



## THE OPERATION OF IMMANUEL KANT'S CRITIQUE OF *PRACTICAL* REASON IN THE STUDY OF THE LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY FILIPINO ELITES

*Emmanuel Jeric A. Albela*

*College of Arts and Sciences, University of the Philippines Manila, Philippines*

*Email address: ejaalbela@gmail.com*

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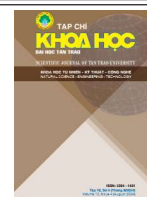
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### Abstract:

In this study, the researcher will investigate the Filipino elite from 1896 to 1901 using Immanuel Kant's Critique of Practical Reason. The researcher will utilize the historical method, particularly the Descriptive-Narrative-Analytic Method, which will be followed by Kantian hermeneutics of the text. It examines the elite's role during key moments of the Philippine Revolution, beginning with the 1896 Cry of Balintawak, which marked the start of the campaign for independence, and continuing through the establishment of the Malolos Republic in 1898 and the capture of President Emilio Aguinaldo in 1901. The paper attempts to incorporate Kant's work into the concept of late 19<sup>th</sup>-century elite Filipinos. It also tries to bring out if the conception also had a notion of moral growth and whether it changed the attitude, behavior, and mindset of the entire Filipino society in their next struggles for the recognition of independence in 1946. The analysis shows that while the elite held considerable power, their lack of Kantian goodwill and failure to follow the categorical imperative weakened the Revolution's unity. Often prioritizing personal interests over the common good, these elites compromised the collective pursuit of independence. Kant's emphasis on duty highlights these ethical failings, which ultimately contributed to the Revolution's failure and left a lasting impact on Filipino society. This study underscores the importance of ethical leadership and reminds us that true progress depends on leaders committed to universal moral principles and the welfare of all.



## ỨNG DỤNG PHÊ PHÁN LÝ TÍNH THỰC HÀNH CỦA *IMMANUEL KANT* TRONG NGHIÊN CỨU GIỚI TÍNH HOA PHILIPPINES CUỐI THẾ KỶ XIX

*Emmanuel Jeric A. Albela*

*Trường Đại học Nghệ thuật và Khoa học, Đại học Malina, Philippines*

*Địa chỉ email: ejaalbela@gmail.com*

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### Từ khóa:

### Tóm tắt

Nghiên cứu này xem xét giới tính hoa Philippines giai đoạn 1896–1901 dưới góc nhìn của Phê phán lý tính thực hành của Immanuel Kant. Tác giả áp dụng phương pháp nghiên cứu lịch sử, đặc biệt là phương pháp mô tả - tường thuật - phân tích, kết hợp với diễn giải Kantian đối với các văn bản. Bài viết phân tích vai trò của giới tính hoa trong những thời điểm quan trọng của Cách mạng Philippines, bắt đầu từ Tiếng hét Balintawak năm 1896 sự kiện khởi đầu cuộc đấu tranh giành độc lập, đến sự thành lập Cộng hòa Malolos năm 1898 và kết thúc với việc Tổng thống Emilio Aguinaldo bị bắt năm 1901. Nghiên cứu tìm cách tích hợp tư tưởng Kant vào bối cảnh giới tính hoa Philippines cuối thế kỷ XIX, đồng thời đánh giá liệu khái niệm này có bao hàm sự phát triển đạo đức cũng như tác động đến thái độ, hành vi và tư duy của toàn bộ xã hội Philippines trong các cuộc đấu tranh giành độc lập tiếp theo, đặc biệt là vào năm 1946. Kết quả phân tích cho thấy, mặc dù giới tính hoa nắm giữ quyền lực đáng kể, nhưng sự thiếu vắng thiện chí Kantian và việc không tuân theo mệnh lệnh tuyệt đối đã làm suy yếu tính thống nhất của cuộc cách mạng. Khi đặt lợi ích cá nhân lên trên lợi ích chung, họ đã làm tổn hại đến mục tiêu tập thể giành độc lập. Sự nhấn mạnh của Kant vào nghĩa vụ đạo đức đã làm nổi bật những sai lầm này, góp phần dẫn đến thất bại của cách mạng và để lại những ảnh hưởng lâu dài đối với xã hội Philippines. Nghiên cứu này nhấn mạnh tầm quan trọng của lãnh đạo đạo đức, đồng thời nhắc nhở rằng tiến bộ thực sự phụ thuộc vào những nhà lãnh đạo cam kết với các nguyên tắc đạo đức phổ quát và sự phồn vinh của toàn thể nhân dân.

