

Matthew Fox's Creation Spirituality: A Response to an Incomplete People Power Revolution

Regina Flor O. Pena*

Assistant Professor, Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila, (University of the City of Manila), General Luna St. corner Muralla St., Intramuros, Manila, 1002 Metro Manila, Philippines

***Corresponding Author:** Regina Flor O. Pena, Assistant Professor, Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila, (University of the City of Manila), General Luna St. corner Muralla St., Intramuros, Manila, 1002 Metro Manila, Philippines. Email: rfopena@plm.edu.ph

ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to situate the state of political affairs of the Philippines three decades or almost 34 years after the 1986 People Power Revolution. This research, with an analytical-descriptive method tries to clarify the place of Creation Spirituality within the context of the majority of the Filipino still living in poverty three decades after EDSA People Power I. I argued here that one way to respond to this 'unfinished revolution' of social transformation is to reawaken the spirituality in politics as argued within the context of Matthew Fox's Creation Spirituality.

Keywords: Politics, People Power, Creation Spirituality, Matthew Fox

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I started with the overview of the current state of poverty faced by most Filipinos. I utilized, as the backdrop of this research paper, the rise to power of our incumbent president Rodrigo Duterte as a result of the long standing democratic deficit that occur despite the high hopes of democratic restoration in 1986 EDSA People Power Revolution.

The major objective of this research work is to revisit the state of political affairs of our country three decades after, or almost 34 years after the 1986 People Power Revolution. The EDSA People Power Revolution is considered by contemporary political scientists as an incomplete process thereby placing our country in a problematic state of poverty among a significant number of Filipinos. Accordingly, this paper proposes a continuation of this revolution as it identifies a concrete response to this unfinished revolution of social transformation, by way of Matthew Fox's Creation Spirituality.

A Neglected Public

Impoverished Filipino public was described as "neglected" in an article written by Arguelles entitled, "The Rise and Rise of Rodrigo Duterte" published last December 25, 2016 by Asia Times (Arguelles, 2016).

Arguelles argued that this neglected and impoverished Filipino public had elected into power President Rodrigo Duterte due to the long standing democratic deficit of a nation who restored the very spirit of democracy in EDSA People Power Revolution of 1986.

The post-Marcos leadership has failed to solve many of the problems that concern Filipinos. Despite promising national growth rates, the gains appear to have largely benefited the rich. More than 26 million Filipinos remain impoverished. This widening gap between rich and poor, recurrent domestic economic crises, epidemic levels of corruption and failed attempts to significantly reduce criminality, have left the public deeply frustrated (Arguelles, 2016). Conclusively, more than 30 years after EDSA People Power I, instead of moving forward, the public felt neglected because the quality of life got even worse.

CREATION SPIRITUALITY

Creation Spirituality is defined as an honoring all of creation as Original Blessing. It integrates the wisdom of Eastern and Western spirituality and global indigenous cultures, with the emerging scientific understanding of the universe and the passion of creativity. It is both a tradition and a movement, celebrated by mystics and agents of social change from every

age and culture. It is also the tradition of the historical Jesus himself since it is the wisdom tradition of Israel (Fox, n.d.).

What then is the place of Creation Spirituality within the context of the majority of the Filipino still living in poverty three decades after EDSA People Power I? The points raised by Arguelles in his article might have given a good look as to what brought Duterte to power but it led me to think hard and linger on the strongest point it stirred on me as a Filipino: 'the revolution is incomplete'. In fact, the original title of the article when it was first published by The Conversation.com was "How the Philippines' incomplete 'People Power' revolution paved the way for Rodrigo Duterte"(Arguelles, 2016).

The gap or incompleteness of the revolution had resulted to a backward and even worse experience of a people who fought hard for social transformation. This backwardness or regression in the general welfare of the Filipino public resembles what Matthew Fox described of politics when he said that "a politics that has been totally secularized and totally anthropocentrized will never lead anywhere but backward" (Fox, 1994). A politician with only an outer life will be buffeted by the winds of selfish propaganda and money grabbing and will become a pawn for the power brokers of a discredited machine-age mind-set instead of serving the people (Fox, 1994).

