

The Political Moralism of Some Catholic Bishops and Priests: A Postmodern Evaluation

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Abstract

The Catholic Church never officially endorses political candidates but rather respects the freedom of its faithful to vote according to the dictates of their conscience. However, in the last presidential elections, some Catholic bishops and priests in the Philippines publicly and openly supported the presidential candidacy of Vice President Leni Robredo while urging the rest of the faithful to do the same. These bishops and priests anchored their position on their shared belief that voting for Robredo was the only rightful and moral option because of her clean track record, non-involvement in any act of corruption, and principled approach in governance. In contrast, her political archnemesis Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos, Jr. had long been embroiled in several allegations of corruption, non-payment of taxes, and fakery of educational attainments. Hence, for these bishops and priests, voting for Marcos Jr. was both wrong and immoral. And yet, the election results hit them with a big “slap in the face,” as more than 31 million Filipinos (majority of whom are Catholics) cast their votes for Marcos Jr., while only 15 million voted for Robredo. This outcome, no doubt, raises the question: Why did the repeated calls of these bishops and priests go unheeded? In this paper, I will attempt to answer this question by subjecting the political moralism of these Catholic leaders to some objective postmodern evaluation. To do this, I will employ the postmodern thoughts of Nietzsche, Lyotard, and Rorty as a lens to examine why many Filipino Catholics today no longer buy the political moralism of their religious leaders.

Keywords: political moralism, Catholic bishops and priests, postmodernism, politics, Philippines

Introduction

The Catholic Church never officially endorses political candidates but rather respects the freedom of its faithful to vote according to the dictates of their conscience. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explicitly states that “[i]t is not the role of the Pastors of the Church to intervene directly in the political structuring and organization of social life. This task is part of the vocation of the lay faithful, acting on their own initiative with their fellow citizens.”¹ In short, the clergy members are not supposed to influence the faithful on whom they should vote. The Second Vatican Council, particularly in *Gaudium et Spes*, makes it also clear that “[t]he Church, by reason of her role and competence, is not identified in any way with the political community nor bound to any political system. She is at once a sign and a safeguard of the transcendent character of the human person.”² For this reason, the *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests* released by the Vatican’s Congregation for the Clergy, declares that

[l]ike Jesus (cf *Jn* 6:15 ff.), the priest “ought to refrain from actively engaging himself in politics, as it often happens, in order to be a central point of spiritual fraternity.” All the faithful, therefore, must always be able to approach the priest without feeling inhibited for any reason.³

Our very own Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) subsequently affirms that although “the clergy can teach moral doctrines covering politics ... [they] cannot actively involve themselves in partisan politics.”⁴ In fact, no less than a CBCP official “warned bishops and priests against openly endorsing candidates in the ...

¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2442.

² *Gaudium et Spes* 76.

³ *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests* 33.

⁴ Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, “Catechism on Church and Politics,” III.2, *CBCP Online*, February 1998; <https://cbcponline.net/catechism-on-the-church-and-politics/>.

elections.”⁵ The said official explained that such endorsements could bring about some consequences that “we do not know” and, aside from that, the Church does not also really want to be answerable for these consequences.⁶

However, as is already well known, some Catholic bishops and priests in the Philippines have already become partisan, publicly giving their support to the presidential candidacy of Vice President Leni Robredo while urging the rest of the faithful to do the same. Among the bishops, for example, we have the present and former archbishops of Cagayan de Oro Jose Cabantan and Antonio Ledesma.⁷ Even the current CBCP president himself, Bishop Pablo Virgilio David of Kalookan, gave a not-so-subtle endorsement of Robredo.⁸ Among the priests, we have a good number of them from all over the country. The hastily formed group “Pari Madre Misyonero Para Kay Leni” alone boasted more than 500 members.⁹ Needless to say, the number of priests who openly sided with Robredo was significant.¹⁰

These bishops and priests anchored their position on their shared belief that voting for Robredo was the only rightful and moral

⁵ Jose Torres Jr., “Catholic bishops, priests warned against openly endorsing candidates,” *Licás.news*, 21 February 2022; <https://philippines.licas.news/2022/02/21/catholic-bishops-priests-warned-against-openly-endorsing-candidates/>.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Bobby Lagsa and Antonio Manaytay, “Cagayan de Oro archbishop openly declares support for Robredo,” *Rappler*, 23 February 2022; <https://www.rappler.com/nation/elections/cagayan-de-oro-archbishop-jose-cabantan-declares-support-leni-robredo-2022/>.

⁸ “CBCP head posts pink zucchetto photo after Robredo joins presidential race,” *ABS-CBN News*, 07 October 2021; https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/10/07/21/cbcp-head-posts-pink-zucchetto-after-robredo-joins-presidential-race?fbclid=IwAR05Y84196q0xZ_rz50sdtVRyNy9LK9FITbv0LLYhBeKONsxpIw6hY9sSOQ.

⁹ Christia Marie Ramos, “Nearly 600 priests, nuns, brothers back Robredo, Pangilinan candidacies,” *INQUIRER.net*, 15 February 2022; <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1555070/fwd-nearly-600-priests-nuns-brothers-back-robredo-pangilinan-as-next-leaders>.

¹⁰ See, for example, Franco Jose C. Baroña, “Over 1K clergy back Leni-Kiko team,” *The Manila Times*, 23 April 2022; <https://www.manilatimes.net/2022/04/23/news/over-1k-clergy-back-leni-kiko-team/1840983>.

option because of her clean track record, non-involvement in any act of corruption, and principled approach in governance.¹¹ In contrast, her political archnemesis Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos, Jr. had long been embroiled in several allegations of corruption, non-payment of taxes, and fakery of educational attainments.¹² Hence, according to the logic of pro-Leni bishops and priests, voting for Marcos Jr. is both wrong and immoral. And yet, the election results hit them with a big “slap in the face,” as more than 31 million Filipinos cast their votes for Marcos Jr., while only 15 million voted for Robredo.¹³ This outcome, no doubt, raises the question: Why did the repeated calls of these pro-Leni bishops and priests go unheeded? In this paper, I will attempt to answer this question by subjecting the political moralism of these Catholic leaders to some objective postmodern evaluation. To do this, I will employ the postmodern thoughts of Nietzsche, Lyotard, and Rorty¹⁴ as a lens to examine why many Filipino Catholics today no longer buy the political moralism of their religious leaders.

