carandang 1987). Filipinos are parts of groups and have a group-dependent identity; because of this, the basic social unit is not the individual but the closed group (Bulatao, interview 1988) (Mulder 1997).

Subsequent upon Bulatao's vision, we can safely assume that the heart of lowland Christian Pinoy civilization lies in the little tradition of the private, trusted and survey-able inner-circle of life—family, relatives, friends, mates, face-to-face community—which impresses, not as a counterpart of things public, but as an opposite world of experience. It is as if private and public are not linked, as if these have no business with each other—which strikes the post-feudal Westerner as odd. Even so, whether there or here, these days trust in life in the inner circle is resuscitated by the 'new obscurity' that, according to Habermas is characteristic of contemporary existence (1985). These days, in the public domain, individuals experience the insecurity induced by the contingencies of post-modern life; the place to be, it seems, is with and among your own.

As if to confirm the little-traditional scope of Filipino civilization, the family is enshrined in the country's constitution as the basic institution of Philippine society. This opinion is widely shared among Filipinos: To them, the family is the bedrock of their life at the same time that the public world of politics and business that surrounds it appears to be indifferent and anonymous; whereas people need to deal with it, they aspire to withdraw into the emotional security of their private sphere. The predominant image of the public world may, therefore, be well reinforced by the contrast it affords with the identity-confirming family. These contrasting images somehow confirm each other, and deflect from positive action in the society that is, after all, no better than a market. This results in a kind
of cultural short-sightedness that confines the relevant world to family, relatives, patrons and community.

In this perception, the family reflects the social organization of the barangay (community) days of the past in the present. Then, surrounding territory was the realm of nature, a place to hunt, to make forays into an undomesticated area stretching among one's own and other communities and clans. Then as now, the family is the actual link in the ancestral chain. For children, parents are ancestors, and if nothing else, this basic fact warrants the hierarchy among (morally) unequal persons. Such hierarchy means order, stability, identity, and hold in life; it is moral per se. Subsequently, moral behavior is mandatory; people should live according to the 'ethic of place', i.e., fulfill their obligations, from showing honor to being protective and patron-like. Compared to the amoral, chaotic free-for-all, the inner world is the haven of reliability and justifies fierce loyalty.

In this scheme of things, conscience is located in relations with concretely known people. The most important of these relations involve the recognition of goodness received, which gives rise to debts of gratitude known as utang-na-loob. It is consciousness of such debts, the most important of them being to parents, relatives, patrons and friends, which practically defines one's conscience and moral horizon (ibid.).

In socio-psychological terms, we may observe that a person belongs to somebody else and, in his turn, claims others. These others, with the members of the basic family at the center, spell the moral universe that defines the person's (self-)identity. The pillars of that universe are obligation and hierarchy: obligation to place family before self, and hierarchy as the unquestioned acceptance of parental authority. The basic responsibility would appear not to be hurting the feelings of parents, and thus obeying and respecting them. Talking
back to them becomes a despicable show of disrespect and a blow to the self-esteem of lowly individuated fathers and mothers.

Such comportment jibes with a manner of socialization that produces relatively lowly individuated individuals; as a personality type, such individuals are outwardly directed, interdependent, and given to a *bahala na* or 'come what may' attitude of fatalism and resignation; almost naturally, such characteristics lead to intolerance of others who insist on going their own way. These are held to be nerds, to cause stress in others, i.e., to “nose-bleed” them; pulling them back into everyday mediocrity and conformity is blithely acknowledged as “our crab mentality.”

The milieu in which a child grows up confirms Joaquin's complaint of the Filipino aversion to challenges and competition. “Do not stand out!” seems to be the imperative; “Don't make yourself special by achieving”. On the one hand this results in the security of authoritarianism in which lowly individuated parents know best and dictate the future of their offspring, on the other the security of acceptance, of *pakikisama*, of smoothly getting along with each other and giving in to peer pressure.

In the practice of this groupish socialization, we should consider gender differentiation. Normally, girls are trained to care, to be responsible and considerate of others; in brief, they are expected to perform. Whereas, gracefully, most boys are similarly educated, others are, regretfully, pandered to, which results in the abundantly present spoiled-brat males who are incapable of seeing the consequences of their own deeds. Combined with the general feature of low individuation, these brats tend to be mother- and, later on, wife-dependent; in order to beef up their self-image, they may subsequently cultivate authoritarianism and machismo, hypersensitivity to perceived criticism and interference, which gives rise to
often encountered hotheadedness and long-lasting resentment; in terms of their surrounding others, it's easy to build oneself an enemy!

7. Cultural psychology: culture, emotion, and motivation

Whereas the dichotomy of private-public is in itself unremarkable, it is remarkable that it appears as a radical bipartition in Philippine life. Private life and public existence do not connect, and the culture of each of them stands on its own. In his comments on the praxis of religion, Bulatao labelled it 'split-level Christianity': the highest integrity in the sphere of private life versus unbridled opportunism in public existence; in order to understand life in the
latter sphere, it is important to note that this split did not affect individual psychic well-being.

While my socio-historical approach is entirely different from Bulatao's psychological interest, his observation of the 1960s concurs with the conclusions I reached over the past thirty years; in the absence of a moral canopy, or a vibrant nationalism grounded in conscious historical becoming, we may safely conclude that, up to the present, lowland culture is expressed in a concrete style of life rather than in the more abstract 'imagined community' of the nation as encompassing moral order. The history of becoming and with it identity, budding civilization and nation were effectively aborted; in being set back to the pre-civilization of Animism, we presently have to do with the absences of a convincing national environment, of historical consciousness, and of cultural leadership; in other words, there is no overarching civilization in place.

This situation is all the more pungent because of the intrusive creed of economic development, with its stress on money, technology, and material success that are inherently averse to popular mobilization. Accordingly, 'the Nation' has been replaced by state and market at the same time that the ideals of nation-building and active citizenship have faded in an anonymous scene ruled by political and economic expediency. This is supported by the very emergence of a multitude of upwardly mobile people in a market-driven environment where moral teachings of old have gone lost and where civil society ideals, such as responsibility for and active participation in a shared public world, have seemingly lost their relevance. In the wider setting of life, this gives rise to the Habermasian 'new obscurity', that is, the contingent experience of life in an anonymous world driven by 'far-from-my-bed' capitalist production, inexorable technological innovation, science, and
factory-made culture. People so affected may safeguard their personhood through finding, on the one hand, a hold in life in self-centered religion, while on the other, they ruthlessly strive for survival, caring only for themselves and their immediate dependents.

In conclusion, the private, inner-circle of life—family, relatives, friends, mates, face-to-face community—stands in sharp contrast to a public realm of anonymity, and expediency. The subsequent disjunction of ideas is at the root of the cultural vacuity or 'perpetual cultural crisis' that exposes the failure of state and political elite to provide cultural leadership, doubt about national identity, self-deceiving historical fantasies, and indifference in regard of the common weal and nation-building.

8. Summary of connection culture, emotion, and motivation

Culture of private life

The milieu in which a child grows up breeds the 'lowly individuated individual' whose identity-borders blend with those of others while confirming the Filipino aversion to challenges and competition. “Do not stand out!” seems to be the imperative; “Don't make yourself special by achieving”. Accordingly, Filipino personality should be seen in relation to relevant others that are incorporated in individual being. This results, on the one hand, in the security of authoritarianism and machismo, and, on the other, the security of acceptance, of pakikisama, of smoothly getting along with each other and giving in to peer pressure. As a result, we find a general lack of self-confidence which, in its turn, depresses initiative.
**Culture of public sphere**

The country is still reeling under the cultural calamity occasioned by the American intrusion that cut off history, becoming, identity, pride, and the subsequent loss of nation. In terms of culture, people slid into ennui, into a mental weariness to land in the doldrums of a sterile, dependent mentality. The country became a listless intellectual desert, where the heritage of Reason of the Hispanicized *ilustrados* had gone lost. No wonder that the current public sphere is filled with journalistic legerdemain and rumor-mongering that play on emotion and biased partiality, the worst of mass-cultural entertainment, karaoke, and lack of interest, altogether feeding the climate of anti-intellectualism resulting from collective amnesia of willful forgetting. This is supported by a national curriculum in which school teaches what to think as against how to think, while discouraging reading and independent thought (Mulder 2000; 2014). The cultural vacuity this entails feeds the sphere of resignation, of the fatalism of *bahala na*, of being overpowered and afraid of reform and change. Things are as they are; one cannot change them and they will not change; so, let it be, forget it, and enjoy the bright side of life.

In a series of articles that first appeared in the Free Press in the 1960s, Nick Joaquin adumbrated this demotivating cultural climate with “Where we should bewail our incompetence, our sloth, our lack of enterprise, our reluctance to look ahead and plan, our inability to organize, our disunity and childish trust in outside forces expressed in our *bahala na*—where, in short, we should burn with shame for our ineptitude, there we are made to feel justified in our very stupidities—and in going on acting stupid. If we bungle and botch, never mind, we do fall gloriously. O felix culpa that produces a Del Pilar at Tirad, a starved USAFFE in Bataan! And because we think heroism can cover up for our botches, we are always very eager
indeed to acclaim our defeats as “moral victories.” Tirad was such a “victory,” Bataan was such a “victory.” Ours is the most mysterious progress because we make it on disasters. In what shambles will we proclaim our next “moral victory”? (Joaquin 2005: 185).

**Motivation**

In the private sphere, people realize the value of and enjoy sticking together, and are willing to give in to keep it that way. In public life, they hope for a secure job, and are not driven to try to change circumstances. The best to aspire to is the face-value of name and fame, with questions of competence unasked. Even so, the listless and unrewarding sphere of national life motivates those who set their sight high to migrate and try their luck on foreign shores. Whereas they remain attached to *Heimat*, to place of birth and home, it appears to be tough to be committed to the state, to be a proud citizen of the republic. So, whether here or in diaspora, Filipinos remain devoted to their *Inang Bayan*, to “Mother Land”. This attachment is like the bond with family and relatives; it is the privatization of the nation in contrast to the public world of state and society at large.

**9. Summary**

**Substantial findings**

In our quest to fathom the Philippine enigma of demotivation, I am struck by, on the one hand individual-centeredness in a non-coherent public world, and on the other a set of factors that support the integrity of life in the private sphere and to sidestep challenges; “Do not stand out!” seems to be the imperative; “Don't make yourself special by achieving”; “Engage in *pakikisama*” that is, in smoothly
getting along with each other and giving in to peer pressure. Such comportment jibes with the ways of family life and a manner of socialization that produces relatively lowly individuated individuals; as a personality type, such individuals are outwardly directed, interdependent, and given to accept their circumstances as they come with *pasyensiya*, or the resignation induced by the conviction that things will and cannot change, in spite of occasional powerful, yet short-lived EDSA-explosions of solidarity (Bauman 2016).

Keep it this way! Suffer it, put on a smile and don't rock the boat! Ah, 'Filipino tolerance,' a many-splendored thing indeed. In this vein, we have to tolerate the perpetuation of 'mis-education' nowadays not because of the colonial school curriculum, but because of willful historical falsification and unending misinformation. Under the banner *A losing battle to improve textbooks*, this practice was highlighted in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* of September 14, 2015 as “Sick schools” with “sick textbooks written in Carabao English”. I disagree with the idea of 'battle'; this situation is endemic and another proof of not picking up the gauntlet that has been thrown down umpteen times since the mid-1960s. It is the comfort of apathy and self-deceit.

Condensed, it boils down to “the heritage of smallness”; Filipinos are people without history, have to do without an integrative narrative, without an overarching Great Tradition, and so their mental horizon is limited to those who are personally known and shies away from flying high. It is the familiar that is real in an obscure, anarchic wide world that fosters inconsiderateness and that is nationally represented by populist, self-seeking politicians and incompetent government. No wonder that those who are driven by ambition—other than grabbing and corrupting—export themselves to shores where their drive is positively appreciated. Go to Facebook
Theoretical premise

In our musings on the historical roots of the systematic split running through life in Philippine society and culture, we realized the explanatory potential of a theory of the evolution of civilization as a process of inclusion, running from the radical contradiction between the private and the public spheres of existence to the inclusion of the public sphere in personal identity feelings such as exemplified by personal involvement, active citizenship, and belonging to the imagined community of the nation.

This process is not a one-way street, as potential nation is giving way to market and political expediency, as such confusing identity feelings and emphasizing the contingencies that Habermas described as the 'new obscurity' and Bauman as 'an age of uncertainty' in which people look for the security of religion and primordial, private existence. Reflection on the Filipino “heritage of smallness” brought this home.

In view of the Philippine condition, we further realized the importance of exemplary cultural leadership and a vibrant national discourse in shaping an overarching Great Tradition to lock the public sphere into private concerns.

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Mulling through Mulder: The Private–Public Paradigm of Civilization

Commentary

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Reading Mulder initially sows confusion reinforced by skepticism moving toward annoyance, exasperation, even anger. Page after page of sweeping generalizations deeply critical of Philippine society and culture stagger a social scientist's imagination. Are these the writings of a fellow social scientist? Consider some of Niel Mulder's blatant assertions: The Philippines is “still a primitive country pretending to be civilized.” “There is no overarching moral canopy, no civilization.” “Despite the many brilliant students produced each year by Philippine universities, the country has yet to produce someone who can inspire to 'greatness'. ” Students “do not value knowledge itself but only the college certificate that allows one to find a secure job.” The country embodies “an intellectual desert.”
No qualifiers. No resorting to the comfortable social science cop-out, “On the one, hand….on the other…..” For the reader struggling to figure out what Mulder is getting at, his relentless attacks writ large simply fan the flames and add to the reader's discomfort. Are we that hopeless? Really? All 100 and more million of us?

To bolster his overwhelmingly negative stream-of-consciousness account of Philippine society, Mulder, a Dutch sociologist/philosopher with long residence in the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand, draws on a number of distinguished writers to substantiate his cause. They include Jaime C. Bulatao, S.J., F. Sionil Jose, Bienvenido N. Lumbera, Resil Mojares, Jurgen Habermas, and others. Selecting, however, only their most caustic portrayals of the evils he believes to have been perpetuated by American colonizers in cahoots with Filipino elites, and going on to lament the impact of distorted power on poor people's lives, his conclusions emerge as flawed self-fulfilling prophecies. Is this yet another tiresome version of “a damaged culture?”

Yet, as one rereads Mulder, seeking some inner logic in the onslaught of words, intriguing glimmers of analysis begin to appear. Mulder starts by posing the often-heard question about Filipinos, “How come that people, many of whom are applauded for their talents in the seven corners of this world, are not driven to succeed in their home country?”

Finding answers to this cultural-psychological question, according to him, calls for scrutinizing the process of national becoming that has formed the culture of Philippine public life, its intellectual climate and the heritage of smallness. These are the crucial elements in his view that mold Filipino socialization, personality, motivation and emotion. Analyzing these elements will
help untangle “the complex problématique of a culture of demotivation in a polity that fails to provide positive prospects.” At the heart of the matter, Mulder asserts is “the separation of the private and the public spheres of life and the cultural contradictions this cleavage calls forth.”

This commentator’s truncated outline of his discussion follows in her attempt to lay out for purposes of analysis a clearer and more orderly statement of what Mulder calls his “theoretical musing.”

- Spanish colonization brought essentially animist populations reliant on a subsistence economy together under a single governance system where improved technology like the plow and new crops gave the indios a foothold in the commercial cash economy.

- Colonization further offered the potential for an expanded mental shift into the public sphere of anonymous others, going beyond the private enclaves of family, home, and community. (Interesting that no equivalent diatribes against Spanish colonization accompany his excoriating American colonization!)

- Given the progressive set of Filipino ilustrado leaders ready to govern after the Philippine Revolution, among them Jose Rizal, Emilio Jacinto, Apolinario Mabini, Lope K. Santos, Pedro Paterno, T.H. Pardo de Tavera and Isabelo de los Reyes, the Philippines could have achieved the envisioned “civilized society,” defined as the arena where the public and private
spheres converge meaningfully.

• The arrival of the Americans, however, crushed that potential; the colonization of Filipino minds and behavior moved forward quickly once the last Filipino fighter had surrendered in 1912 formally ending the Philippine-American War.

• The country then entered a period of cultural amnesia and lethargy gripped “by the doldrums of going nowhere, of aimlessly floating without direction or purpose.” Having lost “their history of becoming, of growth, of civilization, self and nation,” Filipinos, therefore, “in complacent inferiority, accepted the American revision of their history as Gospel truth.”

