



Editorial

Tomorrow's Uncertainty: Reflections from a Corrupted Country, including an Assessment of the State of Research in Philippine Academia

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Our humane world is continually being challenged by corruption, deception, and unprecedented wars. This capitalism in its advanced form is continually challenging the living subsistence of humankind. Every new development, such as AI and robotics, would continually pose a challenge for human beings to adapt to or contend with. Any recent innovation may, unsurprisingly, face backlash. The cultural, social, and technological landscape would never be the same. The world also continually faces new challenges. It survived through the pandemic, natural disaster, and the human-caused wars. One may still have old habits but have now learned to adopt a completely new post-catastrophe paradigm. Surprisingly, the emergence of new theories and concepts is also prevalent in this post-pandemic era of the technoscene.¹ Recent concepts in environmental and animal ethics have fused with digital AI and even digital art in particular, due to the emerging technologies such as robotics and AI video editing, which further add to our confusion about what is real and unreal, along with other challenging technological innovations. These phenomena and events are truly a manifestation of Heidegger's "gathering," a coming together that renders apart. The world will never be the same, but

¹ See Layne Hartsell, "Technics and Civilization: Emerging Technology and Ecology: A Crossroads for Humanity," *Korea IT Times Global News Network* (February 18, 2024). <https://www.koreaittimes.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=129058>

some non-negotiables and non-dispensables will surely remain relevant and will continue to be priceless and valuable, such as the much-adored human virtues and moral values.

Despite the many challenges, the Social Ethics Society (SES) will continue to be a beacon of hope for Mindanao scholarship and Mindanawon philosophy. SES continually partakes in shaping and molding the Mindanawon consciousness. Mindanao, per se, is severely perceived by those in the national center, as well as those who have an unresolved bias against Mindanao, as underrated, beginning from its politicians, down to its scholars, territory, and human development index. Likewise, the Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy will continue to stay and meet these prevailing challenges. Since its initial phase around 2014-2015, the journal has survived through several financial and technical challenges. Thanks to the undying support of some highly committed individuals, such as Fr. Dexter Veloso, Fr. Urbano Pardillo, Dr. Rogelio Bayod, and Dr. Christopher Ryan Maboloc, together with the Board of Directors of SES. The journal had survived and operated independently, devoid of university or institutional support. Also, the journal needs to operate independently from any external institution to get rid of any powerplay, religious and institutional influences, vested interests, and political ideology. The SES Journal likewise recognizes the contribution of its past editors, guest editors, and peer reviewers for their valuable initiative, effort, and hard work. We likewise acknowledge the excellent effort of the current Editor-in-Chief of the SES Journal, Dr. Ian Clark Parcon of Ateneo de Davao University.

The research enterprise is also constantly being challenged by various issues. Some of these issues are simply raised here for purposes of awareness and for the appropriate intervention. Scholars and professors are expected to produce research outputs despite their hectic schedules. Research has become one of the three key pillars of the academic profession, side by side with classroom instruction and community extension work. Ironically, however, research is also one of the areas where monetary budgets are often exploited or politicized. One aspect that is greatly neglected and undervalued by educational institutions, such as universities, is the effort of peer review. Academic institutions should learn to recognize this noble work and implement measures and mechanisms to provide incentives for peer reviews and their respective reviewers. Likewise, journal editors are scarcely

rewarded for their efforts. The most they could get for their task, if lucky enough, is a mere subject de-loading or load release. Journal editors and managers can hardly make the task done without the valuable help of external reviewers, yet it remains one of the most unappreciated tasks, as many professors and academic experts tend to decline such peer review opportunities due to various reasons, including the following: a lack of incentives, recognition, and rewards, to name just a few. Most reviewers conduct peer reviews out of love for the discipline and do so pro bono, resulting in a very limited and scarce resource of peer reviewers. Inevitably, as it is in a blind peer review mode, their merit is often unknown to their respective institutions and colleagues. To add, the stark irony is that scholars and institutions benefit from the merits and rewards of a scholarly publication, but the academic journal itself is most often left unrewarded for its non-profit and free access nature. More institutional funding bodies and government agencies should give incentives, recognition, and monetary rewards to both reputable and struggling scholarly academic journals.