The Meaning of Political Moralism

On February 25 this year, in time for the 36th anniversary of the People Power Revolution that toppled Ferdinand Marcos, Sr. from power, over a hundred Jesuits of the Philippine Province expressed their individual support for the candidacies of Vice President Robredo

¹¹ Cf. John Eric Mendoza, “Priests in Batangas, Bukidnon endorse Leni-Kiko tandem,” *INQUIRER.net*, 20 April 2022; <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1585301/priests-in-batangas-bukidnon-endorse-leni-kiko-tandem>.

¹² Cf. Andreo Calonzo, “Marcos Jr.’s Path to Philippine Presidency Muddled by Lawsuits,” *Bloomberg*, 9 February 2022; <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-02-08/marcos-jr-s-path-to-philippine-presidency-muddled-by-lawsuits>.

¹³ No less than CBCP’s very own member, Boac’s Bishop Marcelino Antonio Maralit, admitted that the results of the last elections were a huge slap in their faces. For details, see Franco Jose C. Baroña, “Poll results a ‘slap in Church’s face,’” *The Manila Times*, 11 June 2022; https://www.manilatimes.net/2022/06/11/news/national/poll-results-a-slap-in-churchs-face/1846881?fbclid=IwAR2wzDNHvM_wyYL5x3_ukXraHGxf4kygp-OyAvEuYJeFety1nusOowqG2U. See also Catherine S. Valente, “BBM makes history with over 31M votes,” *The Manila Times*, 11 May 2022; <https://www.manilatimes.net/2022/05/11/news/bbm-makes-history-with-over-31m-votes/1843212>.

¹⁴ Due to limitations of space and time, I can only focus on these three postmodern philosophers in this paper

and her running mate Kiko Pangilinan.¹⁵ These individual Jesuits claimed that “[t]he basic values we aspire for have been threatened these past years.”¹⁶ Thus, there is a need to “see this election as a graced and fresh turning point to redefine ourselves, reclaim our aspirations, and redirect the course of our collective action.”¹⁷ For these Jesuits, these could only be possible if Leni Robredo and Kiko Pangilinan would be the next president and vice president respectively. They all “believe VP Leni and Senator Kiko display the least self-interest and are the most capable and morally credible to promote truth and social justice, protect our democratic principles and freedoms, and pursue our vision for our nation.”¹⁸

The views of these pro-Leni Jesuits seamlessly echo the sentiments of many of their fellow clergymen who were also rooting for Robredo, and that is, that a deplorable moral malady has plagued the Philippine political landscape. And since at its foundation this problem is moral, ergo, the solutions to be sought must likewise be moral.

Now in political philosophy, the perennial approach that constantly “seeks to describe politics in moral terms” is called political moralism.¹⁹ In essence, political moralism “is the claim that principles of public ethics — that is, the conduct of government officials and the relationship between citizens and the state — are derivable from moral considerations that are prior to politics.”²⁰ In other words, the compass that should guide every political action is morality.

Since the start of Rodrigo Duterte’s term as president, the barrage of polemics coming from those who have been scandalized by his style of doing politics has always been grounded on moral

¹⁵ To view the full text of the “Statement of Individual Jesuits in Support of Leni Robredo and Kiko Pangilinan,” visit <https://www.xu.edu.ph/xavier-ateneo-bulletin/5446-statement-of-individual-jesuits-in-support-of-leni-robredo-and-kiko-pangilinan>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Zoltan Balazs, “The Never Ending Story of Political Moralism and Realism,” *Ethical Perspectives* 25, no. 4 (2018): 589; DOI: [10.2143/EP.25.4.3285708](https://doi.org/10.2143/EP.25.4.3285708).

²⁰ W. Bradley Wendel, “Legal Ethics as ‘Political Moralism’ or the Morality of Politics,” *Cornell Law Review* 93, no. 6 (September 2008): 1415.

arguments. This is what is typical of political moralism: practically every political criticism is based on morality. Now that Duterte's term has ended and Marcos Jr.'s presidency has officially begun, in hindsight, it seems quite clear that all those efforts to discredit Duterte and Marcos Jr. have one common denominator: all political criticisms against them are heavily coated with overtones of morality. And again, this is a direct reflection of political moralism.

The public show of support that some Catholic bishops and priests gave to Robredo was primarily driven by morality. It was built upon the "what ought" and the "what should be" in Philippine politics. But this is precisely where the problem lies; for no matter how they are interrelated, morality is *not* politics and politics is *not* morality. The two are neither the same nor interchangeable. And yet, political moralism simply does just that: that is, "confusing politics and morality."²¹ In a manner of saying, political moralism "embodies a reductionist view of political thinking."²² That is to say, it "reduces political problems to matters of personal morality."²³ This is what some pro-Leni Catholic bishops and priests were doing: injecting a substantial dose of morality into politics. For instance, Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Socrates Villegas did not mince words when he expressed that "Marcos Jr. is a threat to the Philippines" because, accordingly, Marcos Jr. does not have a good moral standing to hold the highest political office of the land.²⁴ Hence, the people should not commit this serious mistake of electing Marcos Jr. since he is not morally qualified to be a political leader. This is a crystalline example of political moralism.

Of course, to those who subscribe to political moralism, there is nothing wrong in insisting that politics should *always and only* revolve around the sphere of morality. As Mogobe Ramose succinctly puts it, "the political domain is pre-eminently an ethical sphere. Politics, as

²¹ Matthew Festenstein, "Pragmatism, Realism, and Moralism," *Political Studies Review* 14, no. 1 (2016): 40; DOI: [10.1177/1478929915607890](https://doi.org/10.1177/1478929915607890).

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Enzo Rossi and Matt Sleat, "Realism in Normative Political Theory," *Philosophy Compass* 9/10 (2014): 691; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12148>.

²⁴ Archbishop Socrates Villegas quoted in Basti Evangelista, "Archbishop says Marcos is a threat to Philippines," *Yahoo! News*, 23 February 2022; <https://ph.news.yahoo.com/archbishop-says-marcos-is-a-threat-to-philippines-210045886.html>.