• The intellectual reformers of the Philippine Revolution, who could have helped to formulate notions of the common good appropriate to local settings were marginalized early on. In their place arose “a rapacious elite incapable of, and uninterested in, providing moral leadership” and who defined the evolving public sphere in terms of their own “shameless mix of business and politics.”

• This pushed Filipinos back to pre-Spanish animist scenarios dominated once more by the private sphere of inward-turned family and small personalized groups as their sources of identity and moral order. The public sphere? Stillborn.

• The prevailing private spherethus acts as a kind of comfort zone which fails to articulate a distinctive and separate public sphere where “civilization” would bring Filipinos
“under the same moral canopy.” Lacking this meaningful distinction between the private and public spheres, true nationhood remains out of reach.

- America's attempt to establish a technical order of impersonal control through the rule of law and an impartial civil service foundered in the face of a society it had deprived of the experience of evolving its own parameters of public space and thus an overarching civilization. The legacy of American democracy forged by its own evolution of struggle failed to articulate with the dominant Filipino culture formed out of a different historical and cultural experience.

- By allocating administrative and political power to economic and educated Filipino elites, the American colonial government created a ruling class in a society now divided into a privileged few whose lifestyles and values distanced themselves significantly from the counterpart “common tao” many.

- Ideas about good government and nation-building promoted by the Americans thus “degenerated into opportunist rhetoric” as Filipino elites aborted that democratic legacy and institutionalized a public-private system that catered to its own interests. Inward-turned private norms thus invaded public space.

- Without an overarching Great Tradition, “the heritage of smallness” and “doing as you please” continues to hold sway. Thus, Filipinos have become a people without an overarching
history or integrative narrative, adopting a mental horizon encompassing largely if not exclusively those who are personally known or linked to one's personalized networks.

- Instead, therefore, of creatively venturing into the unknown in their own country, Filipinos choose the familiar as their framework for living and legitimize "an obscure, anarchic wide world that fosters inconsiderateness and that is nationally represented by populist, self-seeking politicians and incompetent government."

- A proper civilization would embody a process of inclusion that would eliminate the current cleavage between the private and the public spheres of existence in favor of a national identity combining personal involvement and active citizenship.

- In the absence of this dynamic balance inter-weaving distinct private and public spheres on their home territory, Filipinos with the drive to have their skills and qualities appreciated in their own right are compelled to pursue opportunities elsewhere in the world where their work can be judged and rewarded on its merits.

- Mulder concludes that "the private, inner-circle of life—family, relatives, friends, mates, face-to-face community—stands in sharp contrast to a public realm of anonymity and expediency. The subsequent disjuncture of ideas is at the root of the cultural vacuity or 'perpetual cultural crisis' that exposes the failure of state and political elite to
provide cultural leadership, doubt about national identity, self-deceiving historical fantasies, and indifference in regard of the common weal and nation-building.”

The above listing attempts to put some order into Mulder’s introduction to his article. The rest of the article poses a daunting challenge as one set after another of emotion-laden arguments is flung on the table in gauntlet style. The reader feels stymied trying to grasp the essence of the ensuring rapid-fire analysis. His tone and flood of negative and accusatory statements produce an undisciplined rant that invites belligerent confrontational responses rather than reasoned discussion. While one recognizes elements of truth peering out from the sound and fury of words-words-words, the reader is bowled over by the onslaught critiquing all elements of Filipino culture and society said to characterize residents when located within their country but not when they work abroad. Any attempt at a sensible response appears almost hopeless given his drive to discredit past trends that in his view allow only for gloomy assessments of 21st century outcomes.

Other than his general knowledge of Philippine history writ large, on what empirical base does Mulder justify his arguments? Despite his solid sociological training amplified by a strong philosophy background, his long exposure to Philippine ethnography and sociological research, why does he rely almost exclusively on novelists to backstop his ideas? Except for a reference to psychologist Jaime Bulatao, S.J., why does he ignore the substantial literature written by Filipino social scientists rich in empirical detail on issues linked to Filipino identity, culture, socialization, and nationhood?
And yet, any observer who cares about the intrinsic discrepancies between the powerful and the powerless plaguing Philippine society will ultimately find resonance in Mulder’s implicit championing of the besieged majority in an elite dominated polity. Clearly, he is concerned about elites' prerogatives for defining national identity to the detriment of the rest. It is for this reason that one cannot simply dismiss Mulder as unworthy of being read despite his undisciplined and confusing approach to defining the Philippine reality. There is, it turns out, a more positive side to his chaotic swirl of ideas as it also forces us to articulate our own understandings of Philippine society and culture. How should one think about Mulder’s insistence that the expropriation by Filipino elites of the public sphere in their own particularistic interests has created a distorted social structure that is adrift, still in search of a genuinely inclusive national identity?

Mulder is strong in describing the components that have created and sustained a divided society, but in doing so he focuses on the national polity seen primarily from the Metro Manila macro-society perspectives. Virtually ignored is the enormous impact of civil society on the nation in provinces, cities, towns and communities throughout the country. Molded in the fiery furnace of resistance to the Marcos dictatorship, NGOs (non-governmental organizations), in particular, have been striving since 1986 to fashion a public sphere distinction from but more compatible with the co-existing private, “little tradition” sphere of family, friends and personal networks. NGO community organizers have served as important partners to rural and urban poor groups as well as to indigenous people striving to protect their land and its resources. Although these groups remain embedded in their everyday lives in
what Mulder calls the “heritage of smallness,” they are nonetheless expanding into the public sphere ready to take their positions “under the same moral canopy” that encompasses a diverse but unified nation.

Guided by community organizers, people have learned how to exert their agency through engaging in active demand modes with powerful groups – mayors, landlords, private developers, officials in housing, agrarian reform, irrigation, environment and natural resources departments, and many more. Members of People's Organizations have become expert through practice at filling out numerous papers to acquire legal status for their organization or the land they are tilling, at gaining access to loans at reasonable rates, at collaborating in designing, constructing and managing public housing accommodations, and at lobbying in Congress for their rights through responsive legislation. These constitute definitive moves into the public sphere of impersonal judgments of merit and the common good.

For the organized urban People's Organizations (PO) which abound in major cities of the Philippines, the interplay of private and public blurs the boundaries and cleavage between them stipulated by Mulder. POs treat the private and public as a consolidated system in which organized groups move seamlessly, if sometimes necessarily confrontationally, back and forth between their particular interests and the greater good of their fellow informal settlers, farmers and indigenous people nationwide. Their exposure through community organizers to ways of engaging actively and non-violently in arenas beyond family and community highlights significant trends emerging throughout the country.
Noteworthy are the outcomes of the “ordinary tao's” entering the public sphere through, for example, gaining legalized land tenure and decent shelter or housing allocations where once disapproving local and national government entities have capitulated to PO pressures. Similar patterns appear in agricultural groups, like the Bukidnon farmers' 2011 Lakbayan national walk to claim their land rights. Indigenous community groups from the Cordilleras to Mindanao are working to claim formal recognition of their ancient rights through acquiring their Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT). People's Organizations and other community groups have enlisted a wide range of civil society groups to help them out – NGOs, federations of People's Organizations, Catholic Church social action and other faith-based groups, academics, the media, and cooperatives. These civil society entities collaborate actively in forming the overarching moral canopy that in Mulder's terms represent true nationhood. Filipinos and Philippine society turn out not to be hopeless after all!

Interestingly, Mulder highlights dramatically the importance of gender differentiation in thinking about societal development:

Normally, girls are trained to care, to be responsible and considerate of others; in brief, they are expected to perform. Whereas, gracefully, most boys are similarly educated, others are, regretfully, pandered to, which results in the abundantly present spoiled-brat males who are incapable of seeing the consequences of their own deeds. Combined with the general feature of low individuation, these brats tend to be mother- and, later on, wife-dependent; in order to beef up their self-image, they may subsequently cultivate authoritarianism and
machismo, hyper-sensitivity to perceived criticism and interference, which gives rise to often encountered hotheadedness and long-lasting resentment....

Since the past few decades have seen the emergence into public life of women as movers and shakers in Philippines society, the future of the public sphere looms positive. Women predominate as leaders in the civil society world. They organize and head NGOs, informal settler communities, rural associations, and social enterprises including micro- or small-and-medium enterprises. More and more women “responsible and considerate of others” are moving up in government and the private sector. The emergence of a public sphere fashioned significantly by women thus augurs well for a new national polity emerging out of genderized local experience.

Beyond community levels, civil society groups have collaborated in mounting advocacy campaigns resulting in the passage of laws supportive of the majority's increased well-being and rights. One readily cites laws passed and implemented: the Urban Development and Housing Act (UDHA), the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program and its subsequent revisions (CARPER), the Indigenous People's Rights Act (IPRA), and the many laws upholding the rights of women and children, older persons, disabled persons and other embattled minorities. All over the Philippines, ordinary people initially guided by civil society partners but increasingly moving forward autonomously as they become secure in the new and broader arenas of family, community and nation, are formulating a different and diverse kind of Filipino polity. With outlooks emerging out of their own grassroots experiences of effectively combining private and public spheres, they are enhancing
their simultaneous commitment to personal wellbeing and the common good. This is what Mulder says the Americans robbed Filipinos of in the early 20th century. (Again, why does he spare the Spaniards?) True nationhood is indeed evolving through a dynamic new civil society in which organized local communities in partnership with a new generation of concerned Filipinos are holding government accountable for creating an inclusive society in which prevails a healthy integration of both personal aspirations and the common good.

In conclusion, one can admire Mulder's drive to get at the wellsprings of why Filipinos behave the way they do. He brings in historical developments and corresponding explanations for how we have come to where we are today. Although his lack of attention to the existing sociological, anthropological and political economy literature coupled with his undisciplined writing style undermine his case, the long-suffering reader comes to realize that his heart is in the right place. He is after all primarily concerned about how most Filipinos have lost out in the crafting of their society. His insistence on the critical importance of developing a public-private space more compatible with ordinary Filipinos' realities and aspirations has merit.

In his view, that articulation may at last move the society toward the elusive but ever evolving nationhood truly reflective of the its majority citizenry. He should however incorporate into his analysis of Philippine society other perspective in framing the problem. Empirically sound analysis rather than sweeping generalizations will help. Weakening his position is his apparent unwillingness to examine the many positive aspects of Philippine society, including active civil society groups refashioning it
conceptually and structurally toward better lives for the majority. His preference for focusing on why things are the way they are – defined as overwhelmingly bad – but offering little if anything to suggest how to get it right – renders him closer to Don Quixote tilting at windmills than a thinking partner with the majority of Filipinos. His heart is in the right place though. He certainly deserves credit for that.
There are several comments I wish to make on Niels Mulder's ideas. The first is that a running theme in the essays of Niels Mulder on the Philippines, especially this one under review, is that many Filipinos have yet to make the transition from thinking exclusively in terms of a small group of kin and familiars to a broader, more inclusive group, the nation. There is an inability of imagine a common, public good that transcends private interests. To show this, he cites data from years of doing fieldwork in the Philippines – where he actually now lives in retirement, news reports, textbooks and corroborating statements from other authors such as Nick Joaquin, novelist and journalist, and Jaime Bulatao SJ, psychologist.

It is a theme I could not agree more with. In this section I shall state some examples to corroborate his arguments. However, I shall also propose a broader methodology to locate and strengthen his data.

The dismal state of Ninoy Aquino International Airport, primary gateway between the Philippines and the rest of the world is a telling
example. Under the presidency of Benigno Aquino Jr. and under the leadership of Jose Honrado, it was rated by an international team as one of the ten worst airports.

Even before then, under previous presidencies, it was already faring badly especially when compared to other airports in Southeast Asia. There was little attempt, other than clustering together potted plants and pebbles in mini-gardens, to project the Philippines to the world. Jakarta's international airport consists of a series of pavilions with gardens in-between that were inspired by the *pendopo* structure of traditional Javanese houses. Each pavilion showcased in its décor the style of a particular region of the archipelago. The visitor was thus given a superb overview of Indonesia's heritage. Bangkok's airport has a structure that looks like a series of abstract lotus flowers. Inside are display glass cases showing off the arts of Thailand. Singapore has taken its cue from its self-designation as the Garden City. Inside are beautifully landscaped gardens with orchids which the visitor can explore. At the time I visited Hanoi, I thought the airport had the external but stylized form of a traditional Vietnamese house – broad and upturned eaves, creating a sense of flight. When I visited Cambodia in the 1990s, its international airport was much smaller than that of the others, but great effort went into beautiful exhibitions of the culture of rice in Cambodia. There was a fine digital display of photos of the rice cycle at the lobby and a simulated irrigation system at the arrival area. Though the Philippines produces excellent designers and architects, the wonder is that the national government did not deem it important to consult them on how best to project the country. Such projection is a public good that should be a priority in a country eager to attract investments and tourism.
But the dismal ratings of NAIA were actually based on more mundane matters, such as the unreliable facilities. Air-conditioning units breaking down, a section of the ceiling collapsing, the overall appearance of dinginess, the long queues. Despite this rating, neither Aquino nor Honrado pushed hard to bring in the necessary reforms. Worse, there was a syndicate that preyed on hapless travelers by planting bullets (tanim bala) in their luggage during the check-in process, and extorting money in exchange for letting the travelers board their flights. Again no drastic measures, such as dismissing Honrado, on grounds of command responsibility. Worse, when the media called attention to the woes of ordinary victims of these scams. Honrado blamed the media for exaggerations! What all these suggest is that even for educated public officials, imagining a public good as crucial as a functioning and presentable international airport seems difficult. And yet an airport is a limited controlled space. Imagine their difficulties in imagining a city as a public good that reflects on each and every one us. Hence their failure to regenerate Manila, our capital city. Under Pres. Fidel Ramos, the Department of Tourism invested in a Master Plan to stimulate tourism in Manila. I was one of the several consultants that were hired from different fields. The chief consultant was an American expert on tourism. We conceived of nine Special Design Areas in the city, each with its own particular character to be highlighted. The capstone would have been the regeneration of Roxas Boulevard. According to the American expert, in the 1990s, Manila's chief edge over other cities in Southeast Asia was Roxas Boulevard especially at sundown. “Very romantic!” he said. Major buildings were to be lit up, their ground stories were to be re-zoned to allow commercial activity, and entrepreneurs would be allowed, after 6 pm, to bring out tables to the side road in front to create evening cafés. The goal was to generate more income for the
city via tourism. Several presentations were made to Mayor Lito Atienza. He was enthusiastic. But after the project was submitted, nothing more was heard. In the meantime, Manila has become uglier.

Niels' approach has been very phenomenological, that is, he describes the experience of the world as gleaned from the narratives of his informants. That approach is truly important because phenomenology discloses the construction of meaning by individuals. But I would suggest balancing this as well with a functionalist approach, as an alternative source of data. The functionalists, beginning with Durkheim and Levi-Bruhl, point out that collective consciousness is shaped by social structures. Though this one-to-one relationship also has its limitations, as more contemporary sociologists, like Pierre Bourdieu, have shown, nonetheless this approach, if applied locally can explain the tendency to think small. In a chapter on “Beyond a broader community” for my book *Authentic though not exotic: Essays on Filipino identity* (2005), I point out the need to understand the late emergence of the State and the City in Luzon and Visayas, as compared to Java, Sumatra, Vietnam and Thailand. The prehispanic, indigenous barangay, as described by the first Spanish chroniclers were small clusters of houses, each independent of the other, and at times in violent conflict with each other, despite proximity. Niels is, of course, aware of this and cites the “limited scope” of social life in the sphere of Animism. He is also deeply aware of the classic writings of William Henry Scott on Philippine prehistory which he cites. But he should articulate further how the Spanish contribution made an impact. In my book, I argued that the missionaries brought together disparate barangays into one location with an emergent public sphere embodied in the church and its plaza. It is noteworthy that Boxer Codex written in
1590 describes the barangay as consisting of the chief and his _deudos_, meaning kin. But the melding together of these separate kin into a functioning urban center with a self-conscious identity has not been an easy one. Local histories are rife with accounts of conflict between leading families. Moreover, not all did agree to live in the town/city center. Understandably, many preferred to live close to their fields. Hence the sense of isolation even between neighborhoods persists to this day, for instance, in Ilocos barangays where I stayed. Suspicions between barangays take the form of sorcery accusations. “So-and-so got diarrhea from accepting food in that barangay a kilometer down the road. They are bad people. Be careful.” Listening to me, June Prill-Brett, anthropologist of Bontoc and American ancestry, explained that in Bontoc, which escaped hispanization, conflicts between villages took the form of headhunting raids down to the early part of the 20th century. In contrast, Ilocos where Christianization had succeeded in bringing an alternative morality, limited conflict to sorcery accusations.
Unfortunately, even in the city, fear of ordinary parts of the city haunts some very wealthy families. A student had to pick up a packet he had left in the chartered bus whose garage was in Malate, today a generally middle to lower-income district of Manila. When I urged that he take a taxi to go there, he said his father would scold him for daring to go to Malate on his own. Another college student was worried when he went to Gateway Mall in Cubao, Quezon City. It is a mall that is very upscale in parts. He worried that his mother would scold him for daring go to “dangerous” Cubao. Social class hinders some of the very wealthy in mixing with the rest of us, and thus in taking the first step in conceiving of a public good.