Another unchecked and blind obsession of academic institutions is their ridiculous fandom of accrediting institutions and journal indexing bodies, without even due critical analysis and a proper understanding of how these agencies or entities truly function and operate. There is also the concern on the credibility of the people behind such a consumeristic emergence of these standardizing or globalizing procedures. Standardizing accrediting agencies that simply impose overrated approaches, such as the OBE, as if these standards are universally applicable across all disciplines and practically relevant in terms of their potential, has the tendency to diminish academic freedom, as well as the quality of course content and instruction. On the other hand, the obsession with journal indexing bodies tends to encourage the practice of the APC, or article processing charge, among prestigious journal publishers/ publishing. Though reputable online publications are freely accessed among digital repositories, APCs are too high a price to pay, usually with a roughly estimated average of \$2500 as of the year 2023.² Sometimes, the quality of the journal articles tends to be neglected with the over-emphasis on journal indexing; this practice could bypass scholarly

² Data based on *ScholCommLab*, Butler, Leeigh-Ann, et al., "An open dataset of article processing charges from six large scholarly publishers (2019-2023).

quality toward the monetary advantage of the accrediting agencies, which accordingly 'set the standards.' Scholarly journals will also have to face the glaring truth of annual indexing fees, which could be a huge challenge, especially for non-profit, open-access academic journals. These practices are very much prevalent within the confines of journal indexing and journal accreditation. It becomes highly contradictory and ironic that the critical minds succumb to such profiteering endeavors. These standardized criteria propel or persist despite the presence of user-generated alternatives, such as free-access research engines or equally accessible nonprofit journal repositories that have rather survived through advertisement rates. What used to be deemed as predatory behavior of an academic journal now suddenly becomes a legitimate and tolerated practice. Indexing bodies and entities also often come and go. Some indexing organizations and accrediting bodies suddenly disappear and vanish into thin air, leaving only some of their digital footprints. Many universities simply implement policies towards and over their professors despite the lack of comprehension of these emerging indexing obsessions. We should not just implement; we need to think it through. The avenue of research is clearly being invaded by the capitalistic tendencies of globalization and standardization.

Academic journals and the people behind their operation badly need institutional support and reform, as despite the celebration of their educators' scholarly outputs in the academe and their contribution to humanity, the journal editors and peer reviewers' efforts are often less known or underrecognized. Their efforts are most often neglected behind the scenes. That is an irony that needs to be dealt with among higher educational and institutional organizations, as research is one of their key pillars or core functions. We often see only the outcome, but not necessarily its production process. Scholars, professors, and researchers need utmost support from their own institutions to make their research successful; that's another glaring point to make. To state bluntly, there are fewer and fewer academics willing to accept peer review requests and invitations, as it is often an unrewarded and uncelebrated endeavor. The experts on respective topics would rather decline such a noble opportunity to share their knowledge and expertise, as peer review becomes a daunting task. The scarcity of peer reviewers is due, in fact, to the lack of compensation and support for such work. Funds are

rather invested in journal indexing, which is truly profiteering and commercialized in nature. The funds that supposedly go to the experts in such a specific field were diverted and go instead to unnecessary and expensive measures. Such practice is kind of barking up the wrong tree. The lack of response from the potential peer reviewers could possibly affect the quality and result in the delay of the projected release date/s of the journal issue/s. Hence, fewer authors and scholars can also be accommodated as the volume of issues becomes limited. Hence, the academic institutions should learn to incentivize the efforts of a scholarly journal article's peer review, in order not to diminish the quality of academic research.

Research offices within universities, aside from being understaffed, also need to reconsider having staff who are like-minded individuals who truly appreciate the rigor of the discipline and understand the struggles of a legitimate scholarly researcher. This is to prevent or lessen instances of merciless budget cuts or inhumane disapproval, or at least, to eradicate the cruel treatment against researchers and educators, and to uplift and protect their integrity and professionalism. The biased reception of research in the arts and humanities is also a question at hand, as there is an overwhelming overemphasis on research in the sciences and technology, especially on quantitative studies. Scholars need to recognize the unique difference between philosophical/ historical research and the impending bias made by some empirical and quantitative researchers. Research in the humanities has its own set of structures that is highly different from the usual empirical method or approach. Qualitative non-empirical research may have an option not to necessarily conduct interviews or surveys, as credible existing data may be found elsewhere in alternative sources/references. Surveys and interviews may only have been applied if desired, but not as, on that sole basis, a ridiculously imposed mandatory requirement (or presumption) for research. Speaking of social research, some critical and/or textual non-quantitative elements may also be found in other sources. Without denying the fact that statistical data and its respective interpretations could only be true for a definite duration of time, but could also be volatile, as they may vary and easily change within a very short period. By the time the research study is published, the result may already have changed.