Socrates argued, is inherently ethical. Ethics precedes politics in logic and in fact. Politics is the creature of ethics and ought to serve the good prescribed by ethics.”²⁵

Be that as it may, the truth remains that not everyone subscribes to political moralism. On the one hand, we have the political realists who believe that politics is “not directly about distributive justice, or human rights, or the extent of a duty to obey the law, and so on.”²⁶ For the realists, the first concern of politics is not morality but “the practice of politics itself.”²⁷ That does not mean that morality has no value in politics; it is just that morality should not have primacy in politics. On the other hand, we have the political postmodernists for whom morality has a different role and function in politics. But to better appreciate political postmodernism, in the next sections of this paper, I will endeavor to provide a quick overview of postmodernism and then proceed to make a postmodern evaluation of the political moralism of some Catholic bishops and priests in the Philippines.

A Quick Overview of Postmodernism: Nietzsche, Lyotard, and Rorty

There are two general ways of looking at postmodernism: as an epoch in history or simply as an attitude. Viewing it as an epoch, postmodernism “refers to the period that succeeded and revised modernism, and thus to the new tendencies in art, contemporary culture, philosophy, and social life.”²⁸ Simply put, postmodernism is an era characterized by newness, and hence signifies “a new intellectual age ... a revolutionary era [that] is upon us – an era liberated from the oppressive strictures of the past.”²⁹

²⁵ Mogobe Ramose, “Dying a hundred deaths: Socrates on truth and justice,” *Phronimon* 15, no. 1 (January 2014): 74.

²⁶ David Estlund, “Methodological Moralism in Political Philosophy,” *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 20, no. 3 (2017): 370; DOI: [10.1080/13698230.2017.1293353](https://doi.org/10.1080/13698230.2017.1293353).

²⁷ Rossi and Sleat, “Realism in Normative Political Theory,” *Philosophy Compass* 9/10 (2014): 690.

²⁸ Karolina Tomczak, “Deflationist Caprice: ‘Imperfections’ in the Sculpture of Leon Podsiadły,” *Arts* 10, no. 2 (2021): 2; DOI: [10.3390/arts10020039](https://doi.org/10.3390/arts10020039).

²⁹ Stephen R.C. Hicks, *Explaining Postmodernism: Skepticism and Socialism from Rousseau to Foucault* (Tempe: Scholargy Publishing, 2004), 1.

According to some scholars, postmodernism may be divided into “two relatively distinct phases, the first beginning in the late 1940s and 1950s and ending with the Cold War, and the second beginning at the end of the Cold War, marked by the spread of cable television and ‘new media’ based on digital means of information dissemination and broadcast.”³⁰ Within this whole timeframe, the 1960s were particularly important, as then young and “new French philosophers ... the most important of whom were Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Jean-François Lyotard” ushered in novel ways of philosophizing and seeing things in general.³¹ Most academics, however, consider postmodernism less as a historical era but more as “a critical attitude” that characterizes the poststructuralist approach of these aforementioned philosophers.³² This kind of attitude, though, did not simply emerge out of nowhere in the 1960s; instead, it traces its origins to the works of the German philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm

³⁰ Mohammad Khosravishakib, “The Contributions of Postmodernism Methodology as a Prevailing Practice on Ground of Humanities Sciences,” *International Journal of Arts* 2, no. 1 (2012): 1; DOI: [10.5923/j.arts.20120201.01](https://doi.org/10.5923/j.arts.20120201.01). See also David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1990), 9.

³¹ These philosophers are also collectively known as poststructuralists in that, first: “[t]hey had been schooled by another theoretical movement, structuralism, [which] ... rejected the focus on the self and its historical development that had characterized Marxism, existentialism, phenomenology, and psychoanalysis (Cahoone, 1996: 5).” And second, while these philosophers “accepted structuralism’s refusal to worship at the altar of the self ... they rejected its scientific pretensions ... [and] saw deep self-reflexive philosophical problems in the attempt by human beings to be ‘objective’ about themselves (Cahoone 1996: 5).” See Lawrence E. Cahoone, *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology* (Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 5. However, it should be noted that “[t]he interface between structuralism and poststructuralism is fluid, and it is important to see poststructuralism as an internal reworking rather than something that simply comes after structuralism (Wenman 2018: 129).” For details, see Mark Wenman, “Poststructuralism,” in *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, 4th ed., ed. by Vivien Lowndes, David Marsh, and Gerry Stoker (London: Palgrave, 2018), 125-141.

³² David Campbell, “Poststructuralism,” in *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, ed. by Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 203, 206, 212-213. See also Aslı Çalkıvık, “Poststructuralism and Postmodernism in International Relations,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies* (November 2017); DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.013.102>.

Nietzsche who has long been regarded – or we could even say “revered” – by many, as the “father of postmodernism.”³³

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)

Nietzsche’s celebrated “postmodern” attitude may be summed up in the well-known Latin expression that he borrowed from the ancient Skeptics: “*de omnibus dubitandum*.”³⁴ Of course, it literally means “doubt everything.” The rationale behind such skepticism can be gleaned from the goal that Nietzsche himself set for his writings, especially beginning from the middle period.³⁵ On the 1882 original edition’s back cover of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche made it clear that the “common goal [of his writings] ... is to *erect a new image and ideal of the free spirit*.”³⁶ It is essential to keep this in mind because, as Will Dudley underscores, throughout his oeuvre Nietzsche is “engaged in determining the ontology of freedom, or what it is to be free.”³⁷ That is why I would also argue that “Nietzschean philosophizing is ultimately aimed towards our becoming free spirits.”³⁸ But what, or who, are free spirits?

³³ Peter Berkovitz once famously remarked of Nietzsche as the “founding father of postmodernism, a ground-breaking critic of the underlying moral and metaphysical assumptions of the Western tradition, a seminal figure in the elaboration of the politics of identity, difference, and self-making.” See Peter Berkovitz, *Nietzsche: The Ethics of an Immoralist* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), ix.

³⁴ See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. by Reginald J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 2003), § 2.

³⁵ Scholars generally divide Nietzsche’s writings into the early (1872-76), middle (1878-85), and late (1886-88) periods.