A functionalist approach can help locate the weak sense of public good within an organizational and structural context, and thus point to possible solutions. An organizational solution introduced by the missionaries, aside from a common public space, were public rituals—Catholic liturgy and especially fiestas which continue to draw people to the town/city center and thus give people from unfamiliar barangays a human face. Fiestas, celebrated either locally or nationally, provided a shared experience transcending locality and small group. In an essay on community (2005), I made a close comparison with the French experience. Before the Germanic invasions of the fifth century AD, the Franks, who were to give their name to what we now call “France,” were like other Germanic peoples, and like our own indigenous ancestors, divided into small, competing kin groups. After invading and devastating the Western part of the troubled Roman empire, slowly over the course of centuries, states began to develop and city life revived. Feuds between kin were eventually brought to the royal court instead of being settled outside through ordeals and violence. But this process
took the kings of France centuries to achieve. Though the French Revolution of 1789 introduced a state that was even more centralized than that of the kings, nonetheless, according to Eugen Weber's detailed study of the emergence of a French consciousness in the late nineteenth century in his *From peasants to Frenchmen*. He reports that at town fairs in the nineteenth century, peasants coming from remote villages would get into physical brawls with other unfamiliar peasants for the sheer fun of it. Or because there was no bond of kinship that connected them to each other. The eventual solution? Weber sees two crucial factors: 1) the development of an effective road network under the Third Republic in the 1900s and 2) an extensive public education where ideas about Frenchness were taught to all.

This brings us to the second point. Another important area where Niels has pioneered is the study of Philippine textbooks. This essay summarizes his previous findings. He notes that Philippine textbooks, rather than clarify the process of becoming Filipino, are loathe to explain this. They assume that being Filipino, with the attendant vision and values it implies, has always been there. I would have wanted though, an exegesis of particular textbooks. Be that as it may, my experience of public schools in the Philippines corroborates his argument that current textbooks do not contribute to building a sense of nation. Annually we organize the Ateneo Cultural Laboratory, a field school of three weeks that we bring to a different town/ city every intersession. We make it a point to look into textbooks and develop teaching modules that can impart local heritage to high school students. Our emphasis is on the local, not the national. At Puerto Princesa, we were surprised to hear high school teachers remark that the textbooks are too focused on the “national”,
meaning Luzon. In the section on *katutubo* (indigenous), the examples given were the Ifugao and their rice terraces, and the Agta of Luzon. The supreme irony is that Palawan has several, still numerous indigenous peoples: The Palaw'an, the Tagbanua, the Batak. In Silay and Bacolod in 2016, my students who examined the high school textbooks complained that there was little about local history, for instance the Cinco de Noviembre revolution that defeated Spanish power in 1898 through a ruse, without bloodshed. Hence many Filipino students are in limbo: They know something about national history, though this tends to be remote from their daily world but little about the history of the locality where they live. How then can a lived, informed sense of common, public discourse emerge?

A third point has to do with the appreciation that Niels shows towards the Hispanic legacy, particularly of the Propaganda Movement and the Revolution. He laments that many Filipinos are not rooted in this tradition, instead they have an amnesia that makes them admire the US without qualification. This, of course, is the same lament of Nick Joaquin, whom he cites, and Claro Mayo Recto. Claro Recto argued that the Filipino had been colonized both externally and internally by the US. Hence the inability to see that Filipino interests may diverge from those of Americans, and that we should fend for ourselves without Uncle Sam and his military bases. I fully agree with Recto, Joaquin and Mulder in decrying this colonial mindset. In the confrontation with the Chinese over islands in the West Philippine Sea, the behavior by President Benigno Aquino's government was pathetic. When news broke out that the Chinese were occupying the disputed islands, his government sent out feelers to Washington DC to find out what actions it would take to defend us. The feelers were reported in the press. Only after a year of ambiguous statements by
Washington DC, did the Philippine government finally bring the matter to the International Court of Justice at the Hague where a verdict was passed in its favor. Unfortunately, even with this favorable verdict, the succeeding president, Rodolfo Duterte openly stated that he was setting this verdict aside. The excuse was he wanted to avoid a slaughter. Hence he was willing to work with China, and to solicit Chinese aid and investments.

Contrast that with the actions taken by Vietnam which also has a dispute with China over islands in the same corridor. While it is true that they are threatening to allow the US, whom they defeated in 1975, to open a military base on their soil, they have also rammed repeatedly Chinese vessels entering their waters. But, of course, the Vietnamese are deeply steeped in their history. Over the past two thousand years, they fought repeatedly against Chinese attempts to keep them as their colony. Despite periods of domination by the Chinese, they defeated the Sung in 981, the Ming in 1428, and most recently the People's Republic of China in 1979.

The solution envisioned by Recto in the 1960s was to urge Filipinos to steep their consciousness in the nationalist literature of the Propaganda and the 1896 Revolution. This solution Niels agrees with. As a first step, the college student had to learn Spanish since most of the texts were in Spanish. The tactic used, to my mind, was impractical: 24 units of Spanish, later on reduced to 12, in a college setting. The units crowded out other basic subjects. But the vision of Filipinos being deeply rooted in their nationalist tradition remains relevant. We do have to distance ourselves from Americans.

However, I do not think digging deep into this literature of nation-
building suffices. It is also important to know the indigenous tradition, the animism of which Niels speaks. The tragedy of many Filipinos today is that they think of the indigenous as being out there in the exotic wilderness, and not realizing that both vernacular language and everyday practices, like *utang na loob*, implant the indigenous in our everyday consciousness. Knowing our indigenous epics, such as those collected by anthropologist Dr. Nicole Revel in a website open to the public, will be one more layer of resistance to Americanization. It may also help us understand why and how physical violence as an expression of masculinity has been a running theme in our traditions. Such an understanding may lead us to find new, socially acceptable ways to creatively re-invent aggression that is supposedly an expression of masculinity.

A second to the last point I wish to make is that Niels should carefully define some terms lest he be accused of being an imperialist. An example is his use of “primitive” versus “civilizational”. I would have preferred that he use “primal” to designate the original, indigenous culture. A term that has now appeared abroad is “first” culture. For civilization, I would substitute “civil culture” because this is a type of culture that appears in a society with both a state and a city. Among its characteristics is a high degree of occupational specialization which led to spectacular achievements in ancient China, India, Mesopotamia, Egypt and pre-colonial Mexico and Peru. Achievements of Filipino civil culture, which were created in urban settings, are the paintings and sculptures of our masters in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and, of course, the nationalist literature of Rizal, Jacinto, and Mabini.
Finally, I take issue with Mulder’s claim that while the Spanish period produced intellectual giants like Rizal and Isabelo de los Reyes, the American period did not. Nick Joaquin, whom he cites repeatedly, is clearly a product of the American period. Educated during that period and exposed to American influences, he chose to write in English rather than Spanish, though he used the latter language at home. There are other brilliant products of the American period like Horacio de la Costa SJ whose essays on the various challenges facing the Filipino in the immediate aftermath of independence, continue to impress with their clarity, profundity and elegance of language. He also claims that because of the dominance of the small group and its thinking over the Filipino, many fail to assert their own individuality, for fear of standing out. Exposed as I have been to the visual arts of the Philippines, Western Europe and Southeast Asia since my youth, I can safely say that from Juan Luna and Felix Resurreccion Hidalgo of
the 1890s down to Rodel Tapaya of today, Filipino visual artists have maintained a high level of excellence and originality that wins them international acclaim.
Notes on Niels Mulder's  
“The Philippine Enigma:  
culture, emotion and motivation –  
a personal view”

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So how come Filipinos, “many of whom are applauded for their talents in the seven corners of this world, are not driven to succeed in their home country?” The sweep of Mulder's problematization and his subsequent attempt at a “theoretically relevant” answer — what he initially labels as a “culture of demotivation” — are as impressive as they are problematic. I would like to raise a number of theoretical and methodological issues.

In his discussion of “Philippine becoming,” the author talks about a “complex, dialectical process of the transfer of culture.” This process, unfortunately, is not clearly laid out. A list of historical elements is provided: “Catholicism thriving in native Animism; opening up through the printing press, trade and world-wide
communication; expanding the material world through building in stone; immigrating Chinese craftsmen... a native estate of owners and rich bosses... [would] come into being that developed a characteristic civilization in which local and imported elements fused” (p. 3). But what exactly is meant by the “transfer of culture”? A more compelling account of the emergence of national identity—one that ought to map the transition from colonial towns (pueblos) to nation—is needed. I do not think people were simply shocked into realizing that they were Filipinos (this seems to be what the author means by “coming of age”) by the execution of GOMBURZA. If the nation is an artifact of the historical process (and the notion of “Philippine becoming” suggests as much), it is important to spell out its conditions of possibility.

I find the author's claim of cultural obliteration (p. 6) rather excessive. The notion itself seems completely oblivious to processes of hybridity — “[the] mixing together of different cultural elements to create new meanings and identities” (Barker, 2000, p. 385). As a concept, hybridity gestures towards heterogeneity and diversity (Scholl, 2001, p. 2), and calls attention to those cultural forms that emerge in the borderland areas between crudely oppositional terms. “Hybrids destabilize and blur established cultural boundaries in a process of fusion and creolization” (Barker, 2000, p. 385). Bhabha (1994) argues that all cultures can be seen as zones of shifting boundaries and hybridization. More fundamentally, the notion facilitates the interrogation of various oppositional categories of discourse (e.g., locality/globality) and practice (e.g., resistance/domination) (Golden, 2001, p. 6). Of similar importance are the processes of resistance and creative appropriation— as described for instance in the work of de Certeau (1984). The latter
uses the term “bricolage”, a process of creative adaptation or appropriation where spheres of relative autonomy are carved out within existing forms of domination (p. 37). Following de Certeau, Fleming (2002) notes, it is possible to establish a modestly subversive enclave within domination, where “one can... evade a hegemonic power relationship without actually leaving it” (Fleming, 2002, p. 201). These theoretical perspectives suggest that the process of colonization should not be imagined as one of complete domination, or of cultural annihilation. Finally, the analysis is done at such a grand scale and portrays Philippine society as a neatly-bounded culture with a seamless and unified history (Scholl, 2001, p. 2). Apparently, it is assumed here that there is a single “Filipino” culture, despite what may actually be a plurality of cultures. The essay relies on the orthodox notion of culture as a coherent and definable way of life possessed by a specific group of people. I would, on the other hand, contra-poss Wright's (1998) notion of culture as “a contested process of meaning-making,” a dynamic concept where accumulated meanings are constantly re-worked and stretched, contested and negotiated by differently positioned actors (p. 5).

How exactly did the American colonizers achieve “the annihilation of home-grown civilization” (p. 9)? Can we not say that so much of what evolved during the Spanish colonial period has survived? The pueblo that served as the very locus of lowland Christian civilization appears to have survived. The society that developed within the confines of the pueblo was not exactly swept away by American colonialism. Catholicism has remained. Just as important, the emerging colonial middle class of the 19th Century — the local principalia where the Ilustrados came from — found its place in
American colonialism and, with the advent of national institutions like the legislature and the commonwealth presidency, became a national political elite. As regards the amoral competition for power that the author blames on the animistic heritage said to have been resuscitated by American colonialism, was this not already a feature of late 19th Century colonial society under the Spaniards? Corpuz (2006), for instance, suggests that the modalities of traditional politics can be traced partly to the “hermano mayor politics” in late 19th Century colonial society that served as an outlet for competition between leading principia families (p. 114). According to Corpuz, because hermano mayor politics evolved outside the norms of civil politics, it was not graced by any explicit commitment to the well-being of the community (p. 115). Just as important, this lack of commitment to the common good was something Rizal complained of in El Filibusterismo — the last chapter of the novel is an indictment of the Filipinos’ lack of civic virtue, a fatal flaw that will simply make the slaves today the tyrants of tomorrow. Indeed, this is what the Great Indio tried to remedy with his La Liga Filipina. He wanted to create a civic community through this organization.

Although I am familiar with the standpoint of the author, describing the pre-Hispanic past as one of “pre-civilization and mental isolation characteristic of tribal existence” (p. 6) betrays a lack of appreciation for that segment of Philippine history. The author engages in a wholesale — and in my view, orientalist — rendering that appears to ignore what existing historical records, as well as the vast body of scholarship on the pre-colonial period, says on the subject. Consulting the early Spanish accounts and other sources, such as Chao Ju-kua’s Chu-fan-chi (1225), should provide the author with a more nuanced understanding of life during the contact and
precolonial periods. The following early account of native community life by Colin (in de la Costa, 1992) is worth quoting here:

Their polity and laws, which, for barbarians, were not so very barbarous, consisted entirely of traditions and usages which they kept so strictly that they did not even admit the possibility of...[these] being broken. They imposed, among other things, such reverence for parents and elders that among them one did not mention one's father by name, just as, among the Hebrews, one did not mention God by name; as also that private persons, even children, must submit to the will of the community (p. 5).

Chao Ju-kua's description (in de la Costa, 1992) of Tagalog trading practices is also interesting and worthy of note:

The custom of the trade is for the savage traders to assemble in crowds and carry the goods away with them in baskets; and even if one cannot at first know them, and can but slowly distinguish the men who remove the goods, there will yet be no loss. The savage traders will after this carry these goods on to other islands for barter, and, as a rule, it takes them as much as eight or nine months till they return, when they repay the traders on shipboard with what they have obtained ... (p. 9).

Instead of using the general category of “animism”, the author might want to consult Scott's (1994) ethnographic exploration of 16th Century Philippine communities using native categories found in the dictionaries prepared by the missionaries. Certainly, here, the author can benefit from the latter's detailed description of the pre-Hispanic
spirit world. Where exactly is this concept of “mana” from? Is it the same as the Visayan “kalag”? The Tagalog “kaluluwa?” I find it odd that the author would be willing to resort to the so-called “Malayo-Polynesian context” when we have more specific contexts in the Philippines about which we have reliable evidence from ethnohistory, history, and archaeology. In fact, this discussion of “animism” precisely raises the issue of evidence. Are we not supposed to build arguments on ethnographic evidence? “Hover low” over the facts and not fly off into the realm of abstractions? Should not anthropologists pay attention to the substance of culture “rather than to reductive formulas professing to account for them”? (Geertz, 1973, p. 453).

The recourse to “animism” in explaining the “unruly” and “risky” nature of pre-Hispanic social life (p. 7) is not at all convincing. The author needs to weave relevant scholarship into his analysis. I would particularly argue that a decidedly interpretive (Weberian?) approach need not exclude studies that locate conflict within the political economy. According to Scott (1994), since many pre-Hispanic communities had small populations, low levels of agricultural production, and unlimited access to natural resources, “[their] datus' ability to procure iron or prestigious imports depended on control of manpower to exploit resources.” This often led to conflict, although “[wars] were… fought to control people, not territory” (p. 153). Junker’s (2000) work on the political economy of pre-Hispanic chiefdoms also provides a good analysis of inter- and intra-polity competition during that period. For the historically known polities, Junker identifies the following causes of regional power shifts: “interpolity competition for foreign prestige goods trade, interpolity warfare and population displacement, local limits on productive
potential within the ecologically diverse archipelago, factional competition between local chiefs and would-be chiefs, and so forth” (p. 119). On the other hand, how exactly did civilized life under the Spaniards lead to the emergence of a public sphere? Without saying that resettlement and the formation of towns (reducción) was the only path to civilized life, it is important to spell out how an “expanding mental horizon open to take in the anonymous other” (p. 8) could have emerged from such a process. Zialcita (2005) offers interesting insights on how the reorganization of native life via the pueblo, to include the assumption of Christian identity and practices, laid the basis for elementary forms of public life. He argues that the bringing together, bajo de la campana (under the bell), of different clan villages into larger units encouraged a sense of community beyond one's kin:

“The huge church dominated the town. Here were celebrated the major events in the life-cycle of the residents, regardless of their kin affiliations; christenings, weddings, fiestas, and funerals. In front of the church opened a central plaza for all to enjoy regardless of family and status. … Christians were buried, not in or by their houses as in indigenous practice, but rather in a cemetery for all Christians. The basis for a notion of the 'public,' of a community beyond the kin, was in place (p. 66)”.

