



Editorial

The Quagmire of Philippine Politics

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Introduction

The intertwining of politics and culture is seen to be very important in the understanding of the nature of Philippine politics. The chronic disorder of the country's electioneering practices has reached its critical boiling point. The split of the Duterte-Marcos alliance is a clear sign that Philippine politics needs serious remedial treatment. Former allies, future foes. There are no real characters in a political game, everything becomes superficial.

The root of the problem lies in the prevailing political culture of the time. The electorate can easily be persuaded by public pretenses and money. The term 'public service' becomes a messy political game, and some politicians grew up thinking there is nothing serious about government –it is all about politicking. The culprit of the problem we can point to is the Filipino culture –that is the electorate who thinks only of their own individual welfare and does not think collectively as a whole nation. We often think only of our own immediate personal benefit and not of the populace's interest. The political field is compared to a quagmire as every newbie politician once their feet are on the ground will have a difficult time removing the mud out of one's feet or shoes, and the Filipino nation will have a hard time changing its decaying culture and dirty practices.

To treat the quagmire demands a careful and delicate lay down of rock-bottom to form such a solid ground which is the foundation of important cultural and moral human values – the bedrock and hallmark of true human progress and civilization. To treat this

decades-long problem of government corruption, election fraud, abuses of power, and political decay requires a look back to where it all began –the Spanish and American occupation. Sheldon Ives Agaton and Christopher Ryan Mabaloc point to the same culprit –the padrino system of politics in the country.¹ Now, the Filipino people have been stripped of our humanitarian value and cultural identity, first by the colonizers themselves, and then by fellow Filipino elite aristocrats. The Filipino dignity and values seemed to be seriously afflicted with deep-seated colonial wounds and dictatorial scars as the result of centuries-long Spanish and American colonization and political neglect, electoral savagery, and looting. At present, the colonizers' influence continues to have a grip on Philippine politics.

The Duterte-Marcos split is somehow reminiscent of the Marcos-Lopez feud of 1973. The recurrence is a reminder that the rotten system is deeply rooted in Philippine history. The Philippine democratic system requires a complete overhaul to uproot the necrotic tissues of the past which impedes national development and renewal, and to get rid of ambitious political opportunists and traitors. This current type of politics in the Philippines is laden with shameful deception and cunning strategies. What was dubbed Team Unity during the campaign turned sour and became disunited. The result is not just disunity but tight political rivalry. The current president has not just deluded his tandem or running mate but has strategically outsmarted the entire Filipino nation to pick him as the candidate.

The colonial disease has been very malignant, and cancer has been widespread. The poor continued to become powerless against the landed elites and the influential ones. The so-called political change or economic development is ruptured by the selfish motives and vested interests of unprincipled aspiring political candidates. Popularity and fame become the stepping-stones for every aspiring politician. Vloggers and celebrities either suddenly become instant congressmen or are used by opportunists seeing their fame and popularity as assets. But we are already in the age of social media; we

¹ See Sheldon Ives Agaton, "The Padrino System in Philippine Politics and Society," *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy*, Special Issue, February 2024, 193-209. See also Christopher Ryan Maboloc, "President Rodrigo Duterte and the Birth of Radical Democracy in the Philippines," *International Journal of Politics and Security (IJPS)*, Vol. 2, No. 3, May 2020, 116-134.

should not allow evil to triumph.² We should not let the trolls champion this democracy. Those unprincipled should not continue to sabotage the principled ones. Voters should learn to value their vote by voting smartly and wisely. It should be every voter's prerogative to know our candidates and learn of their values, platform, and potential. The power of democracy is always in the people either homogeneously or heterogeneously.

The Power of Choice

The overhaul can start in our own hands – the power of choice. The cliché “vote wisely” still rings true today. The country needs peacemakers instead of leaders who only perpetuate this madness, war, and regional divide. We should be wary of greedy candidates and political butterflies who only serve their own selfish interests and not the welfare of the populace, the constituents, and the citizenry. The cunning game of conceited traditional politicians can hardly be distinguished from the sincere candidates and the principled ones. It is the entire nation that will suffer from the wrong decisions of incompetent leaders. Indeed, the general populace is prone to deception and abuse.

The articles in this special issue will remind us of the necessary virtues that need to be accomplished for us to attain the systemic change that the Filipino nation has long desired. It is quite sad that in this country, our participation in democracy is limited only to the practice of electoral voting. Even the right to suffrage is stolen from our hands by using blood money, vote-buying, and all forms of fraud and dirty strategy. We, in the academia, and those in the vineyard of philosophy, should be critical beyond partisanship. As philosophers and wisdom lovers, we need to be smart enough to understand the façade of political correctness. Ethics and moral values are necessary non-negotiable prerequisites to the attainment of economic development and political maturity. Philosophers play a big role in national growth. Intellectuals should learn to use their craft, arts, and creativity to combat the oppressive system.