## 1. Introduction

### Background of Filipino Elites in Philippine History

The concept of nobility in the Philippines long ago existed, even before Western influences came into the country. *Barangay*<sup>1</sup>, the political unit of the ancient Filipinos, already had a set of social classes. The *Datu* and his family or families would be the highest, followed by the *maginoo*<sup>2</sup> Ilustrado or the class of nobilities. Other classes such as the *timawa* (commoners) and the *alipins* (slaves) complete the social classes in one barangay. When the Spaniards colonized the Philippines, they imposed a centralized bureaucratic style of government; thus, it changed the social structure of the natives, and they had to get along with the others and the Spaniards who lived in the Philippines. The “nobility” class under the Spaniards was hardly associated with the natives because most of them ruled in the country. The term Filipino during the 16th-18th century Philippines was not even related to the country’s natives. It was another term used for the *Insulares* or the Spanish-born in the Philippines.

During the Galleon Trade years, the native Filipinos could hardly participate in the trade. They mostly participated in shipbuilding stationed

at several key points in the colony. As usual, the Chinese Mestizos always engaged in the trade. In this case, the nobility status was always attributed to those Spaniards born both in the peninsula and in the islands or coming from the Mestizos (half-Spanish descendants) that became endemic in the Philippine social strata. The definition of the “elite class” would come into the scene when the Spaniards opened Manila and Lingayen in Pangasinan for world trade. The year 1836 marked the start of capital trade in the country’s history. Little by little, many were allowed to participate in the business and develop their small pieces of an enterprise. The Filipinos joined the trade, later giving rise to a new class, the *Principalia*.

The *Principalia*, or the middle class, was where the Ilustrado came from. The rapid pace of trade became most evident when the Suez Canal opened, which shortened the travel time of goods and services and the distance between the Philippines and Spain. From three (3) months of way travel, it has been shortened to only one (1) month. It was noted by Teodoro Agoncillo, one of the country’s most prominent historians, that the canal’s opening led to the exodus of Spanish immigrants to the islands and then to the introduction of ideas and books (Agoncillo, *The Revolt of the Masses: the Story of Bonifacio and the Katipunan*, 2017). Here, the Filipinos started to have access to Liberalism. However, before the canal’s opening, there were already Filipinos who went to Spain, and most of them studied there and had exposure to Liberal activities, which became a routine of the students in most universities there and in other universities in Europe. This had come into possibility because of the privileged status of the *Principalia* class. With their money, they could send their children to Spain to study. The children of this *Principalia* class will give birth to the *Ilustrado*<sup>3</sup> alternatively, the “enlightened one.”

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1 In history, it is a political unit in the ancient Philippines. From the term *Balangay* – a boat or ship that used by ancient Filipinos in navigating the seas. The father of Philippine Archeology, Henry Otley Beyer described it as the ships used by the *Malays* at the period of migration of Austronesians in the islands of the Philippines (see the *Waves of Migration Theory* by Beyer). From the description, one balangay can compose of 30-100 families thus describes the composition of each barangay in most significant places in the Pre-Hispanic Philippines. It is usually headed by a Datu or Chieftain and among with him is his family or families alongside with other families. It practices a unique class system to identify their roles in a barangay easily.

2 The Maginoo is considered the nobility class of the ancient barangay system of the Filipinos. The family of the Datu are also probably being classified in this social class. In Visayan term, it is tumao and in Kapampangan known as ginu. See William Henry Scott’s *Barangay: sixteenth-century Philippine culture and society*.

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3 The *Ilustrado*, or the enlightened ones were composed of Filipino educated class that became prominent in the 19th century. They were considered at that time as the new middle class of the society that received their education from Spain and later became exposed to

They were the young Filipinos who became active in the Reform Movement in Spain in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, asking Mother Spain for the necessary changes in the administration of their colony – the Philippine Islands. Members of this group will now define the new breed of *elites* in the country's history. Some of the names associated with this group are considered the nation's heroes today, like Graciano Lopez Jaena, Marcelo H. Del Pilar, Antonio and Juan Luna, and even the National Hero Jose Rizal. Other members of this group, however, became known in history because of their participation in the country's rapid changes of events, especially during the Philippine Revolution (1896-1901). Doubts have tainted Their role because as they became vital to the success of the revolution against the foreign colonizers, they were also branded as traitors by some and pointed out as the very reason why the revolution fell apart against the colonizers in 1901. In many works of literature in Philippine History, their status was always critical and became one of the fundamental questions on why the campaign of the Filipinos against the aggressors had gone to failure.