The author accuses “soothsaying nationalists” of “dismissing Philippine becoming and the nation's gestation period as Spanish history” (p. 5). Although I share the author's desire to identify positively with the country's Hispanic colonial heritage, it is important to acknowledge the fact that Rizal, the quintessential Ilustrado, was himself instrumental in inventing “the eternal original
Filipino and 'history' that predates all contact with the West”. The latter's seminal work on Filipino history where he attempted to provide the nation with a coherent memory of the past — his annotations to Morga's *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* (1890) — was pioneering in this regard. More than any other *Ilustrado* of his time, Rizal aspired to locate Filipino identity in a celebrated pre-Hispanic civilization (Aguilar, 2005; Ocampo, 1998). His “committed scholarship” (Ocampo, 1998) involved a creative reading of the available evidence that resulted in a few unjustifiable historical claims. I believe the author needs to address this aspect of Rizal's work since he extols the potential of *Ilustrados* to provide “cultural leadership [that] could have created a transcendent civilization with the guiding ideas necessary to unite Filipinos as a nation” (p. 6).

The idea of a “positive civilization that links the public sphere to private life” (p. 14), and of the need “to fill the cultural vacuity and to tame the modern jungle of public space” (p. 13) are themes I have encountered in one of the author's previous works (1997). In the latter, however, the author wrote about a pronounced “absence of [a] localized positive ethics of the public world”, arguing then that what counts for the public sphere is morally vacuous and exhibit “no other culture…than the rhetoric of rapacious, dynastic politicians.” (p. 67) I would prefer the more modest reference to a “localized positive ethics of the public world” rather than the grandiose notion of a “positive civilization.” Nonetheless, there is a need here for some level of theoretical elaboration. For instance, if the claim being advanced is that, beyond the narrow circle of family members and friends, lies an amoral world of expediency where one struggles only to get ahead but carries no responsibility, what is this a matter of? Ethics? Values? Habits? Habits and dispositions? Personally, I
would rather invoke Bourdieu's notion of the “habitus” —an historically inscribed system of habits and dispositions that makes possible the non-mechanical production by social agents of thoughts, perceptions and actions (1990, pp 54-55).

Clearly, for a good number of Filipinos concepts like “citizenship” or “public good” are mere abstractions devoid of evocative potency (Camposano, 2006, p. 6). This is an observation shared by many. Yet, the present situation could be more coherently rendered simply as the absence of a civic culture — knowledge, skills, habits and dispositions that enable individuals to situate themselves within a larger society of anonymous others and thus think and act for the interest of an abstract public — stemming from the failure of strong state institutions to develop. We can say that what we have for a state is a veneer of formal rules obscuring a vast and tangled web of personal ties. These in turn are incompatible with the rational-legal rules on which democratic institutions operate. State institutions continue to frame political engagement, but their formal rules have been extensively reworked in everyday life to suit private ends (Camposano, 2006, p. 7). Whether this disjunction, this lack of fit, is rooted in the historical transition from late 19th Century colonial society to American colonialism via a process of cultural “obliteration” that resuscitated Animism, or perhaps the result of another historical process, is a question that needs to be addressed based on evidence— and approached with greater theoretical coherence and precision.

REFERENCES


Neils Mulder answers a question that many Filipinos will surely have asked themselves: “Why is the Philippines in such a mess?” He aims to uncover nothing less than the “cultural code” that would account for both the national condition and the individual predicament of Filipinos. This is a difficult and complex task given the challenges one has to face especially if such a project is attempted at the “Philippine” level albeit delimited as “lowland Christian.” As Resil Mojares (2013) notes in *A History of Shame* on why no serious attempts at studying the history of emotions in the Philippines have been undertaken, “One must look at diverse kinds of historical evidence, from the arts, literature, histories, ethnographies. An investigation of such texts widens the field and poses forbidding difficulties because of their unevenness, diversity, and heavily mediated character” (p. 41). The same difficulties, and more (see,
among others, Junker 2000; Mojares 2002; Warren 2002), could be safely said to have confronted Mulder.

Drawing on his earlier work on the Philippines, Mulder proffers the concept of “cultural vacuity” to account not only for the condition the Philippines is in (p.11) but also “the question of individual motivation and behavior” (p. 2). It is the “radical separation of the private and the public spheres of life” (p. 2). Mulder traces the cleavage between the private and public to American colonialism and the workings of its various apparatuses of hegemony. American imperialism altered the process of historical becoming that Mulder believes would have followed the declaration of Filipino independence from Spain. Indeed, it “obliterated” (Mulder's word) “identity, budding civilization, self-confidence, and nation” (p. 6). Underpinning this view is Mulder's construction of the coherence attained by native “Philippine” culture, Catholic-Spanish culture, and (a broader) European culture (which shaped the thinking and behavior of *ilustrados* who would have provided cultural leadership to the new nation) on the one hand, and the disjuncture between Filipino culture and American culture (especially with respect to democracy, public sphere etc.), on the other hand.

This cultural coherence and incompatibility are not adequately and convincingly argued. With respect to Spanish culture, Reynaldo Ileto (1979) and Vicente Rafael (1988), for example, have shown how Tagalogs reinterpreted Catholic teachings and practices, accommodating them into their worldviews, values, and interests as well as subverting them, deploying them in ways that exceeded the purposes for which they were intended. This process of translation (to use Rafael's term) reveals the struggles and negotiations that
underpinned economic, social, and cultural relations in Tagalog society under Spanish rule. Moreover, we could speculate that, were the Philippine Republic not betrayed by American colonialism, would “Filipino historical becoming” not have been attended by conflict, division, and self-interest? Who, specifically, are these Filipinos that Mulder has in mind? The Tagalogs, Ilokanos or Cebuanos?

Mulder's strategy also relies upon constructing dichotomies that reveal a conception and conceptualization of culture that is less than dynamic, if not essentialist. This is evident in his discussion of the distinction between animism and civilization, the spirits that, for him, animate the public spheres: animism for how Filipinos conceive of and engage the public sphere; civilization for the public sphere as it should be. It is worth visually showing this dichotomy:

**Public Sphere Animated by**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Animism”</th>
<th>“Civilization”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unfolds in physical and mental isolation</td>
<td>Expanding mental horizon open to take in the anonymous other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain of nature</td>
<td>State of finding each other under the same moral canopy, of living together as a nation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribal/familial community</td>
<td>Rational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associated with inner-circle of life (family, relatives, friends, mates, face-to-face community</td>
<td>Moral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Inclusive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morally neutral</td>
<td>Private and public spheres connected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private and public spheres contrary to each other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mulder's reflections exhibit a number of slippages and contradictions. Although Mulder is critical of America's role in aborting Filipino nationhood and becoming, he nonetheless celebrates and upholds notions of democracy and governance (Western European in origin but to which Filipinos were introduced by the Americans), ideals against which he then weighs Filipinos and finds them wanting. He is scathing of Filipinos (with whom he identifies), calling them primitive and unfamiliar with the concept of the rule of law. Yet, he himself looks approvingly at Mahathir Mohamad (who persecuted his former deputy and later political nemesis Anwar Ibrahim) and Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos, Jr. if only to support assertions he makes concerning how shallow Filipinos are.

Mulder critiques the family-centeredness of Filipinos and attributes to it their infantilism and immaturity, their inability to go beyond concrete, personal relations into the much broader “imagined community” that is the nation. It is true that “the family” is very important to Filipinos but something could be said about the slant in which Mulder presents it in his paper: he pathologizes it. Alternatively, Mulder could have critically considered how the family has been used, effectively or ineffectively, to imagine the nation. The nation is frequently represented as a mother (for the Tagalogs, Inang Bayan), which points to kinship (fictive or otherwise) as the mode by which national belonging is established. What might Mulder derive from reflecting on how solidarity and collective belonging are theorized through a discourse of family and kinship? Rather than look only at Filipinos' obsessive devotion to the family as being the wall that blocks the personal from joining or merging with the national, Mulder could have also reflected on how,
especially for the elites, it is through the family that they have made sense of, and solidified, their place and role in the Filipino nation. Here, the relation between family and nation is not one of separation and antagonism but rather of being inextricably bound up. In both instances, a more dynamic and dialectical discussion could have been engendered, one in which it would be possible to introduce and incorporate gender, an important component of any discussion of the private and public spheres and of democratic values. Mulder's theoretical explanation of Filipinos' conception of the private-public spheres does not yet show consciousness of, or sensitivity towards, other social categories that vitally define one's incorporation into and membership of, as well as experiences within, a political community.

II

Mulder has to establish a link between on the one hand, political and historical processes that have shaped the Filipino nation specially with respect to the disjunction between the public and private spheres, and on the other hand, individual and personal behavior/development (that is nevertheless socially shared because of the processes in the former). One bridge that he constructs to connect the two is a “heritage of smallness” to which Filipino family-centeredness is conducive and which the educational system enforces and normalizes. Mulder argues that the premium put on being part of a group discourages the cultivation of individuality, critical thinking, ambition, and that social and cultural injunctions against standing out (not unique to the Philippines; in other cultures, there is the “tall poppy syndrome”) reinforce the precept that one's identity and self-worth are not established by personal achievement but by being an amenable part of a group. Mulder, drawing on Habermas and Bauman, argues that in a time of great insecurity, individuals are
“subjected to ever more precarious situations and social dislocations that, in turn, drive the quest for a hold in life in individual-centered religion, in life-styling consumerism, and in the retreat to the private, trusted and survey-able inner-circle of life (p. 14).”

But the “heritage of smallness” that Mulder argues as preventing Filipinos from attaining a civilized conception of the public sphere is
not the same as the condition identified by Bauman as driving human beings today to seek a sense of identity and security in “religion and primordial, private existence” (Mulder, p. 42). Specifically concerning Bauman, the ideas on uncertainty that Mulder draws on here is part of Bauman's broader reflections on the consequences of globalization and neoliberal capitalism on human beings. In an age of insecurity in which, for many young people particularly, the means to achieve markers of adulthood (financial independence, owning a house, having one's own family, etc.) and hence, a sense of one's identity, worth, and meaningful belonging to a broad community are not available as they once were to the older generation. In this case, the family becomes a very vital source of support and grounding. In an era characterized by precarity, neoliberalism promotes the doctrine of “personal responsibility:” people must have the capacity, especially flexibility, to cobble together their biographies in a world that has become very hostile. Millions of young people are unemployed and underemployed, and they are in a state of “waithood,” unable to attain social adulthood. In Europe, young people with university degrees but no jobs or are not earning enough are going back to their parental homes to live. Indeed, in these very difficult times, the family has become even more important as it takes on some of the provisions that the (welfare) state has ceased to provide or has made more difficult to access.

This discourse of personal responsibility has long been a staple of the lives and experiences of millions of Filipinos. My own research shows a deeply held conviction among those I have interviewed that there is no future in the country, and that if one wants to enjoy some economic and social mobility, one has to work overseas. Millions of Filipinos have done just that, in search of a better life or future.
International migration has been their way of providing for themselves and their families, of realizing their aspirations in life. The provision of jobs and social welfare (education, health) has become the personal responsibility of Filipinos while the state has benefitted in the form of remittances. Given the importance of the family, and an extended one at that, in the provision of care and well-being to family members in the context of the near-absence of the Philippine state, one could alternatively argue that “the family” is not an institution that separates the private and the public spheres. Instead of reinforcing the gap between the two, the concrete reality of the lives and experiences of many Filipinos would show that the institution of the family mediates them. It is a space in which the private and public spheres overlap and connect. Feminist scholarship on the politics of care has amply shown this.

Mulder is right to point out that the Philippine state is unable to provide better life chances and social possibilities (Vigh 2006) to its own people but his development of the concept of a “culture of demotivation” through the cultivation and dissemination of “a heritage of smallness” seems to me to take the argument in the wrong direction. (To be sure, he is not really interested in looking at migration but rather the “setting of the complex problématique of a culture of demotivation in a polity that fails to provide positive prospects”). Filipinos leaving for work overseas, whether to take up prestigious jobs at universities or other institutions, to work as seafarers, nurses, doctors, teachers, domestic helpers, etc. cannot do so just by acting on their desire. Migration involves a vast array of “infrastructures” (Xiang and Lindquist 2014 drawing on Bruno Latour) at different scales (personal, national, regional, global). It is contingent on economic and political developments and policies such
that the size of one's mentality or ambitions cannot guarantee success, though admittedly it does play a part. What one manages to achieve depends on so many forms, structures, and levels of relations many of which are beyond the control or influence of individual migrants.

In this sense, an alternative concept that takes into account the limited opportunities available to Filipinos to develop their talents (such as a world-class education) and to use them in the country, a concept that is more processual and deeply embedded in concrete lives and experiences rather than “essentialized” is needed. Although Mulder looks at culture as the “sharing of behavior and outlook within a community” (Wilson 1996, p. 66), he does not provide a more empirically-based examination of how it is shared, relying instead on ideal-typical socio-cultural and personality traits to understand and explain “the Filipino character.” As a consequence, his cultural-psychological analysis of its transmission to, and manifestation in, individuals betrays ahistorical tendencies, not to mention coming up with an analysis that has the potential of being seen as akin to a “culture of poverty.” One must look at material relations of power and opportunities that influence, if not determine, the possibilities Filipinos are able to realize or have access to, or the realities and fantasies that have shaped Filipinos’ desire to go to another country. One such concept (I am certain there are many others) is “social navigation” developed by Henrik Vigh (2006).

In his work on youth soldiering in Guinea Bissau, Vigh (2006) conceptualizes “navigation” as the way one moves within a social environment and how one is moved by that same environment. Navigation involves “simultaneously keep[ing] oneself free of immediate social dangers and direct[ing] one's life through an
uncertain social environment, towards better possible futures and improved life chances” (Vigh, 2009: 97). Navigation concerns the overcoming of a present characterized by social and economic limitations, a present that has indelibly been shaped by the past. I mention “social navigation” specifically for what it illustrates: the social concepts we use should be able to take into account the social, economic, political, cultural, and historical realities that Mulder argues have limited, if not stunted, the flourishing of Filipinos. This should also include more recent global economic and cultural developments and processes that have shaped, and continue to profoundly shape, their lives and experiences. Mulder could examine his “culture of demotivation” in light of “practices of imagination” that Filipinos are able to do or engage in despite what he says are the considerable cultural and structural impediments. The ethnographic and empirical material brought in to provide a critical discussion of the ways by which Filipinos negotiate their spatial and temporal realities, as well as horizons, might help counter Mulder's tendency to be monologic or one-sided, which obtains in his not engaging other—contrary or alternative—perspectives, ideas, and materials.

III

More could be said about Mulder's insights on the behavior of Filipinos, the methods he uses to arrive at them and the materials and sources he marshals to develop his ideas. I am left with the sense that Mulder's subject has not been adequately and properly dealt with. Mulder might consider taking a leaf from Goran Therborn (2011) with whose work some of his preoccupations resonate. Therborn looks at the planetary human condition from a social geology perspective, which is concerned with “looking at the sedimentations of history from the special vantage point of the present.” Its “focus is
not the historical record, but the historical DNA which we are carrying in our social and cultural make-up” (2011, p. 5). It attends to “enduring cultural configurations” in which “we expect to find a cosmological and moral worldview, a pattern of symbolic imaginations” (p. 7). Therborn proposes five fields of human dynamics: mode of livelihood or production; population ecology; struggles for status, recognition, and respect; culture; and politics (ch. 2: pp. 84-125).

