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covid-19 lockdown

quarantine reflections

sze-tao

March 30, 2020

“This is not martial law. Our enemy is the virus.”

— some poor politician in Malacañang (living a simple life & shops at Jaeger-LeCoult¹)

Inhale slowly 1001, 1002, 1003, 1004. exhale slowly 1001, 1002, 1003, 1004.

We are in 1984. the Marcos nightmare is back.

This is a practice of our social conditioning. a social conditioning to authoritarianism and its ultimate dream: *an authoritarian society*.

Poverty is a social condition that is characterized by the lack of resources necessary for basic survival or to meet a certain minimum level of living standards expected for each of us. This is us (Filipinos) being discriminated. And if you stretch your imagination, this is Class War.

Everyone is molded into accepting the discrimination we all experience every day and to eventually give control of our lives to

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¹ *Shoppers mob, take selfies with Duterte in upscale mall.* Virgil Lopez. GMA News Online. May 7, 2018. www.gmanetwork.com

the government and its cronies. We are not simply asked to obey the rules that military personnel and politicians have outlined for us but to stop questioning them. Blind obedience spelled *#sumunodlangkayo* [just obey].

That is the goal of this lockdown, enhanced community quarantine and 8PM to 5AM curfew hours. It is not de facto martial law, it's simply *Martial Law*.

When the current president regurgitates from enforcing a community quarantine to an 'enhanced' community quarantine and finally to 'extreme enhanced' community quarantine; your eyes blink in confusion. As the excuses and denials about enforcing Martial Law accumulates, Duterte assigns all retired army generals (not doctors/medical personnel) to the committee for the "Covid-19 National Action Plan." Finally, the granting of 'Special Powers' via the signing of "Bayanihan Act of 2020" seals the autocratic hand that will address the crisis spawned by COVID-19 pandemic.

Ultimately, authoritarianism is a personality trait² that reflects certain values, preferring social conformity over personal autonomy. *And this is where the anarchists come to play.*

We are under attack. our humanity is being attacked. Our fundamental attitudes towards the world: conformity versus autonomy, nurture or discipline is *forced* into our being.

The imposition of community passes, illegal arrests of curfew violators, nationwide relief goods distribution corruptions, privileged/VIP prioritization, suppression of press freedom and later an overall murder of dissent (online or offline) are mere consequences.

It is not unusual for us to burst in anger for the daily assault on our human rights while we are contemplating our own fear, our life in danger amidst this imposed isolation. Most, if not all of us have long accepted the inability of governments worldwide to provide

² *The Authoritarian Personality*. Adorno, Levinson, Sanford, & Frenkel-Brunswik. 1950.

all our needs in crisis. And yes, we have long understood the limits of capitalism and its unhealthiness to our planet.

So, we are anarchists. Descendants of geographer Kropotkin who advised that the basic biological drive to mutual aid is definitive of humans; that the not so visible side of success in species survival is in collaboration with other species. Anthropologists have long discovered that primitive societies have *almost always* practiced some form of 'gift economies' (whose competitive drive is not to accumulate goods but give them away!³) and have preferred to share resources. That what really matters is the relations between people, that exchange is about creating friendships or working out rivalries.

How does it apply here? When a *question about status of testing kits to address the COVID-19 cases becomes a platform for creative poems*⁴ and other creative pursuits; we nod our heads in agreement. We do not need to bury the state further down the rabbit hole, they've done it a long, long, long time ago. In crisis, anarchist values get activated. You just need to look around, we're at work (or play) and getting away with doing the things we love. And yes, this a rhetoric. We are everywhere.

³ *The Gift: The form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*. Marcel Mauss. 2002. libcom.org

⁴ *'The Kit': Duterte's ramblings at COVID-19 press conference are now creative poems*. Jeline Malasig. Interaksyon. March 10, 2020 www.interaksyon.com