² Alluding to the popular phrase attributed to the eighteenth-century Irish philosopher and statesman, Edmund Burke: “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”

This second volume of the Politics and Culture Special Issue gathers the conference proceedings of the Social Ethics Society delivered both online and onsite during the year 2024. Most of the articles in this issue were delivered during the 7th Politics and Culture Conference last October 11-12, 2024. The Politics and Culture Conference which began in 2018 is an inter-and-multi-disciplinary conference first held at Nagoya University in Japan and was hosted by Dr. Wataru Kusaka, and co-organized by Dr. Christopher Ryan Maboloc and Dr. Rogelio Bayod. This event has been highly anticipated each year since its conception and has remained an important activity for the Social Ethics Society and its members. It survived amidst the pandemic and thereafter. The post-pandemic world is not only characterized by a medical crisis but also by war between nations, as well as political, economic, and financial crises. Hence, the role of political leaders and decision-makers is very crucial to the country's well-being given that we live in a very crucial political time in the national and global history.

On War and Conflict

There are two featured articles in this special issue. These papers tackle the problems of war, peace and conflict, liberal politics, and its effects on the environment.

On the one hand, Juichiro Tanabe's "Analysis of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict from Edward Azar's Protracted Social Conflict Theory" provides a novel and comprehensive insight into the Israeli-Palestinian conflict using Azar's four (4) mutually connected variables in understanding the protraction of conflict and war. Tanabe also tackles the long history of the Israeli-Palestinian regional divide, as well as, theorizes on a formidable resolution of the conflict.

On the other hand, Layne Hartsell's "War and Peace: From Uruk to Hiroshima, via Yasnaya Polyana and the Modern World in the Last 150 Years," describes the global political landscape characterized by chaos, planetary destruction, and war. Hartsell explores the threat of nuclear weaponry that the world has been facing since the last century. Hartsell assesses the environmental impact of wars and modern civilization on bioregions. Hartsell points to the real damage of wars that far outweighs the benefits of being morally upright and

revengeful. War is no joke. There are no winners in war, except businessmen selling their missiles.

On Peacebuilding and Religion

Three (3) articles in this issue emphasize the value of peacebuilding, religious tolerance, and national solidarity.

Mark Anthony Lataza's "Culture of Peace: The Social Character of the Contemporary World" proposes the culture of peace against the culture of violence and endorses a humanistic transformation against the commodification and alienation of the globalized world using Eric Fromm's theory of social characterology. Lataza hopes for a reconstruction of human societies through an emphasis on a peace culture.

Peter Albert F. Columna's "A Genderized, Inclusive, and Friendly View of the Woman on the Christian Account of Creation and the Fall of Adam and Eve," defends women against the erratic reading of the Book of Genesis, particularly on the stories of Creation and Fall. Columna employs a hermeneutic analysis of the Biblical text with the aid of philosophers and theologians toward harmonious gender equity.

Christopher Ryan Maboloc's "Religious Authority, Toleration, and Political Justice," is a brilliant exposé on the political thought of the English scholar John Locke, and in comparison, to John Rawls. Maboloc reinterprets Locke's views on government, civil liberties, religion, and democracy seen in the light of current national issues and events in the Philippines particularly the controversial case of Pastor Apollo Quiboloy and its effects on the Kingdom of Jesus Christ (KOJC). Using the political ideas of Locke and Rawls, Maboloc argues in favor of religious tolerance and the freedom of religious expression against political coercion. Maboloc extends his argument on the sensitive issue of divorce and the existing House Bill 9349 that is currently pending in the upper house of the Philippine Legislation. Maboloc also provides interesting point-of-views and philosophical insights concerning Iglesia Ni Cristo's nationwide peace rally as well as on the endorsements of candidates by some members of the Philippine Catholic clergy.

The Self Amidst the Turmoil

Amidst the dark portrait of reality, one (1) article provides us with a glimmer of hope by redirecting us back to the self, that global peace begins with self-understanding and inner peace.

Francis Jeus B. Ibañez's "Ricoeur on Pure Reflection: A Guide to Understanding Human Reality," tackles the importance of introspection and pure reflection. Ibañez revisits Ricoeur's notions of self-understanding, contemplation, finding meaning, and human values amidst man's infallibility and life's contradictory reality and social evils. The harmony of the individual self cannot be underrated as one confronts political life and national co-existence as systemic change also needs to be found and anchored in the self. We need to be the change we want to see in others, the change should start within oneself. Ricoeur's thoughts can serve as a guide to the perplexed political animal and their leaders.