These fields of human evolution (and its drivers) enable Therborn to demonstrate that “the sociocultural mould, in which we have been formed […] is layered by different social processes of different age” (p. 5). Equally important, they enable him to provide not only a historicized, contextualized discussion of human experience, albeit in broad strokes considering the global scale of his project. As a consequence, Therborn is able to show “layered historical cultures” (p. 87) and the dynamism of human experience, a dynamism that Mulder appears to have sacrificed in favor of dichotomies that consign “Filipino culture and behavior” to a static mould. A perspective that is both capacious and dynamic might enable him to make more connections with knowledge production informed by a project for post-colonial or decolonial imagination (Bhambra and Santos 2017; Savransky 2017) and avoid making his work appear orientalist. Finally, the concept of “culture of demotivation” is built on a link that Mulder (implicitly) makes between culture and development. This is an important link as it underscores the importance of culture and cultural analysis. This is a line of inquiry that requires more ethnographic and empirical material. Equally important, it requires Mulder to cast his eyes not only on the historical past but also on the future, locating Filipinos' behavior—their
thoughts, actions, and feelings, in other words their modes of relating to themselves, to others, and to their world—in concrete and lived spaces and times as they go about navigating poverty, inequality, corruption, injustice and their life-defining consequences.

REFERENCES
It is hard not to agree with many of the points raised by Neils Mulder in his paper *The Philippine Enigma: culture, emotion, and motivation — a personal view* but only if we admit that the enigma — the Filipino - cannot be explained simplistically. Agreeing with his arguments also possibly comes easy because the country is at present, as it has been for so many generations and under different administrations, in an insecure state. I say this with sadness though because if we believe his analysis, then the Filipinos is bound to a destiny of defeat and destitution - Because we are small—in thought, in feeling, in action. And smallness, ironically, is not spared a space in the modern world. Unless one is satisfied with being trampled upon at all times: at best, left unnoticed; at worst, getting crushed—repeatedly.

Mulder's thesis, if unpalatable to many, is not new. Similar opinions in the same vein have been raised and regularly rear their heads in moments that need quick explanation why the country fails to extricate itself from the general dismal situation it has been in for a
long time regardless of change in administration. In fact, Raul Perttierra's piece in the second volume of *Sabangan* (2015) addresses the issue of the Filipino's damaged culture, following the prognosis of James Fallows (1987) less than two years after the Marcos overthrow in 1986. Also cited by Mulder in his paper, a damaged culture—characterized by a 'feeble sense of nationalism and a contempt for the public good' (Fallows, 1987, p. 55)—is sure to do the Filipino in and there seems to be no escape from it as one's culture is not so easy to modify though it is not permanent; or its undesirable traits so easy to erase, notwithstanding its transformability. Perttierra's commentary on the damaged culture thesis in light of teasing out the problem of identity in a globalized era brought up questions that from a critical point of view performs a postcolonial intervention: *What began as a foreigner's critique of Philippine society has been transformed into an explanation of the country's continuing decline by Filipinos themselves*, further Perttierra asks, *Is this an example of identity construction initiated from the outside but later internalized?* (2015, p. 8). The possible internalization of this speculation about the Filipino character is one that I wish to address because, whether coming from the outside or derived from a local gaze, readily accepting the charge is a shallow consideration of the complexity of the situation.

My discussion in this paper centers on the idea that Filipinos' (their culture, in particular, that in turn affects their emotion and motivation towards being great) proneness to remain small (in creation and vision) is seemingly inherent. Ethnicizing such a tendency is what I wish to tackle and in so doing, I also hope to reiterate some of the important points of Mulder that pertain potentially to programmatic steps, such as educational reform and cultural leadership, in
confronting the problems of limited vision and public consciousness supposedly ingrained in Filipino culture. My paper is intended to act as a complementary reading to harness what to me are helpful points made by Mulder that need to be earnestly considered. I accomplish this by first going back to the essay of Nick Joaquin (2004) on the 'heritage of smallness' that besets the Filipino seemingly as a cultural trait, limiting the achievements and potentials of a people. I then present cases that demonstrate that such a sensibility is not unique to Filipinos by focusing on the experiences of our Antipodean neighbors, Australia and New Zealand. The latter I refer to more prominently as Filipino migrants in Auckland and their identity work have served as my most recent research interest. The paper in general reveals my preoccupation as a language and discourse student. I would like to propose seeing smallness not as an underlying cultural trait but as a practice of repeatedly activating the diminution of the bigness of issues in terms of importance and seriousness by means of different forms of discursive manoeuvres. Such a manoeuvre is performed by entities as particular as individuals and as encompassing as the state itself and its alter-egos with help from no less than various media of ideological propagation at their disposal. Finally, while citing elaborations and critique of self-defeating cultural habits from the vantage point Down Under, I also refer to similar arguments made by Virgilio Enriquez (1994) in his elucidation of the roots of such inferiority in Philippine psychology and Felipe de Leon, Jr. (2011) in his contemplation of the issue from a cultural/artistic perspective. This is not to give an excuse but rather to offer a possible explanation. There is a need to admonish the practice of lambasting the Filipino way in the guise of getting real and the knee-jerk defence of the same at all cost and I wish that both be done away with as they foster a misguided attempt at halting dialogue.
instead of pushing forward productive discourse.

**Smallness revisited**

I choose my discussion on the 'smallness' metaphor of Joaquin at least as a take-off point and overarching conceptual tool since Mulder himself uses it as the summary of his explication about the lack of integrating public consciousness in private life (thus, interrupting the fulfilment of a great civilization) in order to flesh out the damaged culture claim. Joaquin's essay deserves a review not only because of the continued relevance of the theme in Mulder's paper, but also because the metaphor the former used has to be reconsidered with a heightened awareness of the nature of metaphors as a means of configuring conceptualizations in everyday life. Metaphors may be valuable heuristically but they are also necessarily limiting.

Material culture, that is, what we do with and how we make sense of objects provides a window to how we see the world and regard ourselves. Humans, along with other animals, have gained the ability and the penchant for fashioning objects that extend one's capacities initially for survival but later on, for self-improvement and actualization. As humans, we rely on objects for various practical reasons but our use and relationship with objects are also imbued with meanings of ultimately what it is to be human at a particular point in time and place. Bill Brown (2010) explains further our entanglement with things in the practice of culture:

> It thus entails both the ways that inanimate objects mediate human relations and the ways that humans mediate object relations (generating differences of value, significance, and
Objects in the world, those fashioned by people, do not make an appearance out of the blue; they are products of the need of individuals or communities and the possibilities offered by the environment at a particular place and time. Whether big or small, the objects that people make come from the negotiation between what they have or do not have (resources such as skills and technology) and what the environment has to offer (material resources and cultural affordances). Cultural practices in general are a product of particular socio-historical conditions—habits or ways of doing proceed from concrete situations that are not necessarily permanent but may be enduring. Focusing, for instance, on the practice of *tingi*—purchasing items in small quantities or by-the-piece instead of in bulk—identified by Joaquin in his essay as the manifestation in commerce of the Filipino's heritage of smallness, there is a need to understand the development of the practice not only as the result of people's limited economic capacity but of their ability to adapt to the demands of particular circumstances. Although appearing to be impractical, inefficient, and economically unsound, the *tingi* system was invented because it served a purpose for a particular kind of community. Joaquin described it as 'so much effort by so many for so little,' yet the commercial exercise provides not only the D and E market the chance to get hold of products they need but also affords the average consumer the opportunity to try out different varieties of certain items before deciding which ones to patronize on a 'larger' scale—buy regularly in larger quantities—or acquire a necessary item in times of emergency (Olarte & Chua, 2005). What is more
interesting is that the preponderance of this practice has prompted manufacturers to 'innovate' packaging in order to cater to said consumer behavior, thus, the entrance of 'sachet' or 'mini-size' in the market.
Whether the *tingi* system or the jeepney, or any of the cases mentioned by Joaquin to exemplify the heritage of smallness of the Filipino, it should be made clear that culture and practices are contingent on the social. Objects are developed out of a need—whether one looks at it from a profit angle or from a cultural perspective. Enterprises such as the *tingi*, small as it is, should not be taken as evidence of a shortage of innovation or imagination. Individuals and the structures that surround them co-evolve: the parts and the whole are inseparable. Even in Fallows' essay, he made clear his premise that the Filipino culture he was speaking about has been shaped by over a century of the country's relationship with the United States. The jeepney was fabricated out of an object with an entirely different purpose because it had to be remolded to serve the needs of people at a particular juncture in history. Similarly, the rice terraces were built because communities needed to survive and prosper and the only way to accomplish such a huge task was to remodel their natural world. In other words, perhaps it is a mistake to see such cultural accomplishments or habits as big or small for people continually refashion objects, practices, and the environment that surrounds them in order to get what they need and want.

This brings me back to the problem of metaphors. Although we rely on them to understand concepts that are important quotidianly and not just during times of literary inspiration, metaphors will always be limited in the understanding they give us of particular experiences and selective of the aspects of such experiences they allow us to see. But what we should look out for as metaphor-users is the potential of metaphors to construct the truth as well as actions based on what we believe to be true. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) explain that metaphors can guide future actions that, in turn, will fit the metaphor further.
reinforcing the ability of the metaphor to make understandable our experience: 'metaphors, therefore, can be like self-fulfilling prophecies' (p. 484). If smallness is the metaphor that Filipinos eventually regard as the trademark of their culture (and civilization), then it is no surprise how easily they find evidence of such in the many habits of their lives. I wonder then the effect if, in lieu of smallness, alternative metaphors of culture are culled from the very same examples mentioned by Joaquin.

I should make clear that Joaquin did not critique these 'little' innovations per se but lamented the tendency of Filipinos, the way he saw it, to not go beyond what has been comfortable or what has been established in practice—to be content with what one has or is able to achieve instead of looking at the prospect of something bigger, which presumably is also better. Mulder believes that the reason behind this is the culture within which Filipinos are raised. He cites as proof overseas Filipinos who become more attuned to reach for and fulfil bigger accomplishments: because they are taken out of an inimical environment that stunts their growth—that harmful place that is also their country.

In response, I have a few conjectures derived from my experience living with Filipino migrants in Auckland, New Zealand while I was doing research on Filipino migrant identity and use of social media from 2010 to 2014. There are three factors that facilitate the attainment of more successes for migrants. First, the Filipino migrant is under constant pressure to do well in life. A research participant, Amy, explains why she avoids posting negative things about migrating to New Zealand on her Facebook account. Aside from the desire to save her relatives in the Philippines from worrying about
them (they migrated as a family), she admits being affected by expectations of success towards migrants commonly held by Filipinos. As the social networking site acts as a venue of self-presentation even as one uses it to communicate, she tends to be silent about experiences contrary to prevalent expectations in representing her life abroad on her social media account (Aguirre, 2014). Second, success in certain fields is easier to achieve because of state support. While most Filipinos who migrate to New Zealand are skilled workers, some move to the country to establish their own business. The NZ government's support for small businesses is worthy of mention since these comprise 97% of enterprises in the country and are backed by various institutionalized programs that aim for their sustenance and growth because the government believes that these industries, small as they are, play a key role in the national economy as sources of innovation and invention, among other contributions (Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, 2014). Imagine, then, what a sari-sari store could become and the potential of the tingi system in an environment conducive to sustained development afforded by accessible assistance from the government. Third, the opportunity to see the nation from a distance provides the chance for one to contemplate about its present through a review of its past. Karl, another research participant, established (along with other friends) websites that cater to the Filipino community in key cities in New Zealand and promote Filipino culture and identity in the adoptive land (see the website filipinosinauckland.wordpress.com).

Karl intends to correct the image of Filipinos in New Zealand as 'silent migrants' (affirming Mulder's observations) and these new media sites are aimed at projecting the rich history and heritage (as opposed to smallness) of the Philippines to a New Zealand audience.
and beyond. On the website, Filipinos in Auckland, for instance, one can read about Jose Rizal and other milestones in Philippine history. Also notable is the apparent goal of the site to place the Filipino in a larger pan-Asian identity and community—performing cultural attachment that extends beyond the confines of the nation. In explaining his motives, Karl makes clear during the interview that:

We are a people with extremely large potentials who happen to shoot our feet once in a while and sometimes with rather tragic or hilarious consequences. But all nationalities manage to do that as well.

We are also inheritors of a rich history (most of which is forgotten) and an extremely colourful culture, diverse as it may appear to be. But the best part about Filipinos is their collective psyche. It contains a plethora of unique attributes found nowhere else, many of which are lacking or absent in other foreign societies.

My encounters with Filipinos in Auckland suggest insights for further investigating the declaration that leaving the homeland makes for a better Filipino. Another realization is the notion of smallness for the Filipino sense of self. Listening to Filipinos in Auckland, made me realize that size is always a matter of perspective.

**Small is relative, or probably also elsewhere**

The statement I excerpt below has been heard before:

…a country that is desperate for heroes and icons. It means
that we create these sacred cows that we're not allowed to
even touch critically. And when you build anyone up to that
mythic hero status it puts them in a light that hides all of their
natural flaws and quirks.

This kind of wound never heals: the way Filipinos see themselves as
smaller than others, especially the West and the wealthier East Asian
neighbours; how we are inferior, subservient, and self-
conscious—the kind that fuels preoccupation with how we look in the
eyes of others; our search for something to be proud of however small
as seen in our tireless search for a Filipino connection in events that
become internationally prominent (e.g. Filipino blood in a beauty
queen; Filipina nanny of the Occupy Hong Kong youth
protesters)—our search for something 'great' to hold on to or lean
against. The statement seems to have nailed the national insecurity
that draws on or feeds our propensity for smallness. However, the
words above are not about Filipinos but about Kiwis—New
Zealanders—and it was spoken by their compatriot, Garth
Carthwright, when he talked about his book featuring musings about
his country after two decades of being away and the negative
feedback, to say the least, that he got from readers on topics that tend
to be critical about certain aspects of his country. I gather that from
his point of view, this national sensibility of being too easily offended
when the ego is slighted can be construed as an expression of New
Zealanders' insecurity for lack of genuine icons of greatness
(Robinson, 2012).

Australians have to contend with a similar lack of confidence as a
national obsession. Literary critic Arthur Phillips (1980) termed this
inferior disposition as cultural cringe, generally understood as
Filipinos as a people have no monopoly over feelings of inferiority. Also, this feeling of smallness shifts in terms of attribution as we move across the globe, at least based on my experience and observations in Auckland. The cases I cite are mostly anecdotal. These cases indicate that seeing oneself or one's culture as big or small is relative to an “other” that one uses as reference.

I got acquainted with the notion of 'tall poppy syndrome' (TPS) in New Zealand. Commonly taken to be a New Zealand cultural trait, the concept deals with the habit of resenting high achievers or 'cutting down' those who stand out preventing individuals from achieving their maximum potential. The TPS is not the term that is usually used to describe the inferior feeling of Filipinos as regards their culture and identity but we do have an equivalent in the oft-quoted 'crab mentality.' Looking back at Mulder's paper, it appears that the practice of putting children in place in the family (e.g. not allowing them to reason out) and preventing them to form and express critical-oppositional views in an educational setting is a much earlier stage of nipping poppies in the bud before they even get the chance to grow tall. Standing out is, if the TPS is to be believed, not a desired trait in New Zealand society but prevalent enough (and seemingly ingrained) to warrant serious assessment of its existence in various fields (see for instance Kirkwood & Viitanen, 2015 in business; Pierce, Hodge, Taylor, & Button, 2017 in sports). If opinions such as Carthwright's are to serve as basis, conformity in Kiwi society is
preferred such that debates that shatter the veneer of placidity are bound to get shut down. Yet, Filipino migrants in the country find it easy to be recognized in the crowd, and in a good way at times.

At a conference, one woman approached me to confirm my observations about how Filipinos in New Zealand perform their identity as ideal migrants by being ideal workers. She reported an observation that during lunch break her Filipino co-workers would either rush through their meal and get back to work in 20 minutes or eat and work at the same time without leaving their desks. Whereas she and others like her (she used the pronoun 'we') would often take long lunch breaks, preferring to spend time away from the desk or the office. This, to her, is a sign of how good (possibly great) Filipinos are when it comes to performing their jobs. On the flip side, a few Filipinos expressed an opinion about how some New Zealanders perform their duties: laid-back, selfish, lazy.

What I would like to convey in mentioning these anecdotes is the shifting attribution of bigness and smallness of practice, vision, or even character that on occasions are construed as natural tendencies of a people. My examples above easily support Mulder's assertion that Filipinos fare better outside their homeland, which strengthens his claim that the culture prevailing in it is what withholds a people from achieving greatness. However, I note Portes and Rumbaut's (2001) concept of 'contexts of reception': comprised of structural elements that include government policies, prevailing market condition, and social support of one's ethnic community. I would like to add to this list 'ideology'.