In this paper, the researcher would like to assess and investigate these so-called Filipino elites and how their vested interests significantly affected the campaign of the Filipinos for freedom by using Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*. The researcher attempts to determine if the conception also had a notion of moral growth and whether it changed the attitude, behavior, and

mindset of the entire Filipino society in its next struggles to recognize independence in 1946.

## 2. Research Gap and Objectives

While various historical works have analyzed the influence of Filipino elites, few studies have examined their actions through a moral-philosophical lens, particularly Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*. Previous studies by historians like Teodoro Agoncillo focus on the *Ilustrados'* political and economic motivations but lack a thorough exploration of whether these elites' actions met universal ethical standards. This gap reveals a need to analyze the Filipino elite's behavior during the revolution to understand if their actions align with Kantian principles of universal moral duty or merely represent self-interest. As such, the research paper is guided by and structured according to the following objectives:

1. To examine the behavior and decision-making of Filipino elites during the Philippine Revolution through Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*, evaluating if their actions align with Kantian ideals of universal ethical duty.
2. To assess the impact of the Filipino elites' vested interests on the broader revolutionary effort, exploring whether their actions supported or hindered the campaign for independence.
3. To determine if the ethical decisions of the Filipino elites contributed to moral growth in Filipino society, affecting the attitudes and aspirations for independence in the years leading to 1946.

### SPECIFIC CONCEPT: The Definition of Filipino Elite

The term "elite" has various definitions. Generally, it refers to individuals considered the "chosen ones" or "cream of the crop," often seen as the socially higher class or those wielding influence due to position or education. Historically, during the height of global trade in the 19th century, "elite" described the upper echelons who

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Spanish liberalism and had sought European nationalist ideas and ideals. The *Ilustrado* class were usually the children of the *Principalia* class - because of their money and status in the society, they were able to send these children to Spanish educational institutions thus it born the Filipino intellectuals (for some they were known as the "rich intelligentsia"). The class was also from the people who cut across ethnolinguistic and racial origins like *Indios*, *Insulars*, and the *Mestizos* and later campaigned for the reforms in the Philippines under Spain. They were also considered as key figures to the development of Filipino nationalism in the 19th century. See Megan Christine Thomas' *Orientalists, Propagandists, and Ilustrados: Filipino Scholarship and the End of Spanish Colonialism*, p. 213.

profited from capitalism and held noble or ruling positions.

In the Philippine context, the 19th-century elite, or *Ilustrado*, were educated Filipinos who, due to their status and wealth, became key players in society and the reform movement. However, not all elites acted uniformly; while some pursued economic self-interest, others showed a commitment to nationalism and aligned with the masses, as noted by historian Teodoro Agoncillo. Agoncillo describes a complex relationship where certain elites, despite their privileged status, genuinely supported the Revolution, reflecting their alignment with the masses' struggle for independence.

In Teodoro Agoncillo's '*Revolt of the Masses: The Story of Bonifacio and the Katipunan*,' he defined the masses in several ways. In the Critique of Nicolas Zafra, he attacked Agoncillo in categorizing the masses during the time of the revolution and accused Agoncillo of sparing the "middle class" who was also called the 'intellectual class.' For Agoncillo, Zafra generalized and misinterpreted his claims. In response to Zafra's critique, Agoncillo wrote the *Four Girls and A Man*, published in the Manila Times from 19 to 27 October 1956. Here, Agoncillo responded to the categories of the definition of masses from the critique of Zafra. Zafra extracted the claims of Agoncillo to define the masses in his book. Here are the following:

1. the broad masses (who) groaned and grew numb under the spell of poverty and profound ignorance.

2. those unsophisticated minds who could not see the various possibilities that might accompany of a mode of action.

3. the group of aggressive and nationalistic elements of the population.

4. the victims of subtle or overt exploitation who were not accustomed to the intricacies of the rational processes, etcetera.