³⁶ See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974). It must be understood that, as Nietzsche points it out himself, the free spirits are an ideal, meaning, they are not yet a reality or perhaps may never be at all. And near the end of the middle period, Nietzsche preferred using the term “overman” (*Übermensch*), the “more perfected version” of the free spirits. See Sheridan Hough, *Nietzsche’s Noontide Friend: The Self as Metaphoric Double* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 88.

³⁷ Will Dudley, *Hegel, Nietzsche, and Philosophy: Thinking Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 238.

³⁸ Alexis Deodato S. Itao, “The Incarnation of the Free Spirits in Nietzsche: A Continuum of Triple Dialectic,” *Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy* 12, no. 1 (June 2018): 255; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25138/12.1.a13>.

To begin with, a free spirit (*Freigeist*) for Nietzsche refers to “that *very free* man, who may in fact be far too free.”³⁹ Without a doubt, such a man is *very free* because he has complete “independence” (*Unabhängigkeit*), that is, the “*freedom to do something* (positive), and ... [the] *freedom from* certain kinds of constraints (negative).”⁴⁰ In other words, “free spirits are ... essentially those who have liberated themselves from all types of bondage like cultural impositions, religious dogmatisms, and intellectualism of all kinds grounded on traditional metaphysics, epistemology, science, etc.”⁴¹ Having been liberated from all these bondages, free spirits are basically “those few who are no longer chained by the fetters of history, culture, philosophy, science, morality, and religion.”⁴²

To become and remain a free spirit, therefore, it is imperative for individuals aspiring to be one, and even more so for those who have already become one, “not to remain attached to (*hängen geblieben an*)” anything that could get them stuck and make them unfree.⁴³ We can thus expect them to “firstly be critical, questioning everything.”⁴⁴ This brings us back to the maxim “*de omnibus dubitandum*.” Free spirits doubt everything and question everything in that “they mistrust the data supplied by the intellect; they question the ability of language to capture the essence of reality and to express truths; [and] they doubt the authority of science, religion, and philosophy.”⁴⁵ It means that it is by being “as suspicious and wary of” practically everything that a free spirit succeeds in “detaching oneself from

³⁹ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, § 256. Emphasis by Nietzsche. See also the Preface and § 44 and 230.

⁴⁰ Christa Davis Acampora, “Being Unattached: Freedom and Nietzsche’s Free Spirits,” in *Nietzsche’s Free Spirit Philosophy*, ed. by Rebecca Bamford (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 189. Emphasis by Acampora.

⁴¹ Itao, “The Incarnation of the Free Spirits in Nietzsche,” *Kritike* 12, no. 1 (June 2018): 264.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 256-257.

⁴³ Richard Schacht, “Nietzsche’s ‘Free Spirit,’” in *Nietzsche’s Free Spirit Philosophy*, 181. See also Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, § 41.

⁴⁴ Itao, “The Incarnation of the Free Spirits in Nietzsche,” *Kritike* 12, no. 1 (June 2018): 258.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 264. Nietzsche’s skepticism, however, is not similar to the epistemological skepticism of the ancient Skeptics, wherein nothing could be held as true. Nietzsche is open to, and in fact accepts, truths. It is just that he highly disapproves of dogmatism in all forms.

various things to which one very probably and humanly will have been attached."⁴⁶

A free spirit, then, is a "*no mere critic*" but one who is particularly meticulous.⁴⁷ As such, he subjects everything "to critical scrutiny ... [and to] a strong suspicion."⁴⁸ As a consequence, a free spirit is "*free from* certain claims of society, particularly those regarded as customary and binding ... [and is thus] not *bound* to the morality of custom, convention, superstition, or even morality itself."⁴⁹ In short, a free spirit is one who enjoys "a certain kind of independence that fettered spirits lack."⁵⁰ But again, every free spirit's independence is always thanks to his critical attitude, the kind of attitude that would later on characterize the postmodern period — nay, postmodernism itself.

Jean-François Lyotard (1924-1998)

What is arguably the most succinct definition of postmodernism comes from the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard, for whom postmodernism is no other than an "incredulity toward metanarratives."⁵¹ So postmodernism is firstly this attitude of incredulity, the typical critical attitude of Nietzsche's free spirits. The word "incredulity" itself clearly denotes not only unbelief but also skepticism. But this incredulity is no longer an exclusive attribute of free spirits; rather, in Lyotard's view, this has already become "the postmodern condition ... at this very postmodern moment."⁵² That means to say that people in general nowadays have simply become unbelieving. And Lyotard explicitly states that this rampant incredulity is specifically *toward* what he calls "metanarratives." But what exactly are metanarratives? And why is it that many people do not embrace them anymore?

⁴⁶ Schacht, "Nietzsche's 'Free Spirit,'" in *Nietzsche's Free Spirit Philosophy*, 181.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 180. Emphasis by Schacht.

⁴⁸ Richard Schacht, Introduction to Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human All Too Human: Book for Free Spirits*, trans. by Reginald J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), xv.

⁴⁹ Acampora, "Being Unattached," in *Nietzsche's Free Spirit Philosophy*, 190. Emphasis by Acampora.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiv.

⁵² *Ibid.*, xxiv-xxv.

For Lyotard, metanarratives refer to all those “theories that claim to be able to explain everything.”⁵³ To put it another way, metanarratives are those “overarching stories that we use to justify activities, institutions, values and cultural forms. They include ideologies, religions, notions of progress, the efficacy of psychoanalysis or benefits of capitalism, and other broad assumptions that underpin much of what we think and do.”⁵⁴ Certainly, their best examples are Marxism (ideology) and Christianity (religion). What is problematic about these metanarratives is that they all tend to impose their claims as universal and unquestionable truths, wrapped with “some kind of purity or absoluteness.”⁵⁵ However, in doing so, these metanarratives unfortunately become oppressive and authoritarian, greatly limiting and curtailing “our sensitivity to differences and ... our ability to tolerate the incommensurable.”⁵⁶ This is precisely why metanarratives have already “ceased to attract support and found their authority, their powers of ‘legitimation’ as Lyotard conceived of it, draining away.”⁵⁷ As the late Br. Romualdo “Romy” Abulad aptly puts it, “Lyotard’s assessment of [postmodernism] as a rejection of metanarratives is a faithful description of our time.”⁵⁸ Many people in our time have “simply stopped believing in [them].”⁵⁹ Indeed, the emergence, or better yet the prevalence, of this incredulity, of this critical attitude in our times, “seems to sum up the ethos of postmodernism, with its disdain for authority in all its many guises.”⁶⁰

⁵³ Stuart Sim, “Postmodernism and Philosophy,” in *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, ed. by Stuart Sim (London: Routledge, 2001), 8. See also Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, xxiii.