Stuart Hall's defines ideology as:

…the mental frameworks — the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation — which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, figure out and render intelligible the way society works. (1996, p. 26)

There is not one ideology that exists at a given time and place but there are those that prevail over others, in short, hegemonic. The dominance of certain systemic beliefs, in the classic Althusserian sense, becomes long-standing to the point of being taken subconsciously as 'natural.' The notion that a group of people is lazy and ambitionless is what some Filipinos have adopted from the predominant construction of Maori identity. The 'bad Maori' vs. normative Pakeha (European New Zealanders) in widely circulated media (Barnes et al., 2012) will tend to get normalized especially when no alternative understanding of the situation is available. Maori and Pacific Islanders in New Zealand experience the most inequality based on several indicators such as health, paid work, and economic standards of living (Marriott & Sim, 2014). Additionally, these two groups also register the lowest education results compared to Pakeha and Asians (Houghton, 2015). The low status of Maori and Islanders may be partly explained by a 'self-fulfilling' notion about how metaphors reinforce socially constructed truths. However, the characterization of Maori in New Zealand, which some Filipino migrants in the country ordinarily echo plays a role in forging the path to their failure since they are:
...ascribed an identity by the predominantly Pākehā majority through the narrow lens of their shortcomings; low socio-economic status, underachievement, and Pasifika ethnicity (Nakhid in Houghton, 2015, p. 11).

In many instances, the state and corporate power win by circulating a particular discourse of the great Filipino worker. My primary concern is from a discursive standpoint: that although dominant representations and meanings of certain aspects of our lives are not entirely configured by discourse alone, what we see and hear through various channels of discourse ultimately play a role in how we accept reality and shape our actions. Power relations in the way we talk about matters that concern us may be hidden or apparent (Wodak, 2001) and while everyone has the capacity to be critical (Chilton, 2005), there are also moments of conformity to hegemony. To cite the Filipino migrant as example once more: while we celebrate the characterization and contribution of the Filipino migrant worker as an indication of our significant place in the global arena, it also comes with a sacrificial and martyrized positioning of these individuals—able to endure hardships to serve employers and continually support the family in the homeland at the expense of their own welfare and happiness. Hidden from this discursive design of the great Filipino worker are the possible labor abuse issues they suffer and the inability of the Philippine state to protect its workforce that it sends off to various locations around the globe and address judiciously the massive exodus of its own people.
‘Small' is a verb

Words do more than report or describe. 'Utterances' are performative, (J.L. Austin, 1962) that is, they do something, discursive acts are not a mere process of expression and communication. Instead utterences, have potency in the sense that what we say can potentially change the world.

Both Mulder and Joaquin's critique certainly deserve to be heeded. Their observations and pronouncements may not be easy to swallow, but they prompt contemplation and analysis of the Filipino psyche, Philippine society, and the country's future.

I do not disagree with their assertions entirely—for instance, I, too, have felt exhausted at the complacency of how things have been done in my own university, academically or administratively. My reservation however, stems from the possibility that readers might misconstrue their statements to the point of pinning the blame of lack of desire for greatness on the individual. Surely, I do not mean to say that we blame society for all our misfortunes. The danger however in sweeping arguments especially those that pertain to the characterization of an entire group of people, stems from the reinforcement of the belief that what the individual decides, does, or becomes is the product of the individual's decisions and actions alone: autonomous. Of course, in this regard, Mulder's presentation is less guilty since he accounts for historical, cultural, and social aspects of the matter. However, one still needs to be careful in reading both the arguments of Mulder and Joaquin for in particular cases that serve to exemplify their major points, the focus tends to shift on individual shortcomings in order to effectively highlight Filipino culture.
(essential quality, it seems) as damaged (e.g. inevitable smallness) and far from getting fixed (e.g. passive students who go to school not to learn but to eventually land a lucrative career).

Utterances, aside from being performative, also have the potential to be transformative (see for instance Oliver, 1999; Sedgwick, 2003). The point about the self-fulfilling tendency of metaphors is to underscore the contingency of reality, in how we utter it. Along this argument I reiterate the project of rebuilding Filipino identity and culture by revising the angle from which we view our sense of self. I refer to the proposals of Enriquez (as cited above) in his fight to recover and reappraise the Filipino's dangal (sense of one's worth), in conjunction with de Leon (cited above) whose politics is geared towards revaluing what the Filipino has in terms of heritage.

Enriquez expressed concern about the loss of self-respect that Filipinos inadvertently carry out by believing outsiders' assessment of their value as a people. In proffering an overhaul of a deprecating regard for the self, he directly condemned the thesis forwarded by Fallows in the latter's post-EDSA essay:

> We have often been caught in the trap of looking at ourselves from the outsider's point of view. Our former colonizers and even some of us have engaged in Filipino bashing for so long that we are almost in danger of believing that we are indeed a 'damaged culture' thus justifying our leaving our homeland and avoiding other Filipinos. (1994, p. 84)

How far have Filipinos come in terms of recognizing their sense of self-respect and the value of their culture? The answer
involves—bridging the individual and private to the social—suggested by de Leon in his insistence that thinking and using culture critically means integrating it with other social issues. The means of making the social a part of everyday individual concerns is by enhancing social consciousness and responsibility to the nation; promoting people participation, local genius, and cultural diversity; and, integrating the arts in wider social and cultural phenomena (de Leon 2011, pp. 29-30). Enriquez's and de Leon's campaign, for a pagbabagong-dangal (regaining self-respect as individuals and as a nation) involves not only individual shifts in paradigms but also structural efforts in recovering the national self-esteem.

In this respect, I agree with Mulder in calling for a better educational practice in terms of developing assured and critical minds. His vision of stronger cultural leadership should be defined by inclusivity, independence, and multi-sectorality. What I imagine are cultural agencies, state-designed in complementary relationship with non-state entities, developing a clear cultural agenda with a national focus; not only in existence to promote culture but to provide venues for debate and discourse in pursuit of a more significant and intelligent configuration of Filipino culture. This, however, cannot be done without the help of historical consciousness not as a way to find excuses in the past but to create a means of explanation that leads to understanding.

It is perhaps fruitful to end this paper by revisiting Phillip's cultural cringe premise. Leonard Hume (1993) examined pertinent documents of the 60s and 70s era, which led him to cast doubt, of paraphrasing Voltaire, on the truth of that pervasive characterization
of Australian psyche. Hume asserts in his final analysis: the cultural cringe—that pervasive, unthinking, admiration for British and foreign things—did not exist, but it was needed, and so it was invented (1993, p. 48).

REFERENCES


Filipino culture - a culture of demotivation?

A perspective on Mulder’s

*The Philippine Enigma: culture, emotion and motivation - a personal view*

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When an anthropologist who has known the Philippines for more than 30 years speaks about his personal views, it deserves attention. No one can argue that he correctly describes parts of Philippine social realities. The frustration is evident and the despair almost palpable. His proposition that Filipino culture is a “culture of demotivation” is understandable but is definitely disputable.

To pose a counterpoint to Mulder’s critique of Filipino culture, my observations come from my experience of Philippine society and of Filipino migrants in the diasporic circles of Singapore, Malaysia and New Zealand. I draw from Victor's Turner's view that culture is processual. Given their history, human beings exercise agency and as a consequence culture is always in the process of becoming. This
processual view holds that cultural definitions are always incomplete. Hence, defining Filipino culture as a culture of demotivation not only essentializes but also concretizes it. This view is in contrast with the position of Turner and other anthropologists.

Among overseas Filipinos, their memory of “Filipino culture” connects them to the homeland and allows them to create a new home in foreign lands. Their overseas success is as much a product of homeland culture as they draw on social networks of Filipinos in diaspora.

_A damaged culture? A culture of demotivation?_

Mulder introduces his perspective on Filipino culture using Fallows' controversial view of a “damaged culture.” Mulder then quotes Abinales: _how could a country with so many gifted, so many nice people, end up in such a mess?_ Mulder then states his main quest (underlining mine):

In our quest for leads, we'll explore the setting of the complex problématique of a culture of demotivation in a polity that fails to provide positive prospects. Subsequent despair drives ordinary workers overseas and bleeds the nation dry of talented achievers.

There are some theoretical concerns about Fallows' claim since it implies that some cultures are “un-damaged” and therefore better. This view reflects a “purist” essentialist stance challenging mainline anthropology's principle of cultural relativity. Mulder's consideration of Fallows' proposition as “prophetic diagnosis” is
bothersome because it views social problems not as addressable concerns but as “finished products” beyond change or redemption.

According to Mulder, a majority of Filipinos are demotivated to succeed in the homeland, hence their quest for overseas work.

**Historical claims, Nationalists and Soothsayers**

Mulder also advances perspectives on Philippine history that is contestable, enumerated below.

1) **Animism in the whole Philippine Islands?**

Mulder's view of “Catholicism thriving in native Animism” (p.3) in the Philippine Islands seem inadequate in the face of archeological and historical evidence of a well-entrenched monotheistic religion, Islam, along the strategic coastal areas of Mindanao, Visayas and Luzon centuries before Spanish colonization. Morga ([1609] 1970) acknowledges the spread of Islam in the archipelago at the time of the Spanish expedition of Legazpi in 1565 as far north¹ as Laguna and Manila. A. L. Kroeber (1919) estimates the establishment and spread of Islam in Mindanao at around 1380 C.E., almost two centuries ahead of the Spanish expedition. A popular ritual called Ati-atihan credits the ten Muslim *datus* with the organization of the Confederation of *Madya-as* in Aklan² -- a group of settlements near the sea (Regalado and Franco 1973; Scott 1984; Zaide 1949). This

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¹ The reference point for the entry of Islam in the Philippines is Mindanao which lies on the southern tip of the archipelago. The presence of Muslims in the northern island at the time of the third Spanish expedition attests to the spread of its followers in Luzon.

² The ritual has a written narrative which is part of an 18th Century document called Maragtas by Pedro A. Monteclaro, published in the local languages *Hiligaynon* and *Kin-iraya* of Iloilo and contains the legend of the migration of Bornean settlers, recorded in 1858, who are remembered as folk heroes by the inhabitants of Aklan Island (Scott 1984, p. 91-103). The Maragtas is not considered a valid historical document.
ritual has also undertaken a transnational journey and is celebrated among overseas Aklanon migrants.

2) Filipino identity

Mulder's attribution of the Filipino identity to the *ilustrado* class is debatable. The years of Spanish colonization produced 'pure' Spaniards born in the Philippine islands. This led to a conflict between local born Spaniards (*Insulares*) and those born in Spain (*Peninsulares*). The Spanish *Insulares* first alluded to themselves as “Filipino” to contrast themselves from the *Peninsulares*. Later, the Europe-inspired *ilustrados* would also call themselves “Filipino”, a national identity adopted later in the Philippine Revolutionary constitution and the constitutions of 1935, 1972, and 1987.

3) Spain opened the (Philippine) islands to Asia?

Mulder's credit to Spanish colonization's “opening the islands to Asia…” (p. 3) that “was accompanied by culture contact that brought the plow, new crops and technology that not only freed people from subsistence and famine, but also provided the impetus to expand the mental horizon beyond the circumscriptions of Malayo-Polynesian Animism, and to include and respect others” is also contestable. The view that the mental horizons of the natives were limited is contradicted by archeological evidence. The Butuan mother boat suggests a thriving inter island trade route. Archeological find of the flying elephant porcelain in Lena Shoal shows that trading relationships with the Chinese long preceded Spanish colonization. The Laguna Copperplate Inscription points to an organized political
and economic structure that extended to Manila. In terms of agriculture, the Ifugaos in the Cordillera had been practicing irrigation farming for centuries before the Spaniards came.

It comes, as no surprise if Mulder attributes the archeological evidence to “soothsaying ‘nationalists’” who “counter cultural vacuity with their peculiar brand of myth-making” and “invented the eternal original Filipino and 'history' that predates all contact with the West” (p.5). Given his view of some Filipino nationalists, Mulder expressed surprise that some UP academics avoided contact with him.

4) Filipino Collective Amnesia

According to Mulder, Filipinos have collective amnesia which means they lack a common historical memory. This emphasizes the colonized peoples' forgetting and lack of historical sense. Eric Wolf (1982 - Europe and the People Without History) and John L. Comaroff (1989 - Images of Empire, Contests of Conscience: Models of Colonial Domination in South Africa) warns of simplistic historical interpretations, asserting that,

[T]he world of humankind constitutes a manifold, a totality of interconnected processes, and inquiries that disassemble this totality into bits and then fail to reassemble it falsify reality. Concepts like “nation,” “society” and “culture” name bits and threaten to turn names into things. Only by understanding these names as bundles of relationships, and by placing them back into the field from which they were abstracted, can we hope to avoid misleading inferences and increase our share of
understanding.

The notion of Filipino culture as a culture of demotivation leading to the massive state of transnational migration is a very simplistic view of a complex phenomenon. Most overseas Filipinos, despite not having a historical consciousness, manage to live comfortable and modest lives.

Mulder also examines American colonialism and its role in the development of a culture of demotivation in the Philippines. Undoubtedly, the overall effects of any colonialism are negative. However, some anthropologists also challenge previous understandings of colonialism. Comaroff (1989) states,

The image of colonialism as a coherent, monolithic process can no longer be sustained: indeed the very nature of colonial rule was, and is, often the subject of struggle among colonizers – as well as between ruler and ruled.

Comaroff makes the distinctions among three colonialisms in South Africa: state, settler (mostly Boers / Afrikaans originating from the Netherlands) and civilizing missionaries and shows that colonials found themselves at times in conflict with each other in terms of their vision and practices to attain the colonial vision.

It may be interesting, but certainly difficult to prove that there was a culture of demotivation in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, which prompted a significant number of British and Dutch migrants to immigrate to South Africa. It is even more difficult to explain the incomprehensibility of white settler cruelty. One may ask, if there
was a common British or Dutch cultural socialization that enabled such destructive practices. The world struggles up to now to make sense of the modes of inhumanity inflicted upon the black Africans by the Boer / Afrikaan settlers, and the consequences of apartheid in South Africa after its independence from the British.

Wolf’s notion of nation, culture and society as forms of relationships helps us to understand them as ongoing processes and interactions. While Mulder sees American education as a fatal blow to Filipino identity and culture, the generations who attended the newly established public schools reaped priceless benefits. While memorization is not education, discovering and remembering are foundational to the learning process.

**Perspective from the Anthropology of migration and Diaspora**

The gap between Mulder's proposition and presentation of evidence is the main weakness of the article. Researchers are required to back their propositions and conjectures with evidence. The proposition of a Filipino culture of demotivation requires evidentiary proof. This could be provided with unemployment statistics and labor outflows from the American period onwards. In terms of his proposition - *culture of demotivation and polity which failed to provide positive prospects* - that drives Filipino transnational labor outflows could have been proven by looking at the five decades of American colonial rule. My proposition that migration is not driven by a culture of demotivation but rather of interconnected local and global political economic factors is supported by overwhelming evidence.

Research findings of migration show that diasporal subjects have a
double-orientation towards the homeland and settlement. Among overseas Filipinos, meaning-making is based on their memories of home. These memories are expressed in their efforts to be a part of a Filipino diasporic community. In this case, the culture of demotivation becomes the basis for support and succor abroad.

While Mulder is careful to limit his essay to his personal view, his fondness for exaggeration detracts from rather than supports his claims. The following is an example (p.6):

What B-52's could not accomplish, that is, bombing the Vietnamese back to the Stone Age, Yankee Arrogant (sic) achieved in the Philippines: the history of becoming and with it identity, budding civilization, self-confidence and nation were effectively obliterated, with the result that country and people were set back to the Age of Animism, to pre-civilization and mental isolation characteristic of tribal existence.

Given this sweeping statement, one wonders how serious Mulder is in engaging in academic exchange.

Stereotyping the Filipino as having a “tribal existence” is not a productive way of beginning an analysis of culture. Similarly, an alarmist view that assumes Filipino transnational migration is the result of a culture of demotivation, does not contribute much to seeking a better understanding of transnational human movements.

a) Mobility as a universal characteristic of human beings

According to Eades (1987), among humans, “mobility, like birth and
Movement among human communities was originally seen as “normal” in paleoanthropology. Appadurai (1988), notes “motion is part of the normal round for many groups, ranging from Bushmen and Australian aborigines, to Central Asian nomads and Southeast Asian swidden agriculturalists.” Migration scholars acknowledge human paleo-movements and note that mobility and settlement are responsible for cultural evolution and diversity. Human beings developed norms of social interactions, and acceptable allocation of resources compatible with the food supply in the environment.

b) Forced migrations in human history

Here I make the distinction that while most of human movements in prehistoric times seemingly were voluntary (i.e., archeology's out-of-Africa theory), the history of ancient civilizations indicated and at times, explicitly depicted forced migrations. Victorious empires exiled the kings and subjects of defeated kingdoms, for example, the defeat of the Northern tribes of Israel and their exile to Assyria.