5. the ignorant and starving... confused, hopeless, abused, and;

6. the lowest class. (Agoncillo, *Four Girls and a Man*, 1956)

Teodoro Agoncillo, in his defense, said that none of these statements contradicted each other, as Zafra claimed. He also said that it is not a mistaken identity in any pair; in fact, they should be treated as complementary to one another, as they together constitute a definition of the masses by enumeration.

Antonio Hila, in *The Historicism of Teodoro Agoncillo*, complements Agoncillo's perspective, noting that Zafra's critique underscored various "historical distortions" and "inaccuracies" (Hila, 2001). Hila argues that intellectual status alone does not equate to belonging to the elite class that undermined the revolution. Figures like Apolinario Mabini, Emilio Jacinto, and General Antonio Luna, although intellectuals and sometimes regarded as elites, displayed loyalty to the revolutionary cause, aligning with the masses' nationalist aspirations rather than acting out of self-interest. In the case of Apolinario Mabini and Emilio Jacinto, they were called intellectuals and may be defined sometimes as part of the elite, but their roots and even their mindset towards the masses can hardly say that they are part of the middle class who cared only for their vested interests instead of defending the nation from tyranny. The same can be said for Gen. Antonio Luna who had shown great dedication in defending the country's independence from the American colonizers

Milagros Guerrero, in her article *The Provincial and Municipal Elites of Luzon During the Revolution, 1898-1902*, details how many elites initially resisted the revolution between 1896 and 1898, fearing it would jeopardize their wealth and privileged status (Guerrero, 1982). Doubting the revolution's potential for success, these elites aligned with the Spaniards to protect their assets. Yet, as the masses began to secure victories in Central Luzon, elites shifted allegiance to avoid becoming targets of the revolutionary forces. In



Zambales, for example, revolutionary leaders Teodoro and Doroteo Pansacula advocated for common ownership (*Comunidad de bienes*) and redistribution of wealth, a radical idea that unsettled the elites, pushing them to support Spanish efforts against the rebellion. This trend continued under Aguinaldo's leadership, as prominent elites negotiated ceasefires to mitigate the economic impact of the conflict. However, after Aguinaldo's temporary exile following the Biak-na-Bato truce, some elites in the Philippines suspected that Spanish rule would soon be restored, reaffirming their loyalty to the colonial regime. Guerrero, in the same article, discussed the '*turn coating of the elites*' after Aguinaldo left the country for Hong Kong as she stressed:

When rumors of Spanish-American war reached Manila, and the provinces on 22 April 1898, this feeling of confidence was buoyed by protestations of loyalty from Aguinaldo's lieutenants who were quick to offer their services to Basilio Agustin, the Spanish governor created a Filipino militia which incorporated some of the Aguinaldo's military leaders. He also created a consultative assembly, which included the cream of the Philippine elite: Pedro Paterno, Ambrosio Rianzares Bautista, T.H. Pardo de Tavera, Joaquin Gonzales, Maximo Paterno, Ariston Bautista, and Cayetano Arellano. (Guerrero, 1982)

However, sooner or later, these efforts of the elites came to an end because Aguinaldo and his friends came back to the Philippines on 31 May 1898, and on 12 June 1898, he declared the independence of the Philippines. Two days after the declaration of independence, they even sent Aguinaldo a proposal from the Spanish governor of autonomy, but Aguinaldo simply replied, "*Tanghali na kayo*," which means "you're pretty late," because Aguinaldo reassured the revolutionaries that the Americans would help the Filipinos to eliminate the Spanish forces in the Philippines. Here, the elites quickly turned to Aguinaldo and abandoned their autonomy plans with Spain in the Philippines.

The elite participation in the Philippine Revolution was noticed at the time of the second phase (1898-1902), and it was those years that created a significance on the postwar agreement and settlement between the elites and the new colonizers, the Americans. The elites will occupy essential positions in Aguinaldo's government because the president of the newly established republic believes, although he already knew the characteristics and behavior of this group, that this class will help the government in its formation of the entire bureaucratic system, their 'intelligence factor' will be needed in the organization of the Philippine Republic, and their money could be a big help in the government. This could be observable in the formation of the Congress in Malolos, where most of the elites occupied the seats in the Congress. The constitution that was framed was also a product of their efforts. Thus, Mabini already suspected, because as he observed the constitution, that this could be a total control on their part because the legislative part of it requires more power than the executive department where the president's office resides.