⁵⁴ Ian Adams and R.W. Dyson, “Jean-François Lyotard (1924-98),” *Fifty Major Political Thinkers* (London: Routledge, 2003), 193.

⁵⁵ Stephen Melville, “Postmodernism and Art: Postmodernism Now and Again,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism*, ed. by Steven Connor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 83.

⁵⁶ Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, xxv.

⁵⁷ Stuart Sim, “Jean-François Lyotard (1924-98),” *Fifty Key Postmodern Thinkers* (London: Routledge, 2013), 180.

⁵⁸ Romualdo E. Abulad, “Filipino Postmodernity: Quo Vadis?” *Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy* 13, no. 2 (December 2019): 51; DOI: [10.25138/13.2.a.2](https://doi.org/10.25138/13.2.a.2).

⁵⁹ Sim, “Postmodernism and Philosophy,” in *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, 9.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

Richard Rorty (1931-2007)

Another colossal figure in postmodernism is Richard Rorty. Like Nietzsche and Lyotard, Rorty also espoused a critical attitude that is characteristic of postmodernism. Whereas Nietzsche's ideal "postmodern" man is a free spirit, Rorty's is a "liberal ironist" who he defined as a person who is skeptical and critical about the idea of final or metavocabularies.⁶¹ Rorty's rejection of metavocabularies stems from his conviction that "everything is contingent."⁶² This conviction is rooted in Rorty's own belief that "[t]here is no truth."⁶³ But what he actually meant is not that we could never find truth but that

[t]ruth cannot be out there — cannot exist independently of the human mind — because sentences cannot so exist, or be out there. The world is out there but descriptions of the world are not. Only descriptions of the world can be true or false. The world on its own — unaided by the describing activities of human beings — cannot.⁶⁴

In effect, what Rorty would like to say is that "[t]he world does not speak. Only we do. The world can, once we have programmed ourselves with a language, cause us to hold beliefs. But it cannot propose a language for us to speak. Only other human beings can do that."⁶⁵ For this reason, Rorty averred that "since truth is a property of sentences, since sentences are dependent for their existence upon vocabularies, and since vocabularies are made by human beings, so are truths."⁶⁶ It can thus be concluded that "*languages* are made rather than found and that truth is a property of linguistic entities, of sentences."⁶⁷ The huge implication is that "if languages are made, then

⁶¹ Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 74.

⁶² Alexis Deodato S. Ito, "The Problem of Standardized Education in the Light of Richard Rorty's Concept of Contingency," *RTH - Research Trends in Humanities, Education & Philosophy* 7 (2020): 63.

⁶³ Richard Rorty, *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1.

⁶⁴ Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 5.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 7. Emphasis by Rorty.

all language is contingent.”⁶⁸ This is why Rorty did not hesitate to give out the challenge that we better forego any attempt to search for truth.⁶⁹ After all, in his view, it is never possible to find a final or metavocabulary that is applicable to everyone, everywhere, and for all time.⁷⁰

This is where the liberal ironists come into the picture. Rorty thought of them as “those who recognize and embrace the contingency of their most central beliefs and desires” and live as perennial skeptics of metavocabularies.⁷¹ In addition to their critical attitude, liberal ironists are also a people of deep compassion, for their constant “hope [is] that suffering will be diminished, that the humiliation of human beings by other human beings may cease.”⁷²

For Rorty, of course, one of the harshest forms of suffering and humiliation that humans can inflict on their fellow humans are forceful impositions: that is, when humans impose and force their own vocabularies on others and insist that these be accepted as absolute truths.⁷³ Thus, in order to lessen future instances of harsh suffering and humiliation, Rorty envisioned the establishment of “a liberal community ... a society where there is freedom from pain and humiliation and where open-mindedness is practiced.”⁷⁴ Such a society is obviously a utopia, but if it were to exist in reality, it would definitely be “a society of ironists ... [whose] members do not accept any vocabulary as final — be it theirs or others’ vocabulary.”⁷⁵

⁶⁸ Itao, “The Problem of Standardized Education in the Light of Richard Rorty’s Concept of Contingency,” *RTH* 7 (2020): 55.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ See Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, xvi.

⁷¹ Itao, “The Problem of Standardized Education in the Light of Richard Rorty’s Concept of Contingency,” *RTH* 7 (2020): 56.

⁷² Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, xv.

⁷³ See *ibid.*, 88, 91-94.

⁷⁴ Itao, “The Problem of Standardized Education in the Light of Richard Rorty’s Concept of Contingency,” *RTH* 7 (2020): 56. See also Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 51-52.

⁷⁵ Itao, “The Problem of Standardized Education in the Light of Richard Rorty’s Concept of Contingency,” *RTH* 7 (2020): 56. See also Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 51-52.

A Postmodern Evaluation

Let us now return to the question: Why did the repeated calls of some Catholic bishops and priests to the Filipino electorate to vote for Robredo and set aside Marcos Jr. go unheeded? I believe the answer to this question was perfectly phrased by Br. Romy Abulad who, in one of his last published articles, announced: “We have just crossed the border, emerged from the transition age, and entered postmodernity.”⁷⁶ If we accept Br. Abulad's contention, then we can very well say that the reason why the repeated calls of some Catholic bishops and priests went unheeded is that the majority of the Filipino electorate have already become postmodern. And what is more, we not only have one but at least three indicators that can support this claim.