Presenting or showcasing research works and work-in-progress papers in research fora, conferences, and seminars is another very important exercise for a philosophical researcher, as feedback from participants helps mold the study into a publishable quality and outcome, and thereby further shapes the possible direction of the study. Reactions and comments from colleagues and fellow participants help verify its findings as it is confronted and subjected to a critical perusal. The process is also one way to help challenge younger, fresher, and struggling academicians or researchers. Sending the faculty members and supporting the students to attend research gatherings and conferences is a huge help for them to advance their research.

SES particularly seeks to enhance and develop the scholarly output of its members, and to provide and create opportunities for the younger generation of scholars over the years. The Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy has been in existence for quite a decade already, since its maiden issue in 2015. It has been one of the most notable and distinguished scholarly academic journals, particularly in the field of philosophy, humanities, and social science, as it is a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary journal of applied philosophy, particularly based in the Philippines and Southeast Asia. The Journal has been indexed in ASEAN Citation Index (ACI), Philosopher's Index (PI), and Andrew Gonzales Philippine Citation Index (AGPCI).

The SES is also very much grateful to the Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP) for the partnership and the trust throughout the years. The PUP, through its Research Office and the Center for Philosophy and Humanities, is continually leading the country in terms of philosophical research and other similar academic endeavors. PUP has become a partner of SES on local and international scholarly endeavors, such as organizing conferences and co-editing journal issues and volumes in the field of philosophical research.

The Philippines is now leading the globe in terms of its initiative in bringing quality research in the field of philosophy and the humanities. The quality of the country's research is on par with international standards. But despite the glaring brilliance of our scholars and scientists, the country is still left behind economically, politically, and even morally. Because of the corrupt practices in the country, we are left behind in innovation and technology. Corruption

in the Philippines is an endemic problem, from the lowest ranks of public offices up to the top-ranking officials. Private establishments and corporations are not much different. The irony, however, is that it is a highly religious country.

The cycle of corruption in the Philippines is due in part to this rotten culture of dirty electioneering. Public funds, resources, and goods are stolen or manipulated by politicians to advance their electoral candidacy or political campaign, even sacrificing the quality of infrastructure projects and human or structural developments by turning to substandard material, or worse, ghosting the whole project by fabricating its implementation. Whole facts are then fabricated to suit their preferred narrative and to protect and safeguard political alliances or partisanship. The sad part is that the culprits go unpunished. On top of that massive corruption in the Philippine government, the nation is greatly divided beyond repair, regionally, archipelago-wise, religion-wise, and due to moral elitism. We can point to many factors as causes of this political division: colonial heritage, moral divide, elitism, regional biases, and discrimination, to name a few. In Philippine politics, crab mentality is at its highest level. If a president comes from the remotest regions and provinces far from the national capital, s/he gets bombarded with issues, no matter how hardworking. The media is not only biased, but it can also easily be bought and paid to destroy the credibility of outstanding politicians. Activism has also become rude, ridiculous, and bereft of human reason.

Filipino culture tends to become insensitive; it lacks moral and emotional sensitivity, and this could be one reason why corruption in the country is rampant and persists continually. Many are afraid to speak out, thus becoming apathetic and without a care in the world, without a care for the country's welfare. In addition, there is also an apparent racism and bigotry towards fellow Filipinos in the periphery, and in the provinces, including down South, away from the national Center, such as the discriminatory maltreatment of the "Bisaya" whenever outside of their territory. Corrupt politicians are rarely punished, thereby giving the wrong impression that such corruptible behavior and practices are tolerable. This decadent Filipino culture of corruption is a hopeless case; we are like in a dark pit or quagmire, truly a waste of the people's taxes and government coffers that get lost from wrong decisions to unnecessary things. Our democracy is a failure, as those who would want to serve the public will need to steal

money from government coffers to stay in power, or to remain relevant in a position, or to stay publicly in demand. They steal money not just for the politicians to stay in power to the satisfaction of their supporters, but for them really to jibe and deal with the prevailing corrupt system, and the dirty culture of vote-buying, and the handiwork of politicization and electioneering practices, such as a political sabotage, maneuvering, and a matter of keeping one's political alliance and survival, or to protect vested interests or personal wealth. We need to tell the exact things as they are; there is no time to sugarcoat both the government and the citizens' erroneous ways. We need to mature as a nation, a developing nation that is prone to disasters and calamities in the Pacific "Ring of Fire." As the country faces the outcome of an impending global war of nations, the role of government leaders is crucial for smart and well-informed decision-making for the betterment and peace of all Filipino citizens around the world.