On Decoloniality and Filipino Philosophy

Four (4) articles in this special issue touch particularly on the topic of indigenous wisdom, and indigenous Filipino philosophy.

Rogelio P. Bayod's "Indigenous Worldview on Health and Its Implications to Modern Medical Practices, Innovation, and Education," provides prospects for the integration of Indigenous cultural practices into the modern healthcare system. A very novel perspective that emanates from the Ovu-Manobo cultural ethnic groups incorporates the total well-being of the human person encompassing the physical, mental, spiritual, and communistic dimensions of holistic wellness.

Oliver F. Perater's "*Tagay*: A Critique of Beverly Sarza's Analysis of the Filipino Thought in Social Drinking Tradition," argues for the pre-eminence of Filipino thought as can be observed in the social drinking practices of the aboriginal Filipinos through a deeper understanding of the fermentation process of Tuba, an indigenous Filipino wine.

Ernesto C. Zaldua, Jr., Oliver F. Perater, and Menelito P. Mansueto's "The Layers of *Strata*, José Monserrat Maceda's Asian Musicology: A Case of Decolonization in the Filipino Musicality," looks back on the wonderful cultural contribution of one of our Filipino

musical icons and National Artist for Music – José Monserrat Maceda. Zaldua, Perater, and Mansueto position Maceda as an unexplored Filipino cultural philosopher by analyzing one of Maceda's very significant works, *Strata*, which showcases his prominence both as a global and indigenous music scholar.

The work of Ruben Balotol, Jr. threads along the boundaries of Peace Studies, Film Theory, and Filipino Philosophy. Ruben Balotol, Jr.'s "The Mad World: The Image of War and Peace in Philippine Motion Pictures," invites Filipino scholars to examine Philippine movies as a form of artistry that can invigorate the sense of philosophical reflection. But contrary to Perater, Zaldua, and Mansueto's works that point to the indigenous peoples for the possibility of Filipino Philosophy, Balotol points to the modern art of filmmaking as a reflection of the Filipino social reality.

On Discipline and Education

One (1) article discusses the integration of ethics and values formation in the curriculum of basic education students in the City Government of Davao.

Rec Eguia and Christopher Ryan Maboloc's "Integrating Discipline in the Basic Education Curriculum," examines the educational philosophy behind the Dabawenyo DCPlinado Curriculum Integration Program. The article highlights the importance of discipline in the formation years of young students and the role of discipline in building the moral character of the future generation.

Politics and the Virtual

Finally, two (2) articles in this special issue tackle the relationship between social media trends, politics, and the harsh realities of the Philippine elections.

Ruel A. Mesario, Dominador Pagliawan, and Ruben A. Balotol, Jr.'s "Memes, Viral Content, and Digital Stories Constructing Political Narratives and Mobilization," explores the risks of exposure to viral social media content, such as political memes and videos. Using a thematic analysis of these viral contents, the researchers discovered the need for a more critical engagement of the information to develop enhanced media literacy on the part of the public.

Arnel Morte's "The Role of Collective Recognition on Political Power," is an impressive diagnosis of the political scenario in the country. Using John Searle's concept of collective recognition, the paper effectively conscientizes the Filipino electorate to vote for an efficient candidate. Morte's expertise in Searle's social ontology aids him in trying to grasp the realities of Philippine politics.

The Book Reviews

This scholarly collection also includes two (2) book reviews. Janice DC Peñaflor and Christopher Ryan Maboloc discuss Ronnie Amorado and Ramcis Vilchez's book *Pedagogy of Fraud: Cheating Practices in Online Classes*, while Layne Hartsell shares his thoughts on Menelito P. Mansueto's book, *Decolonial Turn in the Philippine South*.

All in all, there are sixteen (16) essays in this special issue, including this editorial. Shalom to the contributors and all the scholars who have contributed to this special issue, directly or indirectly, as a peer reviewer or as an editor. We would like to thank all the contributors for the very rich and bountiful collection of essays. May the articles in this special issue awaken and reinvigorate our sense of philosophical research and philosophical reflections. Enjoy learning while reading! Kudos to the editorial board of the SES Journal. We would like to thank everyone for your undying support for the Social Ethics Society. Have a dose of wisdom in this special issue, now presenting the second volume of the "Politics and Culture."

References

- Agaton, Sheldon Ives. "The Padrino System in Philippine Politics and Society," *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy*, Special Issue, February 2024, 193-209.
- Maboloc, Christopher Ryan. "President Rodrigo Duterte and the Birth of Radical Democracy in the Philippines," *International Journal of Politics and Security (IJPS)*, Vol. 2, No. 3, May 2020, 116-134.