However, months later, it became clear to Felipe Buencamino, another prominent elite character during the revolution, that the revolution of the Filipinos did not have the support of the United States; he would soon, little by little, go after the interests of the Americans in the Philippines. This was also learned by the other elites in Luzon, and as expected, they also did what Buencamino did. However, they couldn't just withdraw their support to President Aguinaldo because they also knew that the president still had the support of the entire Tagalog region during that time. Even the Ilocanos still supported the president in his revolutionary ideas. For the elites, there is still a chance for the revolutionaries to dislodge the Americans from Manila. As Guerrero mentioned in the same article:

...thus, while the cosmopolitan elite, was doubtful that the Revolution would succeed, they extended their support to Aguinaldo. The latter, acutely aware of the lack of talents among the

active insurgent leaders, invited the wealthy and educated Filipinos to serve in the government. (Guerrero, 1982)

However, when the elites learned that a settlement was already agreed by the Spaniards and Americans on 13 August 1898 and ceded the governance from Diego de los Rios to Wesley Merrit and the consecutive losses suffered by the revolutionaries against the American forces, these elites secretly dealt with the Americans. The turning point was the unfortunate assassination of General Antonio Luna in Cabanatuan and later the fall of the young General Gregorio del Pilar in Tirad Pass. Soon, the elites were now turning to the side of the Americans. In fact, before the tragedies in the Philippine Revolution, they even proposed to Congress and the cabinet that the Philippines should accept the offer of autonomy under the protection of the Americans. Also, at the fall of Aguinaldo to the hands of General Frederick Funston and the Americans on 23 March 1901, these elites had finally secured their positions and economic security, now under the realm of the Americans. Moreover, the fall of Aguinaldo also signified the end of the Filipinos' campaign to defend the won independence in 1898.

From the given discussion, this paper clarifies that the elite that would like to be discussed and put in the lens of Kant's Critique of Practical Reason were the Filipino Elites who had several occasions of turn coating their loyalties that became a critical part of the Philippine Revolution. The role they played and the decisions they made sealed the fate of the Filipinos' campaign for freedom and independence.

#### **THE FILIPINO ELITE IN THE LENS OF IMMANUEL KANT'S CRITIQUE OF PRACTICAL REASONING**

Given the definition from the previous discussion, we can now investigate if the so-called Filipino (turn coating) elites fall under the Moral Philosophy of Kant and whether these Filipino elites during the height of the Philippine Revolution had shown the qualities evinced by

Kant's categorical imperative. If there was an element of goodwill in their decisions, acted on a maxim that benefited the entire nation, or embodied teleological ethics.

In this paper, the researcher uses the moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* in the case of the Filipino elites who had a significant role in the period of the Philippine Revolution from 1896 to 1902. Their character, behavior, and attitude became critical, which sealed the outcome of the Revolution. The researcher used the *Critique of Practical Reason* to examine whether these Filipino elites fall on Kant's moral philosophy.

Immanuel Kant's Critique of Practical Reason argues that the principles are in subjective form (maxims) if only one person believes them. On the other hand, if every rational being thinks or considers them, it falls on the objective form. The imperative can be hypothetical or categorical. A hypothetical imperative needs a course of action to attain a specified outcome. For example, "If I don't want to stay hungry, then I should bring food with me." On the other hand, categorical imperative needs a certain course of action under all probable circumstances; for example, "No person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law."

Kant discussed the hypothetical imperatives answered to wants or desires, while categorical imperatives establish rationality. Subjective principles and hypothetical imperatives are practically oriented; it could not be a fundamental determiner of moral motivation because they only operate in self-interest. A proper moral motivation cannot follow fleeting pleasures or displeasures; it must follow noncompromising rationality. Rational beings must imagine their maxims as practical and universal laws fitting into a moral rationality mold. No matter what one desires, the logical form of rationality urges a rational analysis of one's actions. In testing an individual decision, it should use a formidable imperative. A fundamental requirement of morality, independent motivation,

and undergirding support this immovable law. Any heteronomy comprises random authority.

Objects inspire pleasure or displeasure. Rationality should be free of empirical attractions and have non-subjective status — for example, the concept of the word of honor. If both persons agreed on a particular compromise, they could not deny the existence of commitment even though there is no tangible evidence of the agreement.