The brand of Philippine politics continues to showcase selfish and money-grabbing politicians. Corruption, cronyism and nepotism remained to be a serious problem in the Philippines. The Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) has curated, sorted and analyzed pages and pages of the Commission on Audit's Annual Audit Reports (COA AARs) which showed a trail of pork barrel misuse under President Benigno Aquino III infected by the same corruption that marked the trail of pork barrel misuse of his predecessor Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (Mangahas, 2015). In fact, from 1979 to November 2016, there have been 10,094 cases of malversation and 7,968 cases of graft filed against public officials before the Sandiganbayan. They make up half, (53.59%) of the 33,772 corruption cases received by the special court in that time period. According to Sandiganbayan data as of November 2016, there are currently 4,164 cases pending the court's decision, excluding a couple of high-profile charges it already dismissed in December 2016 and early January of 2017 (Buan, 2017).

Digging deeper, in the area of infrastructure development, corruption and inefficiency have long marred public-works contracts. In 2009, for instance, PCIJ reported that Arroyo's rush to roll out projects resulted in obscure contractors bagging billion-peso worth of contracts even though there wasn't enough proof that they were capable of doing quality work (Mangahas, 2018).

Eight years later, with Duterte at the helm, contractors with a history of blacklisting, registration revocation, graft cases, poor performance, and political ties have again emerged as the top firms moving earth to open roads to traffic. (Mangahas, 2018).

Henceforth, this kind of corruption in road projects has lingered under the Duterte government. In a 2017 dialogue conducted by the Construction Industry Authority of the Philippines (CIAP), "politics and political intervention" still emerged as a key concern among contractors. The situation, according to one former government official, even "discourages good and honest contractors from doing projects in certain regions where contractors are designated as project takers." (Mangahas, 2018).

How then can we respond to this political malaise that continues to place majority of the Filipinos in a poor state of welfare? A paradigm shift, a revolution by way of Creation Spirituality is the response to this unfinished battle. This major shift of perspective calls for workers in the political arena to redefine a totally anthropocentrized and secularized paradigm which has long been tried and failed (Fox, 1994).

This is a revolution that calls all of us to act. Creation spirituality as a perspective recognized the great work that has to be carried out in politics. St. Thomas Aquinas sees politics as the fulfillment of the command to "love your neighbor" on the greatest scale possible. He writes that in politics we consider "the ultimate end of human life" and that there is something godlike about politics so conceived (Fox, 1994, p. 164). Needless to say, a politician who does not engage in some kind of a spiritual practice is not in a position to lead (Fox, 1994).

SPIRITUALITY IN POLITICS

In 1992, Al Gore published his book entitled, *Earth in Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit*. In this book, Al Gore takes a courageous stand on renewing the vocation of politics by way of an ecological and cosmological spirituality. According to Al Gore, his work on

nuclear arms control served to concentrate his mind on some of the larger purposes of politics. He saw the link between ecology and politics. Ecology is the study of balance, and some of the same principles that govern the healthy balance of elements in the global environment also apply to the healthy balance of forces making up the political system. And in his opinion, this system is on the verge of losing its essential equilibrium (Fox, 1994).

In a system of politics that lost its equilibrium, the only cure to this ailment is spirituality. Al Gore realized that as he deeply searched for the roots of the global environmental crisis, the more convinced he became that it is an outer manifestation of an inner crisis that is, according to him, 'spiritual'. Thus, politicians with a sense of ecology, cosmology, and spirituality must enter the so-called mainstream politics (Fox, 1994). But how? This is the continuing work of revolution that I think every Filipino, or every citizen from all parts of the world must be engaged. This is the big battle that we all need to fight for.

POLITICS IS EVERYBODY'S CONCERN

Revisioning the work of politics as Al Gore has done is a great hope and a great challenge. Matthew Fox outlines what I think are essential basic steps to carry out this important work. First, it is important that we do not allow our politics to be defined solely in terms of "professionals" such as politicians or elected government officials. Second, we need to move politics away from the massive expense of playing the media game. Third, politics is too important a work to be left to an elite. All of us need to be committed to this task of re-shaping our politics (Fox, 1994).

It is a fact that the changes in our society are direct outcomes of politics. From the price regulation of products to the construction of new schools to the introduction of new laws and legislations. In this sense, everything in a nation is influenced by politics (Lemauricien, n.d.). Accordingly, we can say that positive social change can take place when we begin to realize that politics is a work that is never for the few chosen ones. It is for all who strive to participate in spiritual work. Politics in a real sense is spiritual. Politics is a divine work of public service which caters for people's needs, hopes and aspirations.

Response to the Unfinished Revolution

The fulfilment or failure of this task will largely spell out our future as a people. What will be the

state of the majority of the Filipinos in terms of their well-being is in each of us. Our commitment is not to ourselves alone but to the future. Thus, young people with high hopes and ideas ought to flock the life of politics in order to renew it (Fox, 1994). The resurgence of these breed of young people is evident as they are now at the frontline of relevant issues on human rights, politics and the environment. Just recently, the Time magazine has chosen Greta Thunberg, a Swedish climate crisis activist, as person of the year. Greta Thunberg is the youngest individual to be recognized. She gained international attention for strongly criticizing world leaders for their inaction in the climate crisis in a viral speech she made at the UN Climate Action Summit in September (Flynn, 2019).