The most lasting effect of European colonization was the major changes in the global demographic configuration, which produced
“white migrant settler nations” such as the U.S.A, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The migrant settler takeover, most times, through violent means, of indigenous lands greatly reduced the native populations, paving the way for the creation of white nations. Simultaneously with this, the inhumane traffic of human beings from Africa and Asia through various means such as, the slave trade, black bearding, and labor indentures, gave rise to the spread of African, Indian and Chinese diaspora in the world. It is important to note that as the Africans lost their history and culture, they also created new ones wherever they settled. The creolized cultures in North, Central and South America demonstrate that culture survives by adapting and mixing with the new environment in its new locations. In this sense, it does not cease but is reinvented and recreated.

c) Development of mobility related technology

The importance of mobility for human beings is demonstrated by the development of skill and technology that facilitate movement: from the taming of horses, dogs, donkeys and mules as mode of transport, humans invented wagons, boats, trains, ships and airplanes. These all point to the human need for mobility.

d) Economic explanations: push – pull of Filipino migrant labor in the global market

Presently, migration and diaspora scholars attribute transnational migration to macro and microeconomics push-pull explanations, associated with cultural factors such as strong family commitments that encourage temporary sacrifice in exchange for the well-being of the family. Thus if jobs are not available in particular localities,
people are “pushed” to seek jobs elsewhere. In the case of internal migration, this is seen in the movement of people from rural to urban areas in search of employment. When there are not enough jobs in the nation, then people go transnational.

Filipino migratory directions have been mostly determined by the labor needs/demands of destination countries. While there are historical records of Filipino migration during the Spanish colonial period (Borah 1996a, 1996b, 1997-2004), migration of Philippine labor began slowly during the American colonial times, and started accelerating in terms of numbers and destinations in the later part of the twentieth century.

Mulder's argument that American colonization generated a culture of demotivation needs to be examined in terms of Filipino labor outflows. The Philippines was annexed by the United States in 1898 and granted its independence on July 4th, 1946, after 48 years of colonial rule. It took about eight years of American rule for migrant Filipinos to embark for work on U.S. soil. On December 20, 1906, fifteen Filipino sacadas (sugar cane workers) arrived in Hawaii. The increasing numbers of Filipino agricultural workers bound for sugar plantations in Hawaii and fruit plantations on the West coast caused alarm and opposition among Americans which intensified during the great depression of the 1930s (Scharrenberg 1929). To reduce this migrant flow (Christiansen (1979), a quota system based on national origins (Allen 1977) was passed through the Tydings-McDuffie Act (or the Philippines Independence Act) in 1934, declaring the Philippines a separate nation, thereby denying Filipinos US citizenship. The U.S. allowed only 50 immigrants per year from the Philippines from 1934 onwards. This was increased to 100 in 1946 up
to the 1960s. War veterans were allowed to migrate to the US after World War II. Students were also allowed to study in the U.S. (Christiansen 1979; Liu, Ong and Rosenstein 1991).

The rate of Philippine labor migration from the 1950s up to the first half of the 1960s was low because there were limited employment opportunities overseas. At that time, the Philippines had a predominantly rural population, whose inhabitants lived simply. There was no significant labor outflow of Filipinos to the U.S. and the rest of the world after five decades of American colonization. Income per capita in the Philippines at that time, was higher than all of the other East and Southeast Asian nations except Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore although Taiwan surpassed the Philippines in 1962, South Korea in 1967, Thailand in 1977, Indonesia in 1985 and China in 1992 (Nelson 2007).

Philippine economic growth slowed down in the 70s. To address increasing domestic unemployment, labor export was allowed as a temporary measure (Tyner 1999). In 1982, the government established the POEA (Philippine Overseas Employment Administration) to regularize the illegal recruitment practices (Sills 2007) indicating the institutionalization of labor as a national export commodity. This government policy coincided with the country's declining economic growth made worse by internal political strife (the rebellions by the NPA and MNLF). The gradual loosening of immigration policies in Europe and North America, Asia and the Middle East allowed the entrance of needed labor in those countries. In 1965, the U.S. passed the Immigration and Nationality Act that gave preference to migrant applicants with U.S. relatives. Canada
abolished migration restrictions and opened its doors to migrants of all nationalities, declaring the first policy of multiculturalism in the world (Judge 2003). The introduction of the Foreign Domestic Program in 1981, later replaced by the Live-in Care-giver (LCP) Program in 1992, encouraged Filipina migration to Canada (Stasiulis and Bakan 1997). Meanwhile, European economic growth and industrialization created the need for foreign labor. In addition, European countries, needing to provide support for its working women and ageing population, opened its doors to foreign domestic workers and caregivers. To attract needed labor additional incentives such as the “Green card scheme” (Germany 2000) and American Competitiveness and Work Force Improvement Act (U.S. 1998) lifted the visa cap on skilled workers in order to attract skilled labor (Abella 2006).

In the '70s and '80s, the OPEC cartel created growing amounts of financial reserves, allowing member countries to embark on massive infrastructure projects in communications, health and education. The Middle East, buoyed by “petro dollars” enabled the massive deployment of Philippine labor to the Gulf region (Cariño 1992). The external factor of economic growth in the migrant destination countries provided the pull for Filipino migration.

While hopes were high that things would be better after the 1986 EDSA People Power, the downward economic spiral continued, this time without martial law and Marcos as convenient excuses. From 1986 to 2005, unemployment rates fluctuated from 8 to 14 per cent (11.5 per cent in 2005 according to the Philippines 2006 report by Asian Development Bank), with underemployment remaining consistently above 20 per cent and rising as high as 26 per cent in
2005 (Sills 2007, p. 3). At the same time, government external debts rose to 72 per cent of the GDP at the end of 2005 (Asian Development Bank 2006). Even when external migration for overseas jobs reached 400,000 in 1988, it was not enough to absorb the unemployed Filipinos that year (Vasquez 1992). This data is critical. It points out that even when there is great anxiety/despair about joblessness, the available demand of jobs overseas puts a limit to migratory outflows. This means that despair that comes from a culture of demotivation does not provide the push that determines migrant outflows.

Migrant receiving countries compete for preferred skills among migrants and distinguish between short fixed-term contractual migrants, usually unskilled and circumscribed with restrictions, and long-term permanent emigrants or residents, usually skilled, with corresponding privileges (Ang 2001; Iredale 2001, 1999). Mulder's notion of successful Filipino overseas migrants comes from the skilled and professional classes who are long-term permanent emigrants or residents. The article's silence on the place of unskilled contractual migrants open to abuse and exploitation, in the overall theme of Filipino migrant success is a regrettable oversight.

Ironically, it was not Ferdinand Marcos who “packaged” Filipino labor as an export commodity. Until 1986, there was no conscious discursive 'packaging' of the Filipino migrant. President Corazon Aquino initiated the reification of Filipino overseas contract workers by creating the iconic representation of its mostly female overseas workers as the "modern-day heroes" of the nation (Parreñas 2001). The title mga bagong bayani ng bayan or 'modern-day heroes of the nation' became part of the Philippine migration discourse. This was to facilitate entry of the Philippines as a labor export-oriented economy.
in the global neoliberal capitalism's expanding labor market.

The outward flow of Philippine labor coincided with its worsening economic and political problems, as well as an expanding global trade of labor. Transnational Filipino migration could not have taken place without the economic prosperity in the Middle East (KSA, UAE) and Asia (Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Malaysia and Singapore), and the demographic changes in Europe (married women in jobs and its aging population).

e) Philippine emigration in the global labor market

In terms of emigration, India tops the list of ten, followed by 2) Mexico, 3) Russian Federation, 4) China, 5) Bangladesh, 6) Pakistan, 7) Philippines, 8) Afghanistan, 9) Ukraine, and 10) United Kingdom. For Mulder's proposition to be valid, it needs to be supported by a simple majority of the top ten cases of emigrant outflow. Thus, it is important to argue that immigrants from the other nine countries listed as sources of immigrants, which include United Kingdom (10), Russia (3) and China (4), left these countries because of a “culture of demotivation”.

In terms of remittance-receiving countries, India ranks first ($72.2B), followed by 2)China ($63.9B), 3)Philippines($29.7B), 4)Mexico ($25.7B), 5)France ($24.6B), 6)Nigeria($20.8B), 7)Egypt, Arab Republic ($20.4B), 8)Pakistan ($20.1B), 9)Germany ($17.5B), 10)Bangladesh ($15.8B), (World Bank Migrant Remittances Fact Book 2016, p. 12). China is a major migrant sending country, and is currently the second highest receiver of migrant remittances, ahead of the Philippines and Mexico at third and fourth places respectively.
(World Bank Migrant Remittances Fact Book 2016, p. 12). The data weakens if not disproves Mulder's arguments. China was not colonized by the U.S. and has a very nationalistic population with a socio-political and cultural cohesiveness that works above the plurality of local cultures. And yet it has a high rate of transnational migration.

It is difficult to prove the simplistic view that it is the lack of national identity and the Filipino culture of demotivation that has encouraged massive transnational migration. The class trajectory of Filipino migrants also proves that those leaving the country are not the most miserable, poorest classes. Tacoli's (1999) study of Filipinos in Rome shows an educated or professional middle class composition. This could be explained by the stringent immigration requirements in Europe, which also applies in the U. S. What can be deduced from this is that migrant destination countries spell out the specific qualifications of needed migrant labor. The desire to migrate needs to be matched by the labor needs of migrant receiving countries.

Evidence strongly shows that other factors such as global labor demands and changing population demographics, directs the outward flow and trajectory of labor migration. To put it simply, people migrate because they can, and because there is a market for their skill / talent outside their homeland. Thus, the means to move and availability of jobs overseas, rather than despair, better explain Filipino transnational migration. It is important to note that while most migrant stories depict altruistic sacrifices for migration, some narratives point to unique individual factors, such as a sense of adventure, romantic alliances (in the case of Filipina brides) and idealized notions of marriage (Constable 1999).

In sum, voluntary migration, while generally a normative human activity, is complex. Filipino migration and the plotting of its
trajectories cannot be reduced to Mulder's explanation of a “culture of demotivation.”

The vacuity of Philippine culture and Mulder's version of a better Philippines

Mulder's ruminations on what could have been a better Philippine history is based on the writings of Jose Rizal, Apolinario Mabini, Lope K. Santos, Pedro Paterno, T H Pardo de Tavera, and Isabelo de los Reyes. He states,

*If these self-confident ilustrados or 'enlightened ones' would have had it their way, and if the Americans had not betrayed the Revolution, ilustrado cultural leadership could have created a transcendent civilization with the guiding ideas necessary to unite Filipinos as a nation.*

The ideas of these men were confined to the educated class, literate in Spanish or English. One wonders how people can unite on the basis of ideas they hardly understand.

These *ilustrados* were mainly middle class, whose members were eager to please those in power. Pedro Paterno is notorious as the greatest turncoat in Philippine history. Notably, except for Isabelo de los Reyes who was an Ilocano, all of the gentlemen were *Tagalogs.*

The critique of Imperial Manila in recent times is not without basis. Throughout Philippine history, there has been no significant effort to acknowledge other regions as cultures with distinct interests in nation building.
Arguably Filipino elites, aside from espousing the ideas of freedom, never had adequate knowledge of practical governance enabling a better life for ordinary Filipinos. And this elite, self-absorbed and self-serving, with a culture of entitlement explains why Mulder thinks that the Philippines has gone backward to the state of precivilization. However, an elite that behaves with impunity and entitlement does not constitute the Filipino nation.

**Conclusion**

Despite my criticisms, I admit that many people I meet often support most of Mulder's observations. Colleagues in my field agree about common problems in Philippine society such as: a) the lack of unity; b) imbalance of power among classes and regions; c) corruption at all levels of public and private sectors; d) misallocation of economic resources; e) mainline media that serve more the interests of the elite; f) inconsistent social media that responds to a selective range of issues; e) the majority of the masses who prefer being entertained by television, in teleseryes, sports (basketball, football and volleyball), and noontime shows; f) cultural values such as bahala na, pasyensya, pakikisama, and social relationships such as katsokaran, kakampi, kabarkada, kapatido, kakosa, kamag-anak, kabiruan, kapitbahay, kaklase, etc. Filipinos are able to recognize their social relations and networks as possible vehicles/enablers of corruption or corruptibility. Some analysts even say that the election of Duterte (a choice scorned by much of the West but welcomed by Russia and China) as president is a vote against corruption and disorder. Filipinos are also able to laugh at themselves with common sayings such as, “Pinoy kasi” or “More fun in the Philippines.” But when the negative effects of cultural traits are used as a summation of Filipino
culture/ people, it borders dangerously as cultural stereotyping, with hints of racial bias.

Americans have a lot of jokes that make fun of 'rednecks' and 'blondes' lack of intelligence. American blue-collar workers composed mostly of discontented white males elected Donald Trump as president, a choice that continues to baffle the world. There are thousands of homeless people in most of America's urban centers, high rate of domestic violence, shooting homicides in schools and public places, murders, drug related crimes and killings. Despite this, Americans are able to laugh at themselves (watch Modern family, Big Bang Theory, etc.). And yes, the U.S. is in the top 20 of remittance receiving countries in the world. But no serious academic will claim that American culture is damaged or that Americans have a culture of demotivation.

There is a difference between objective evaluation and panghahamak/ panglalait. Filipinos use pakiramdam to make the distinction. It is worrying that Mulder's claims sometimes hover on cultural insensitivity (kakulangan sa pakiramdam). Academic discussions thrive when people are open to ideas and are sensitive enough to respect dissenting views. For this reason, I highly recommend including the views of nationalist soothsayers.

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Mathews response to Mulder - a personal view

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This lengthy paper sets out to explain with a theoretical framework how it is that the Philippines produced such great men (and women, we assume) during the Spanish period but none so grand since, and that Filipinos generally are not driven to succeed in their home country. In other words, why is there such a culture of demotivation? The author, Niels Mulder, highlights several integrated reasons: a lack of national identity/framework/aspiration; the culture of Philippine public life separated from private life with its great emphasis on family and the “little” tradition; socialization; the psychologization of the dominant type of personality that subscribes to submissiveness, bahala na and pakikisama; and woeful amnesiac education that negates history.

As a critique, the paper presents as somewhat of a rambling collection of thoughts with different styles, at times overly esoteric
and wordy, and not well integrated with the purpose or theoretical framework the author tries to use to explain the nature of Philippine society and culture. The miserable conclusion, of one paragraph, is equally vague and does no justice to drawing together the several threads woven throughout the piece and referring back to the opening paragraphs.

That said, substantively there are some interesting arguments about the contribution of various factors to the alleged indolence of and definite inequality between Filipinos, to each of which I could relate in terms of my own 30 years experience of the country. For instance, and perhaps as the major factor, is an absence of known history—in which the Philippines is not alone. A cab driver in Manila recently lamented to me that none of the younger generation bothered to watch an apparently award winning historical movie about General Luna, saying essentially what Mulder repeats about the poor sense of history and hence politics and civil society that Filipinos generally have. One cannot blame them, in the sense that the way history is taught is as something past and to be forgotten, and, as Mulder points out, any other interpretation would challenge the complacency of the little tradition.

Mention EDSA to many 18 year olds and they know not. Mention Rizal's Noli and they respond with distaste of the “bits they had to read in school” long ago. Mention Ferdinand Marcos and they look at you blankly, and incredulously at the mention of 3,000 pairs of shoes... Mention Prez Duterte (whom I refuse to acknowledge as a compassionate leader) and they applaud. Well, most; but the so-called, fabricated, drug war is beginning to irk.
But take an 18 year old sex worker who has not finished high school who, at the mention of any of the above could give a non-stop verbal largely correct rendition of all that is political. Or a 22 year old cam model who in a TV interview waived the Philippines flag and almost sung the national anthem in answer to a question about her exploitation: she was not concerned about sexual/gender denigration (although perhaps she should have been) by customers, but would not tolerate denigration of Filipinos and the Philippines. And can we ignore the current generation's protests against Marcos' burial and the polity? True, there have been other protests, other cases of resistance, and we do need to ask if they have been successful in effecting long term change. Some things have changed, for 30 or even 20 years ago one would not have so readily encountered such outspoken souls.