For Kant, the categorical imperative emphasizes that duty may be expressed thus: “*Act as if the maxim of thy action were to become by thy will a universal law of nature.*” (Kant, 1889) In other words, a rational being shall do things not for his own happiness but for the general welfare of all.

The practical rule is unconditional. Thus, it is categorical, the practical proposition with an a priori truth-value. If an individual follows subjective desires, he/she should imagine them as examined by moral law. The law is not formulated, and it expresses upon the mind as part of the structure of rationality as such. Anyone who searches for happiness shall also include the quest for the happiness of everybody in one’s rationality. It does not exclude anyone in his moral community. Hence, the selfish expansion of one’s happiness makes no sense as a moral idea.

Moreover, we can deepen our understanding of the Elite’s actions by delving briefly into Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* and *Critique of Judgment*, which may help us further evaluate whether the elites acted with true moral principles or were primarily self-interested. To put it simply, Kant attempted a systematic critique of human thought and action. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant explains that human knowledge is shaped by categories, like cause and effect, space, time, among others. This affects how one perceives and understands the world. However, Kant also explains that not everything is represented or experiences as such, as the thing in its true form, but rather only an appearance (Kant, 1998). This, in philosophical terms, is the phenomena, or the

world as we perceive it, over noumena, or the real and true object being perceived. This then lays the foundation of Kant’s moral philosophy, such that moral actions, as we perceive it, cannot be done solely based on personal experience, but requires a deeper level of understanding and reasoning. Hence, *Practical Reasons* expands this notion by focusing on how one ought to act guided by reasoning, particularly by determining whether one’s actions can be universally valid or accepted—the categorical imperative.

Then, with Kant’s later introduction of the *Critique of Judgment*, he bridges Pure Reason and Practical Reason, articulating what one must do in instances where rules and the universality of an action is vague or unclear. Here, he explains the idea of “reflective judgment,” which is one’s attempt to rationalize situations without explicitly defined rules (Kant, 2007). This reflection or judgment focuses on the application of moral laws to specific contexts. This allows individuals to harmonize both their understanding of the world with categorical imperatives, which allow for a level of flexibility in morally conflicting situations.

If we put these principles in the case of the Filipino elites, their behavior, attitude, and actions during the period of the Philippine Revolution, we can now see if they acted appropriately as Kant prescribed in his Moral philosophy. As defined previously, this is in the case of Filipino elites who had an episode of turn coating their loyalties during the entire duration of the revolution. Let’s take some important concepts mentioned by Kant in his *Critique of Practical Reason*:

We must assume that man is by nature (that is, as he is usually born) sound in body, there is thought to be no reason why we should not assume that he is also by nature sound in soul, so that nature itself helps us to develop this moral capacity for good within us (Kant, Kant’s *Critique of Practical Reason* and Other Works on the Theory of Ethics, 1889).

It is true that all of us, by nature, are good. Thus, every rational being, like a man, can develop



goodness through our decisions and actions in life. Referring to the Filipino elites, it is correct to say that as members of the middle class who are always classified as intellectuals, they have the full capacity to act within the norms of morality. Given their disposition in the society, they were the ones who were much expected by President Emilio Aguinaldo; thus, he invited the elites in his cabinet and took the higher positions in the government because he believed in the capacity of these elites to shape the just born Philippine Republic. In further reading, Kant had injected his concept of man's evil deeds as he exclaimed:

We call a man bad, however, not because he performs actions that are bad (violation law), but because these are of such a kind that we may infer from them bad maxims in him (Kant, 1889).

During the Philippines' history, the Filipino elites were referred to as the ones who betrayed the Revolution because, for many, what they did was just the reason the campaign failed. In giving a balanced perspective on this, we cannot judge right away their actions at that time because, for them, what they did (turn coating) was the thing they taught what is good for every Filipino. At this point of discussion, the epitome of their behavior was to prevent more killings caused by the Revolution. However, this was only to conceal their true motives, which were to spare themselves and their socioeconomic status from the socio-political change that the Revolution might bring. This will bring us to another argument, Kant, on how man can consider if the action is only for a particular maxim, which can be classified as selfishness or in a universal law that caters to the welfare of the general. As he mentioned:

Nor can he be partly good and partly bad at the same time. For if he is in part good, he has taken the moral law into his maxim; if then he was at the same time in another part bad, then, since the moral law of obedience to duty is one and universal, the maxim referring to it would be universal, and at the same time only particular, which is a contradiction (Kant, 1889).