Going back to this journal issue, this current one is the third volume of our Politics and Culture Issue. The articles herewith are long overdue and ripe. Like the previous issue, many of the topics in this issue concern technology and its effects on human development. There are three (3) featured articles in this volume. The first featured article is Layne Hartsell's "Ethics, Technology, and the Indigenous Worldview: A Reflection on Weckert and Bayod." In this essay, Hartsell reflects and affirms the call for indigenous knowledge to contribute to the ethics of technology, a significant assertion that was first made in a scientific article published in the *Journal of Nanoethics* authored by John Weckert and Rogelio Bayod. Drawing from ecophilosopher Derrick Jensen's notion of "human supremacy," Hartsell offers the possibility of a genuine change to avoid the pitfalls of a "technology dystopia" that is looming within an industry-driven capitalism marred with Western ecological paradigms.

Our second featured article in this volume is Noel S. Pariñas's "Ang Pag-iral ng Tao sa Espasyo (Human Existence in Space)." This work is a sequel to a previously published work, "Ang Espasyo sa Pag-iral ng Tao," which also appeared in the SES Journal (Special Issue, February 2024). Pariñas's essay argues for the balance of two human dimensions or spaces, namely the horizontal (existence with fellow humans) and the vertical (existence with the Holy) spaces of human existence. The so-called balance, in a new space, where "human[e] act"

and “holy-human act” meet, provides a whole new meaning of humanization and social co-existence.

Our third featured article in the volume is Bernardo N. Caslib, Jr. and Ben Carlo N. Atim’s “Exploring the Sources of Meaning-Making: Culture, Convention, and Their Relevance and Value to Learning.” In this essay, Caslib and Atim revisit the positions of profound analytic philosophers to explore the notion of “meaning making” and its implications for ethical, social, and civic learning.

The fourth article in this issue is entitled “An Analysis of 'The Extended Mind' in relation to Thomas Fuchs’ Position on the Emergence of Artificial Intelligence,” authored by John Raymund S. Alonzo. Humans and technology relations are given another fresh look and perspective, and analyzed by J. R. Alonzo using Thomas Fuchs’ position on artificial intelligence. Our fifth article still touches on technology, especially artificial intelligence, but this time seen as an academic tool in the presence of educational chatbots. Kenichi Andreau F. Tigas’s “Educating the Person Today: A Personalist Critique of AI in Education” offers a personalist critique of the use of artificial intelligence in education, following the tradition of Karol Wojtyla and other personalist thinkers.

The sixth article is Neggie Sam Ray P. Cuaresma’s “Politics in Emersonian Perfectionism: Democratic Conversations in Friendship and Marriage.” N.S.R. Cuaresma follows Stanley Cavell’s ethical theory and its implications in a political and democratic society. Sean Patrick Mercado’s “A Battle Within: A Reconstruction of Bertrand Russell’s Ethical Perception on Warfare,” the seventh article in this volume, aims at an extensive and comprehensive reading of Bertrand Russell’s ethical justifications of war. S. P. Mercado attempts to highlight certain inconsistencies in Russell’s ethical and moral standpoint. Alvin C. Laserna, Jr.’s “Husserl’s Intersubjectivity meets Thomistic Notions: A Path to Better Interreligious Dialogues,” the eighth and last, but definitely not the least, article in this issue, seeks to improve Husserl’s phenomenology of intersubjectivity by incorporating Thomistic Realism. Laserna believes that the challenge of numerous religions and the need for interreligious dialogues can be addressed in the combination of Thomistic Realism with Husserl’s phenomenology.

Finally, the volume introduces the latest book published by ElziStyle Bookshop (2026). The compilation edited by Mansoor Limba

and Christopher Ryan Maboloc includes the reflections of authors from the southern part of the Philippines which captures the movement referred to as Davao School of Radical Democracy. "Building a Theory from the Ground: The Davao School of Radical Democracy," introduces to the readers the historical and socio-cultural as well as political background behind this emerging school of theorizing in the Philippines. The article gives a preview of the newly released book, *The Davao School of Radical Democracy: Southern Voices Reimagining Philippine Politics*. The book is a concrete manifestation of responses to the challenge of finding alternative to the capitalist driven and elitist perspective that has dominated the Philippine intellectual terrain.

Again, and as always, the SES journal would like to thank and remain grateful for the enormous contribution of our authors, peer reviewers, our technical team, as well as everyone in the editorial board for the continuing commitment and support, and the efforts to promote the welfare of a healthy and professional philosophical discussion and research from all over the world. Subhan Allah!