First, ever since the election of Duterte, the Catholic hierarchy's attempts to “guide” the Filipinos in their political decisions have all fallen on deaf ears. As Fr. Ranhilio Aquino relates,

in 2016, many bishops and priests came out openly against Rodrigo Duterte because of his imprudent loquaciousness. But the nation gave him 16 million votes. This time, in the face of every insult, slur and charge, the nation gave Marcos 30 plus million votes. It might be difficult to pin down what exactly the voters saw, felt or found in Marcos that caused such a wave of votes to carry him to Malacañang. The only thing that can be said is that ... it was also the repudiation by the multitude of the anointing by the elite, the posturing of the supposed “intelligentsia,” the disente.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Abulad, “Filipino Postmodernity: *Quo Vadis?*” *Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy* 13, no. 2 (December 2019): 55.

⁷⁷ Fr. Ranhilio Callangan Aquino, “The Church and the elections,” *The Manila Times*, 30 May 2022; <https://www.manilatimes.net/2022/05/30/opinion/columns/the-church-and-the-elections/1845503>.

Now what do all these accounts evoke, if not the impression that in a certain sense, the majority of the Filipino electorate who voted then for Duterte and now Marcos Jr., have become like free spirits? For, despite the incessant clamors of some Catholic bishops and priests, the majority of the Filipino electorate never felt compelled to blindly follow the dictates of their religious leaders. Instead, like the free spirits of Nietzsche, most Filipinos *very freely* voted the candidates that they wanted to in the last elections, indicating how they are also *very free from* the fetters of their religion. Hence, the political moralism of some Catholic bishops and priests made no significant impact at all.

If truth be told, though, it is not only in recent years that Filipinos have displayed the peculiar traits of free spirits. Philippine history tells us that Filipinos have always valued the importance of being free, such that we have outstanding figures like Jose Rizal, Marcelo del Pilar, Graciano Lopez-Jaena, Andres Bonifacio, and Emilio Jacinto, to name a few. These men bravely went against Mother Spain and the Catholic Church because they all thought that their fellow countrymen deserved to live as free spirits — that is, free from colonial authority (Spain) and also from the shackles of religion (Roman Catholicism).

If we are to examine further, the aspiration of the Propagandists and the Katipuneros did not actually die with them. Beginning from the time of the American occupation, a slow yet steady effusion of “religious decolonization” has been taking shape in the psyche of many Filipinos.⁷⁸ Although this has never really translated into a large-scale religious exodus, Fr. Danny Huang, S.J. keenly observed that “in the past decade or so, Philippine culture has been transformed, and is still being significantly altered, by the processes of globalization and urbanization.”⁷⁹ And so thanks to these very same processes, we now have an “emerging global, postmodern culture in the Philippines” — a culture that has consequently led many young Filipinos to adopt the postmodern outlook that each one should be “free to decide for

⁷⁸ Cf. Dionisio M. Miranda, SVD, *Loob: The Filipino Within — A Preliminary Investigation into a Pre-theological Moral Anthropology* (Manila: Logos Publications, 2021), 19-22.

⁷⁹ Daniel Patrick Huang, S.J., “Emerging Global, Postmodern Culture in the Philippines,” *Landas* 13, no. 1 (1999): 49.

himself or herself what is true and good, as long these choices don't harm anyone else."⁸⁰

It can therefore be argued that the seeds of postmodernism have long been taking root in the psychological and political terrains of many Filipino voters. Thus in this light, what happened during the 2016 and 2022 presidential elections may be interpreted as the points of maturation, the blossoming of those seeds — a vivid indication that Filipinos have already evolved into a postmodern electorate, or perhaps, into a nation of free spirits who refuse to bow down to the dictates of political moralists like some Catholic bishops and priests.

Second, after the last Aquino administration, many Filipinos have already become sick and tired, and thus are deeply incredulous, of liberal democracy — the underlying metanarrative whose fundamental principles formed and informed the policies of the Aquino government.⁸¹ The problem with liberal democracy, at least in the Philippine context, is that it has mainly been played and dominated by “Western-educated and privileged intellectuals who are detached from the everyday Filipino.”⁸² Worse, this setup “has

⁸⁰ Ibid., 51. In Fr. Huang's view, however, postmodernism is generally negative, devoid “of substantive common values and meanings, ... [and thus] lacks that unifying sense of origin, or *telos*,” so that it is nothing more than an amalgam of “aimless relativism and fragmented pluralism (ibid., 52).” Still, despite its apparent flaws and limitations, postmodernism is not really totally negative. This is the view of four respected Filipino thinkers who, after having made more in-depth studies on this topic, consider postmodernism as something positive. For details, see Mary Irene Clare O. Deleña and Raymond John D. Vergara, “Postmodernism from the Perspectives of Filipino Philosophers: Abulad, Co, Demeterio, and Pavo,” *Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy* 12, no. 1 (June 2018): 140-161; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25138/12.1.a7>.

⁸¹ The late former president Benigno Simeon Aquino III and his supporters belong to the Liberal Party, whose fundamental political philosophy is anchored on liberalism or liberal democracy. The Philippines, however, “has a long liberal tradition that cannot be limited to the Liberal Party.” According to Lisandro Claudio, liberalism in the country can be traced all the way back to the time of Rizal and del Pilar. For details, see Lisandro Claudio, “What is Liberalism, and Why Is It Such a Dirty Word?” *Esquire*, 7 April 2017; <https://www.esquiremag.ph/politics/opinion/liberalism-a1655-20170407-lfrm>. Meanwhile, *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines liberalism as a “political doctrine that takes protecting and enhancing the freedom of the individual to be the central problem of politics.” For more information, see Kenneth Minogue, “Liberalism,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 13 May 2022; <https://www.britannica.com/topic/liberalism>.