Here, we can say that the actions thought by the elites of what is good for every Filipino (as they claim), based on many proven studies in Philippine history, can be referred to only as partial good. Moreover, with this, it just classifies a particular maxim which beneficial only for themselves. For Kant, there is no partiality of good and bad it will not qualify what he always says about good will. Referring to goodwill, Kant nailed his ideas on this as he said:

A good will is good not because of what it performs or effects, not by its aptness for the attainment of some proposed end, but only by virtue of the volition, that is, it is good in itself, and considered by itself is to be esteemed much higher than all that can be brought by it in favour of any inclination, nay, even of the sum total of all inclinations (Kant, 1889).

The Filipino elite's series of turn-coating deeds should not be attributed as an act of goodwill. Based on the literature, their shifting of loyalties during the Revolution do not represent an act of genuine volition. Switching allegiances from Spain to the revolutionaries, then from Aguinaldo to the Americans, and finally, to the Americans against Aguinaldo and the revolutionaries, demonstrates that they were acting on a particular maxim to achieve an end only beneficial for themselves.

Mabini (2007) expressed these suspicions towards the elite and their hidden agenda in a letter to Apacible and Santos written on May 31, 1899. The letter reads:

Since the taking of Calumpit by the Americans and knowing that I desired a temporary suspension in order to obtain information, General Antonio Luna sent parliamentarians to General Otis. They returned saying that the American General is willing to conduct a conversation and for this reason we sent Commissioners with instructions to negotiate with the American Commission. They also said that the Americans cannot recognize our Government, and would do so only if Aguinaldo and the other generals who were in favor of peace were to submit to their orders; and I did not agree

with this absurd requirement, those of the present Government—almost all of them belonging to Congress have sought the change on the pretext that the former could not obtain an understanding for having been intransigent from the very start.

Because of the formation of the new Cabinet, they attempted to send commissioners to Manila who would have the task of proposing the acceptance of autonomy similar to that of Canada, but they had to desist because the Army and the people opposed it. General Luna has called them traitors with reason since relying on the Constitution makes it illegal for the Government to adopt a program of autonomy (Mabini, 2007).

Hence, to an extent, we cannot blame them for wanting to protect their interests, given that these elites, in the context of this study, enjoyed certain prestige or cultural capital that the masses did not (Go, 1999). They sought to protect their interests whenever the situation benefitted them. Moreover, the superiority of the U.S. military and the promise of peace and freedom made them support the Americans, as it was advantageous for them to maintain their status and gain a chance to be in politics (Go, 1999). Therefore, we can now clearly say that these Filipino elites, who could have used Aguinaldo's leadership to build a strong republic, failed the nation. It ultimately turned out that these so-called intellectuals had already sided with what most Filipinos considered as enemies, which derailed the campaign for independence.

### Concluding remarks

In context, several factors led to the failure of the Philippine Revolution (1896-1901), but the lack of goodwill of the Filipino Elites contributed significantly to the downfall of the Philippines as an independent nation. As Kant pointed out, "*all men attribute to themselves freedom of will. Hence come to all judgments upon actions as being such as ought to have been done, although they have not been done.*" (Kant, 1889) This is a good reference to how the Filipino elites used their freedom to be accountable or be responsible only for themselves but not for the struggle for an independent nation

because they were afraid that the success of the Revolution would not permit them to retain their status in society.

The ethical shortcomings of the elites, examined through Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*, highlight a failure to act in alignment with universal moral duties. According to Kant, genuine moral actions must stem from a sense of duty that transcends self-interest, embodying the categorical imperative of acting for the greater good. The elites' actions, however, were driven by personal gain, demonstrating an absence of teleological ethics and a disregard for the collective welfare. This failure to uphold Kantian principles of goodwill meant that the elites not only betrayed the Revolution's ideals but also stymied the nation's progress toward self-determination.

This historical reflection is a powerful reminder of the lasting impact of choices made by those in power. The legacy of these ethical missteps can still be felt today, as the concentration of influence and privilege among the elite continues to shape Philippine society. The unresolved issues from the past underscore the need for leaders who prioritize the nation's welfare over personal interests. Kant's philosophy serves as a timeless standard, reminding us that true progress and national integrity depend on leaders willing to act selflessly for the common good.

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