While I agree with Mulder that so many are, for whatever reasons, apathetic, have no concept of historical being, or are encultured to be ego-family centred, there are those who digress. Does this give the Philippines hope, or are we to believe in none, because such personas are few, disempowered, and will eventually sink back to local conformity?

But Mulder's argument/s and descriptions are not new. Many sociologists of the 1950s-'60s and beyond (eg. Lynch, Makil, Bulatao) described Philippine life in similar terms; perhaps that continuity of like-observations proves the case that Filipinos are essentially “wriggling, squirming, talking barbarians, and…brown half savages, weak on discipline. If these people don't improve it will show the absolute uselessness of this 'benevolent' business and prove that the only way to manage these people is the way they understand and one to which they will respond much quicker, viz., a show of
force.” (paraphrase of letters by Blaine Moore (a Thomasite) to his parents, 1902-03, (cited in May, 1980: 95).

The problem is that such opinions are blanket views, and tend to become self-fulfilling. While there may be some truth in what Mulder describes and argues, and as my own experiences would support, there are also experiences that run counter to such an easy victim-blaming perspective.

Further, if all is hopeless, as Mulder seems to bemoan, then what possible solutions are there? Mulder himself offers no hope, no way out, so why would he think that Filipinos, who apparently lack critical capacity, think otherwise?

As much as Mulder's arguments to explain the current state of Philippine society and culture are tempting, as they easily gel with one's own experience, they take no account of other accounts.

It is ironic that Mulder states that Filipinos have a colonially-inspired reasoning that presents outsiders as the main movers of Philippine history, yet it is exactly an outsider who is trying in this paper to inspire a change in the history of the Filipino condition. He cites that it was first the Spanish who drove Filipino history, as did the Japanese and Americans; the only time Filipinos took charge and hence gave rise to some great men and women was when, erroneously, they were the “first Asian nation to defeat a Western power” (p. 4). Erroneous because it was the USA who drove out Spain, and thus left it to Japan to take that honour in its defeat of Russia in 1904-05. Erroneous also because the Filipino *ilustrados*
never intended to oust Spain.

Mulder's argument also presupposes the Filipinos' need for a nation in a Western “great” tradition sense, without asking for what purpose?

Overall, the paper ties together in a rather rambling fashion, some of the aspects of Philippine life that are somehow detrimental to the country's development, democracy and nationalism; but these views are not new perspectives, they tend to be victim blaming, and offer no way out other than, it would seem, through external intervention. To adopt such views is easy; to take a different perspective—such as sheer survival as a paramount driving force?—is to side with and understand the little tradition.

Nevertheless, the value of this piece is to raise these age-old questions and indicate the persistence and integration of some traits we all perhaps have experienced and thought about. I believe outsiders have as much right as citizens of the world to contribute to debates in countries not their own; and have no objection to otherwise benignly contributing. But in reading this paper I find that the voice of Filipinos is absent. Ironically, perhaps, that is the very point Mulder makes....

Dr. Paul W. Mathews.
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It is a privilege to have retired to a country that keeps me alert and amazed. In coming to a new place, this can only be expected; the singularity here, though, is that after some thirty years of exposure to Pinoy ways, these still elicit wonder, and, more to the point, steadily draw comment from Filipinos themselves as they exclaim Pinoy kasi or 'Only in the Philippines' when observing the makalusot and extra-judicial ways that are broadly displayed through the privatization of things public.

In “The Philippine Enigma,” I tried to come to a theoretically relevant conclusion of the observations and arguments that I presented in Life in the Philippines; Contextual Essays on Filipino Being (2016, University of the Philippines Press). What struck me as both revealing and exceptional is the absence of civic culture. In introducing the problem of 'Enigma,' however, my off-hand use of 'culture' triggered misunderstanding and exposed me to Galam's justified and to Tondo's more vehement disciplinary upbraiding.

Instead of 'culture,' I should have written 'ambience' or 'social atmosphere'; instead of 'demotivation' 'that is provincial at heart and...
adverse to intellectualism, challenges, competition, and individual ambition.' To put it differently, my “Enigma” is a quest to explore, in phenomenological fashion, the—not necessarily related—elements of a demotivation syndrome. In the ensuing cultural-anthropological bricolage, 'handywork,' I find myself in line with Filipino cultural critics, such as Lorenzo M. Tañada who berated 'our habit of self-delusion' and 'living on rhetoric and ignoring reality,' Claro M. Recto who deplored the spiritual colonization of the Filipino and exposed the folly of entrusting the country to the US of A, Nick Joaquin, Fernando N. Zialcita, Francisco Sionil Jose, Webmaster benign of www.GetRealPhilippines.com, and its columnist Ilda.

At this juncture, it may be appropriate to ponder the mental climate said critics address. In A Question of Heroes, Nick Joaquin analyzes the cultural calamity occasioned by the American betrayal of the Philippine Revolution in 1898, subsequent collaboration of native politicos with the new imperial master and, “more damaging, the counter-revolution of the public school. … By 1914, those who were children in 1901, had grown up into a new generation, the generation of sajones educated wholly in the Americans' public schools, where, in the profoundest way possible, they had been brainwashed, deprived of memory, alienated from their own history, and oriented towards the culture symbolized by Washington, (etc.)” (2005: 227).

Comparing with and observing the Creole elite at the end of the 19th century, Joaquin “is again struck by the natural versatility of the men of that culture. We do wrong to think this unique in Rizal, the quality was richest in him, but was common to his contemporaries. The enigma is how a culture supposedly so oppressive could have
produced men of such varied talents that they seem protean, these manifold approximations of the Renaissance ideal of the universal man. Compared to them, the *ilustrados* produced by the American era look smaller, narrower, more specialized, more provincial” (2005: 168).

The break with the past cut off Philippine becoming, and with it Filipino identity, budding civilization and Revolutionary self-confidence were effectively aborted. Subsequently, the Filipino nation languished in the limbo of self-doubt and self-denigration that plagues it until this very day and that, in its turn, evoked the 'nationalist' myth-making and a-historical self-delusion that saturates schoolbooks and public opinion.

In *Authentic Though not Exotic. Essays on Filipino Identity*, Fernando N. Zialcita presents us with incisive investigations and apt comparisons that convincingly expose 'nationalist' prejudice and historical manipulation (2005; Mulder 2016: 251-55). Such exposing, however, is not popular, which reveals a basic answer to Tañada's 'habit of self-delusion' and Joaquin's “Why are we as a people so disinclined to face up to challenges?” Small children, and with them many adults, prefer fairy tales. Novelists and movie-makers would be out of business if confronting reality were the preference, and so people are comfortable with lullabies that keep them pleasantly asleep. They prefer to indulge in fantasies about the *sinaunang* or original Filipino who predates all contact with the world outside and who, as an enduring moron, roams on in the present without offering any hold on the process of Philippine becoming.
Probably, the challenge of History is a cup too big to swallow in a culture that, according to Joaquin, is distinguished by its “Heritage of Smallness” (2004: 351-67). Filipinos identify with community, relatives, family and friends. In this person-centered area, Filipino civilization is authentic and alive; the world beyond is vague, not reassuring, even as people, willy-nilly, need it. This is complemented by the deficiency of an exemplary center of leading ideas, such as an ideology of nationhood, a doctrine of state, or a credible narrative of becoming that would mold Filipinos into an imagined community. In other words, in the absence of an overarching Great Tradition, the little tradition of the life-world defines identity.

Everyday existence, from the communal down to the familial, is trusted; the big world outside, borderless and un-survey-able, spells what Habermas called *die neue Unübersichtlichkeit* or the 'new obscurity' characteristic of contemporary existence; it inspires uncertainty, anxiety and moral vacuity. In the third section of “The Philippine Enigma”, I illustrated this condition by quoting FSJ's diagnosis of 'our times.'

Section five followed from Joaquin's “Heritage of Smallness”. Whereas the 19th-century *ilustrados* took pride in their civilizational heritage, the break with the past silenced the voice of the Filipino cultural elite, as centuries of contact with the West were undone, and as moral consciousness returned to a primal, 'little-traditional' scope that ignores things 'national' or 'public.'

Put differently, the American Great Tradition that was imposed on the Islands exists in a vacuum and is not organically
connected to lowland Christian culture; the two do not inspire each other and fail to articulate. This disjuncture of ideas is at the root of grave cultural problems, such as doubt about national identity, self-deceiving historical fantasies, the non-development of civic culture, and indifference in regard of the common weal and nation-building. Said disjunction and its consequences naturally affected the intellectual climate that was the subject of section four.

With the above as the setting of socialization, I then attempt to delve into cultural-psychological questions, such as the molding of emotions and dominant personality type, where I was pleasantly surprised to meet again with psychologist Bulatao who, in the 1960s, commented on split-level Christianity that seems to be inspired by the same split between private and public life, or the absence of civic culture that animates my writing. With 'dominant personality' and prevailing socialization practices in an often authoritarian and always hierarchic environment of morally unequal individuals, I did and do not mean that there are no outstanding personalities who are free from 'the heritage of smallness,' Nick Joaquin himself being a prime example, like also the urbane artists Zialcita refers to, and the august circle of public intellectuals and outstanding professionals who, with “the major purpose of promoting Filipino culture as the bedrock of the Filipino nation” (FSJ), recently founded the Academia Filipina; let us pray and hope that this Academia will develop into the exemplary non-partisan cultural center which the ever fission-prone society is in need of if it is ever to grow into a nation.

Several respondents questioned my view of history, so let me qualify my position. In the trail of Joaquin, history in the conventional sense starts with the Spanish advent; from then on, there
is an entity called Pilipinas and the evolution of Philippine society. Naturally, people want to know what was earlier, and, because of the Islands’ relative isolation before contact with Spain, there are piles of information about prehistoric culture and social environment. In the Essay “Retrieving Authenticity” (Mulder 2016: 45-60), I give many instances of how the pre-Hispanic past shines through in mentality and practice of the present, such as the animistic view of things public, clannishness, and, according to Zialcita, *utang-na-loob*.

Several respondents with an interest in migration, such as Galam, Aguirre, and Tondo commented upon “Enigma”. Tondo interpreted my unfortunate phrase ‘culture of demotivation’ as the major motive for migration, which is a view I do not hold. Be that as it may, to her it serves as the call to mount her high horse and to embark on a dissertation on migration and motivation that comprises 11 out of her 20 substantial pages.

According to Galam, “…personal responsibility has long been a staple of the lives and experiences of millions of Filipinos. My own research shows a deeply held conviction among those I have interviewed that there is no future in the country, and that if one wants to enjoy some economic and social mobility, one has to work overseas. Millions of Filipinos have done just that, in search of a better life or future. International migration has been their way of providing for themselves and their families, of realizing their aspirations in life. The provision of jobs and social welfare (education, health) has become the personal responsibility of Filipinos while the state has benefitted in the form of remittances.”
Subsequently, he observes, “Given the importance of the family, and an extended one at that, in the provision of care and well-being to family members in the context of the near-absence of the Philippine state, one could alternatively argue that “the family” is not an institution that separates the private and the public spheres. Instead of reinforcing the gap between the two, the concrete reality of the lives and experiences of many Filipinos would show that the institution of the family mediates them.”

Then, upon a harangue padded with things I neither said nor intended, “Mulder could have also reflected on how, especially for the elites, it is through the family that they have made sense of, and solidified, their place and role in the Filipino nation. Here, the relation between family and nation is not one of separation and antagonism but rather of being inextricably bound up,” which, to me, sounds like a perfect example of the practice of the privatization of things public.

The latter observation is corroborated by “Clearly, for a good number of Filipinos concepts like “citizenship” or “public good” are mere abstractions devoid of evocative potency” (Camposano, 2006, p. 6). This is an observation shared by many. Yet, the present situation could be more coherently rendered simply as the absence of a civic culture --- knowledge, skills, habits and dispositions that enable individuals to situate themselves within a larger society [of] anonymous others and thus think and act for the interest of an abstract public --- stemming from the failure of strong state institutions to develop. We can say that what we have for a state is a veneer of formal rules obscuring a vast and tangled web of personal ties. These in turn are incompatible with the rational-legal rules on which democratic
institutions operate. State institutions continue to frame political engagement, but their formal rules have been extensively reworked in everyday life to suit private ends (ibid., p. 7).

At this point, I should gratefully acknowledge Zialcita and Camposano's advice to use the notion of civic culture such as spelled out here above. Civic culture is the result of the evolution of social life as a process of inclusion, of an expanding mental horizon open to take in the anonymous other and to share the same moral canopy.

With a wonderful “Mulling through Mulder,” Racelis opens a window on the hope-giving evolution of civil society—NGOs, POs, and others—that challenges the status quo and in which private concerns become public issues and in which public issues become private concerns (pp. 4-5). In other words, many non-privileged people are crashing through the divide separating the private from the public and hope that prevailing opportunistic expedience will be brought into the moral sphere of decision-making. In interpreting the early stirrings of civil society in the mid-1960s, Nick Joaquin opined “we are finally getting off the ground and seeing things with fresh eyes” and building a nation (2004: 371-2).

However inspiring Joaquin's vision may be, in this fission-prone milieu, it spells a gigantic enterprise, such as clearly elaborated by Aguirre in pondering the question “How far have Filipinos come in terms of recognizing their sense of self-respect and the value of their culture?” Taking his cues from Enriquez and de Leon, he concludes that pagbabagong-dangal (regaining self-respect as individuals and as a nation) involves not only individual shifts in paradigms but also, and probably more importantly, structural efforts
in recovering the national self-esteem.

“In this respect, I am one with Mulder in calling for a better educational practice in terms of developing assured and critical minds in students. Also, his vision of stronger cultural leadership, to me, should be defined by inclusivity, independence, and multi-sectorality. … This, however, cannot be done without the help of historical consciousness, not as a way to find excuses in the past to clear us of accountability in the present, but to create a means to own explanations that would hopefully lead to understanding.”

Since the importance of historical consciousness is invoked, I should acknowledge Mathews' questioning of my suggestion that, in the course of their Revolution, the Filipinos were the first in Asia 'defeating a Western power'; it would have been more precise to state 'driving out' or 'liberating themselves from' a Western power, even as 'defeating' would still be correct for the Visayas where Spanish forces capitulated to Filipinos. On Luzon, however, Aguinaldo was not up to the task, and was the first in the long line of those to be hoodwinked into putting trust in American intentions (Joaquin 2005; 129-41, “Where did Aguinaldo fail?”).

‘In the Eyes of the Beholder’

If anything, “The Philippine Enigma” occasioned selective readings that range, on the one extreme, from Mathews'smug comments and his curt conclusion “that the voice of Filipinos is absent” to, on the other, Zialcita's recognition that my approach is and has been very phenomenological, that is, “he describes the experience of the world as gleaned from the narratives of his informants,” which is precisely
what I have been doing, namely trying to “disclose the construction of meaning by individuals.”

“The Philippine Enigma” further triggered a shod of scattered remarks that range from Galam's German-inspired admonition to engage in theory-guided research, and from Tondo's fashionable view of a past with monotheism and lively international trade, to Mathew's pot-shot at the current president, and from Galam's irritation when I attributed something positive to tabooed personalities, to Tondo's advice to seriously engage with the Filipino logical credo of the 1990s that called for an inbred view of national becoming, such as Philippine history by Filipinos written for Filipinos in Filipino! As a result, it is hard to see the forest for the trees, to do justice to the avalanche of observations, and the attribution of non-intended intentions and interpretations by respondents who mistake Filipino opinion (= my data) for my personal ideas.

Mea culpa, as the whirlpool of divergent responses may be stirred by my heuristic style of writing that aims at evoking images and recognition in the reader's mind, but that sits not well with those who are less poetically inclined and prefer statistics and graphs. So, on the one hand, I am credited with “being always thought-provoking and refreshingly clear-sighted” (Caroline Hau), and, on the other, criticized with “producing a rant of words-words-words” (Racelis). Because of all this, I thought it best to restate my purpose and position, such as I did under ‘Only in the Philippines’.

Be this as it may, the editor of Sabangan should be complimented for selecting a lead-article that triggered a good deal of reason and
emotion. In a way, this livens up with my experience of living in an intellectual desert, and stands witness to the fact that socio-cultural data always call forth exceptions, such as my erstwhile teacher of anthropology enjoined his students to be alert to.

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