In E.F. Schumacher's work entitled, *Guide for the Perplexed* (1977), he stressed that "self-awareness, which constitutes the difference between animal and man, is a power of unlimited potential, a power that not only makes man human, but gives him the possibility, even the need to become superhuman.... 'to be properly human, you must go beyond the merely human'."

With this, the next step becomes inevitable, the developing of the instrument of man to go beyond being merely human. That is, developing the instrument of seeing and understanding the truth that does not merely inform the mind but liberates the soul.

As described by Matthew Fox, *Creation Spirituality* is a kind of watering hole for persons whose passion has been touched, by issues of the day --- deep ecologists, ecumenists, artists, native peoples, justice activists and a whole lot more.

REFERENCES

- [1] Arguelles, C. (2016). The Rise and Rise of Rodrigo Duterte. Retrieved from [http:// www.atimes.com/article/rise-rise-rodrido-duterte/](http://www.atimes.com/article/rise-rise-rodrido-duterte/).
- [2] Arguelles, C. (2016). How the Philippines' 'incomplete' People Power revolution paved the way for Rodrigo Duterte. Retrieved from <https://theconversation.com/search?q=Arguelles>.
- [3] Buan, Lian. (2017, January 22). Tracking Sandiganbayan: Who's who is PH's biggest corruption cases. Retrieved from: [https:// www.rappler.com/newsbreak/159148-biggest-corruption-cases-sandiganbayan-graft-plunder-malversation](https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/159148-biggest-corruption-cases-sandiganbayan-graft-plunder-malversation).
- [4] Flynn, Kerry. (11 December 2019). Time Person of the Year: Climate crisis activist Greta

Matthew Fox's Creation Spirituality: A Response to an Incomplete People Power Revolution

- Thunberg. Retrieved from [https:// edition. cnn. com/2019/12/11/media/time-person-of-the-year-2019/index.html](https://edition.cnn.com/2019/12/11/media/time-person-of-the-year-2019/index.html)
- [5] Fox, Matthew. (1991). *Creation Spirituality*, New York: Harper San Francisco.
- [6] Fox, M. (n.d.). *Creation Spirituality*. Retrieved from <http://www.matthewfox.org/what-is-creation-spirituality/>.
- [7] Fox, M. (1994). *The Reinvention of Work: A New Vision of Livelihood for our Time*. New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 165.
- [8] Lemaucien.com (n.d.). Why we should be concerned with politics. Retrieved from: [http:// www. lemaucien.com/article/why-we-should-all-be-concerned-politics](http://www. lemaucien.com/article/why-we-should-all-be-concerned-politics)
- [9] Mangahas, Malou. (2015, August 17). PCIJ finds same patterns of pork misuse under PNoy gov't. Retrieved from: <http://news.abs-cbn.com/nation/08/17/15/pcij-finds-same-patterns-pork-misuse-under-pnoy-govt>.
- [10] Mangahas, Malou, et. al. (2018, September 3). 'BUILD, BUILD, BUILD' HITS CHOKEPOINTDPWH under Duterte: Corruption, politics, slippage mar many projects. Retrieved from: <https://pcij.org/article/1401/dpwh-under-duterte-corruption-politics-slippage-mar-many-projects>.
- [11] Ramirez, Mina M. Ph.D. (2017). *A Transformative Way of Doing Research*, Manila: Asian Social Institute.
- [12] Schumacher, E. F. (1977). *Guide for the Perplexed*, New York: Harper Perennial..

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Regina Flor O. Peña is an Assistant Professor at the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences of the *Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila* (University of the City of Manila). She earned her Master in Religious Studies at the Don Bosco Center of Studies an Affiliate of the Universita Pontificia Salesiana, Rome (magna cum laude). She obtained her Bachelor of Arts in Political Science (cum laude) from the University of the Philippines, Manila. She previously served as the Chairperson of the Department of Social Sciences and Humanities, College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences of the *Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila* (University of the City of Manila).

Citation: Regina Flor O. Pena. "Matthew Fox's Creation Spirituality: A Response to an Incomplete People Power Revolution". (2020). *International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies*, 7(1), pp.25-28

Copyright: © 2020 Regina Flor O. Pena. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.