⁸² Matthew David Ordoñez and Anthony Lawrence Borja, “Philippine liberal democracy under siege: the ideological underpinnings of Duterte's populist

produced the types of leaders who are driven by self-interests and elitist commitments.”⁸³ Thus when Duterte ran for the highest office in 2016, many Filipinos readily subscribed to his anti-liberal propaganda since they had long been deeply disenchanted “with the liberal-democratic regime that followed Ferdinand Marcos’ overthrow in February 1986.”⁸⁴

And indeed, throughout his entire six years as president, Filipinos consistently gave Duterte high approval ratings based on data from different surveys from July 2016 to June 2022. This only goes to show that the majority of Filipinos are satisfied with Duterte, “the first Philippine president to not render even the minimum obeisance to liberal democratic politics.”⁸⁵ Moreover, in all these six years, Duterte boldly went directly against the leaders of the Catholic Church not just once but even numerous times, openly criticizing them; but still, he was able to maintain the massive support from the citizenry. This further indicates that many Filipinos have already grown incredulous not only of the metanarrative that is liberal democracy but also of another metanarrative: the seemingly infallible and inerrant teaching authority of their religious leaders. No wonder, despite the aggressive campaign staged by some Catholic bishops and priests against Marcos Jr., their best efforts still failed. The majority of the Filipino electorate have simply transformed into postmodern voters, unapologetically ignoring their religious leaders’ teaching and moral authority, and even overwhelmingly electing Marcos Jr. to succeed Duterte. Besides, the Filipino electorate are also wholly aware that those politically active Catholic bishops and priests are actually advocating for a return to liberal democracy.⁸⁶ And that was their fatal

challenge,” *Philippine Political Science Journal* 39, no. 2 (2018): 144; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01154451.2018.1537627>.

⁸³ Christopher Ryan B. Maboloc, “Situating the Mindanao Agenda in the Radical Politics of President Duterte,” *Iqra: Journal of the Al Qalam Institute* 4, no. 1 (2017): 8.

⁸⁴ Walden Bello, “Duterte’s Revolt against Liberal Democracy,” *Global Dialogue: Magazine of the International Sociological Association* 7, no. 2 (2021). <https://globaldialogue.isa-sociology.org/dutertes-revolt-against-liberal-democracy/>.

⁸⁵ Lisandro E. Claudio and Patricio N. Abinales, “Dutertismo, Maoismo, Nasyonalismo,” in *A Duterte Reader: Critical Essays on Rodrigo Duterte’s Early Presidency*, ed. by Nicole Curato (Manila: Ateneo de Manila Press, 2017), 93.

⁸⁶ See Richard Heydarian, “The Catholic Church versus Duterte: A conservative institution turns into a bastion of resistance against the Filipino

mistake, for such tiresome metanarratives as liberal democracy and infallible religious authority have already exhausted the majority who, in turn, have also discarded these very same metanarratives in the elections.

Furthermore, the common narratives of Duterte's critics often attribute his political victory to his launching of "a populist revolt that shook the country's liberal-democratic institutions to their foundations."⁸⁷ Yet what these critics fail to realize is that "[p]opulism is but a tsunami caused by political illiberalism as a movement in political tectonics."⁸⁸ Populism, in short, is a mere effect; however, its causes are "something older and more fundamental, namely, political illiberalism."⁸⁹ Albeit mostly unnoticed and even ignored, illiberalism has always been there, serving as a perennial counternarrative to liberalism. One scholar even claimed that "we should consider illiberalism to be in permanent situational relation to liberalism."⁹⁰ Now the somewhat unexpected collapse of liberalism in the 2016 elections — and yet again in 2019 and 2022 — could therefore only mean that illiberalism has now gained the upper hand in the Philippine political arena. And the main reason illiberalism thrives in many political spheres is postmodernism. That is to say, "illiberalism functions in a postmodern world" way better than in a politically, religiously, and morally conservative setting.⁹¹ In a word, it is not only illiberalism that gives rise to populism. Postmodernism is also — and

strongman," *Nikkei Asia*, 6 February 2018; <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/The-Catholic-Church-versus-Duterte>.

⁸⁷ Richard Heydarian, "The Return of the Marcos Dynasty," *Journal of Democracy* 33, no. 3 (July 2022): 67; DOI: [10.1353/jod.2022.0040](https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2022.0040).

⁸⁸ Anthony Lawrence A. Borja, "Conceptualizing Political Illiberalism: A Long Overdue Index of Illiberal Political Values," *Philippine Political Science Journal* 43 (2022): 51; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/2165025x-bja10027>.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 28. To add more clarity, Gábor Scheiring defined illiberalism as "a set of contemporary political practices of government and social relations in the economy and culture, comprising a divergence from the norms and practices of pluralist, constitutional liberal democratic governance." For details, see Gábor Scheiring, "The Social Requisites of Illiberalism," in *Routledge Handbook of Illiberalism*, ed. by András Sajó, Renáta Uitz, and Stephen Holmes (New York: Routledge, 2022), 600.

⁹⁰ Marlene Laruelle, "Illiberalism: A Conceptual Introduction," *East European Politics* 38, no. 2 (2022): 304; DOI: [10.1080/21599165.2022.2037079](https://doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2022.2037079).

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 310.

even significantly — responsible for advancing populism.⁹² It is crucial to highlight this because this supports the thesis that the majority of the Filipino electorate have already become postmodern, and hence, are in general incredulous of metanarratives. This also explains why the majority of Filipinos have grown unsympathetic to the agenda of liberalism and likewise indifferent to the allure of political moralism. Hence, the lopsided victory of Marcos Jr. only strongly attests that the zeitgeist of the Filipino electorate, from 2016 up to the present, has now become post-liberal and postmodern.

Third, according to Dr. Ryan Maboloc, Marcos Jr.'s victory is in part because the people saw in his presidency a direct continuity of Duterte's.⁹³ Hence, no matter what some Catholic bishops and priests would do and say, they could never convince the now "postmodernized" electorate to change their views and vote for Robredo. Somehow, the majority of the Filipino electorate have recognized and realized that the political pronouncements of their religious leaders, who mainly resort to moral harangues, cannot be taken as final vocabularies. Such a critical attitude towards the political moralism of some Catholic bishops and priests has, to some degree, made the Filipino electorate akin to the liberal ironists of Rorty. For like Rorty's liberal ironists, most Filipinos also sincerely yearn for "a society where there is freedom from pain and humiliation."⁹⁴ Whereas, before the time of Duterte, the Catholic hierarchy was a political powerhouse whose exhortations were taken and obeyed without question. But after Duterte became president, following Duterte's very own defiance of, and antipathy towards the Catholic hierarchy, many of the citizenry have also learned how to defy and disregard the forceful impositions of some Catholic bishops and priests. And that was precisely what happened in the last elections, when more than 31 million Filipinos voted for Marcos Jr. to

⁹² Cf. Hans Blokland, "How Postmodernism Advanced Populism: An Inside Story From The Netherlands," *Social Science Works*, 21 December 2017; <https://socialscienceworks.org/how-postmodernism-advanced-populism-an-inside-story-from-the-netherlands/>.

⁹³ Christopher Ryan B. Maboloc, quoted in Maya Padillo, "EDSA failed, a Marcos is back: AdDU Prof," *Edge Davao*, 12 May 2022; <https://edgedavao.net/latest-news/2022/05/12/edsa-failed-a-marcos-is-back-addu-prof/>.

⁹⁴ Itao, "The Problem of Standardized Education in the Light of Richard Rorty's Concept of Contingency," *RTH 7* (2020): 56. See also Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 51-52.

be the next president: they conveyed a clear message that they do not want to be dictated upon by their religious leaders on political matters; and that, with their collective choice, they have given their faith to Marcos Jr. whom they see as the most fitting to continue the legacy of Duterte.

So I would reiterate that the majority of the Filipino electorate have indeed already become postmodern. As Prof. Antonio Contreras confirms, “the Filipino mind is one that celebrates the multiplicity of narratives. We are, at the very least, a clear example of the postmodern — one that celebrates the polyvocality of life, where many voices emerge to provide different views of human experience.”⁹⁵ And similar to Rorty's liberal ironists, postmodern Filipinos are actually open-minded people, very welcoming of novel and foreign ideas, but also equally resentful of any form of suffocating and oppressive domination. This is why, when the pro-liberal politicians and advocates tried to reassert and reclaim their hegemonic position in the last three elections, the vast majority of the Filipinos muzzled them with what Dr. Maboloc calls a “language of dissent.”⁹⁶

The Filipinos have had enough experience of being oppressed, suffering centuries of colonial rule and control. Thus when some Catholic bishops and priests “broke from decades of political neutrality to speak out against the campaign of Ferdinand ‘Bongbong’ Marcos Jr.,” many Filipinos felt repulsed, refusing to hear out the political moralism of their religious leaders who, in their view, already “became tools of oppression.”⁹⁷ Having practically become postmodern, Filipinos have no more tolerance for forceful impositions. Unfortunately for some Catholic bishops and priests, they totally misread the current zeitgeist and political vision of the Filipino

⁹⁵ Antonio P. Contreras, “Governance in a Postmodern World: Challenges for Philippine Science and Politics,” *Philosophia* 38, no. 2 (2009): 213.

⁹⁶ Maboloc, “Situating the Mindanao Agenda in the Radical Politics of President Duterte,” *Iqra: Journal of the Al Qalam Institute* 4, no. 1 (2017): 3.

⁹⁷ Mark Saludes, “Catholic nation? The Filipino Church rethinks its role in politics,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 29 June 2022; <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-Pacific/2022/0629/Catholic-nation-The-Filipino-Church-rethinks-its-role-in-politics>.

electorate.⁹⁸ They failed to see that contemporary Filipinos have now transformed the nation into “a society which already has a preponderance of de facto postmodern attributes.”⁹⁹

Conclusion

The resounding defeat of Leni Robredo in the last elections effectively silenced many of those who were at the forefront in smearing the reputation and sabotaging the candidacy of Marcos Jr. They include some Catholic bishops and priests, one of whom humbly confessed that the election results were indeed a heavy slap to their faces, a tremendous rebuke to their pride and authority.¹⁰⁰ But they should have seen it coming, as the CBCP itself had already clearly forewarned the clergy two decades ago that “[f]or them to take an active part in partisan politics, with its wheeling and dealing, compromises, confrontational and adversarial positions, would be to weaken their teaching authority and destroy the unity they represent and protect.”¹⁰¹ Even prior to this forewarning from the CBCP, an earlier Vatican document also categorically emphasized that “[t]he reduction of [a priest’s] mission to temporal tasks, of a purely social or political nature, is foreign to his ministry, and does not constitute a triumph but rather a grave loss to the Church’s evangelical fruitfulness.”¹⁰² But what did some Catholic bishops and priests do? Instead of busying themselves in teaching the chief tenets of Catholicism, they busied themselves in advancing their political moralism. Rather than doing religious catechesis, they went full blast in doing political cathexis. And the rest, as we know it, is history.

⁹⁸ Cf. Alexis Deodato S. Itao, “The Political Vision of Contemporary Filipinos: A Ricoeurian Reading of Duterte’s Popular Presidency,” *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy* Special Issue (December 2018): 121-160.

⁹⁹ Antonio P. Contreras, “Investigating Postmodern Politics in the Philippines Using Reflexivity Theory,” *Philippine Political Science Journal* 32, no. 55 (2011): 74; DOI: [10.1080/01154451.2011.9723532](https://doi.org/10.1080/01154451.2011.9723532).

¹⁰⁰ See Franco Jose C. Baroña, “Poll results a ‘slap in Church’s face,’” *The Manila Times*, 11 June 2022; https://www.manilatimes.net/2022/06/11/news/national/poll-results-a-slap-in-churchs-face/1846881?fbclid=IwAR2wzDNHvM_wyYL5x3_ukXraHGxf4kygp-OyAvEuYJeFEty1nusOowqG2U.

¹⁰¹ Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, “Catechism on Church and Politics,” III.2, *CBCP Online*, February 1998; <https://cbcponline.net/catechism-on-the-church-and-politics/>.

¹⁰² *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests* 33.

Marcos Jr. is now the new president and it is the postmodern Filipino electorate who have placed him there.

Vis-à-vis the postmodern transformation of the political and electoral preferences of many Filipinos, resorting to political moralism smacks of an unintelligible and anachronistic battle cry. It simply does not work anymore. As Peter Drucker says, "The greatest danger in times of turbulence is not the turbulence: it is to act with yesterday's logic."¹⁰³ In these postmodern times, what is apropos is definitely not political moralism; instead, what we need is continuing dialogue and a renewed collective commitment to live the spirit of *bayanihan* so that together, we can move towards a brighter Filipino tomorrow.

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¹⁰³ Peter Drucker, *Managing in Turbulent Societies* (London: Heinemann, 1980).

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