



The Encumbered Radical Democracy

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Abstract

This paper will explore the encumbered aspect of radical democracy to the moral forces of the community and argue that radical democracy is heavily tied to the communal values of the people. This is possible because the realization of democracy is essentially a call for justice, and justice is inseparable from the people's background. Moreover, freedom is the normative content of democracy, and this freedom is the principle of justice. From this, democracy is the power central to the people. This is not a centralized power or a form of government. The centrality of power to the people can manifest in both formal and informal organizations, as long as like-minded individuals embrace power for a common cause. Democracy is realized if people empower themselves. The empowerment of the people is not only enjoyed exclusively but publicly; a public happiness that is based on common goals.

Keywords: Community, Justice, Self-identity, Public Happiness, Higaonon

Introduction: The Argument of Encumbered Self-Identity

The intention of the paper is heavily grounded in the discussion of the encumbered self-identity in the critique of liberalism. This is intended to envisage the encumbered aspect of radical democracy in the life-world background of the people. Especially, the notion of justice is never external to one's community. The inseparability of justice to one's community is undeniable because the self-identity is rooted in community and environment. In this line of thought, the people's realization of democracy is the realization of their sense of freedom imbued with communal values and aims.

In Michael Sandel's discussion on *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, he pointed out that the self cannot be abstracted from one's situatedness. This argument was developed because of the problem of the perspective of the self that was endorsed by liberalism. Liberalism insists on the primacy of justice, where it prioritizes the right over the good. This means that the good, expressed in the welfare and satisfaction of desires, cannot outweigh the right.¹ In this case, the good and right were distinguished, and the notion of right (justice) is independent of any conceptions of the good.

The emphasis on the priority of justice means that this prioritizes the self. This is necessary by emphasizing that the self, like justice and right, is independent from any external objects. This means that the "I" is not defined nor bounded by any of its surroundings. The self is conceived to be barren, and the value of the self is only attached to the notion of the capacity to choose, or known as autonomy. The state of the self is irreducible because autonomy is the inner worth.

The irreducibility of the self is best illustrated in John Rawls' discussion of the Archimedean point, where he proposed a hypothetical starting point. Inside this abstract notion, the self becomes disembodied or un-situated, entering a neutral concept of the self. Rawls developed his original position because he intended to achieve a conception of justice that is compatible with free and equal citizens. The original position is a contract theory that achieves fair agreement and procedures. This idea was developed because of the problem of the plurality of values embraced by the people in the society. Principles of justice that will regulate the basic structure are

¹ Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, 2nd Edition (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 18.

chosen that are acceptable to different backgrounds and leanings. Rawls, therefore, wanted to achieve a conception of justice that is compatible with or shared by citizens as a basis of a reasoned, informed, and willing political engagement.² The parties involved in the contract will agree on the principles of justice chosen. The notion of justice is chosen rather than being arbitrary. This is crucial in the Rawlsian approach because Rawls wanted to avoid the contingencies of human affairs that may put others at an advantage point, and some are at a disadvantage. These tendencies will be nullified in the veil of ignorance.³

In the original position, the background values, the same as in religious or comprehensive moral doctrines, cannot be endorsed in formulating the principle of justice as the basis of society.⁴ This engagement is possible through citizens' public reasoning where it formulates justice that overlaps their differences and achieves principles that are not conflicting with theirs. The original position with the 'veil of ignorance' abstracts the persons to achieve a fair and equal agreement.⁵ However, stripping down all the constitutive attachments of the person is a problem, rather than realizing the liberating project of liberalism. This formulation is precisely the conceptual limit of liberal justice, seeing the person as empty.

What Liberalism will do is bracket comprehensive moral and religious doctrine that can contribute to or offer significant ideals. For instance, in the case of the moral permissibility of abortion, there are contending ideas that come from religious and moral claims. Abortion, as an insistence based on women's rights, can be considered a moral claim. On the other hand, religious doctrines will prohibit abortion. There is no clear-cut explanation as to why women's insistence should prevail over the religious stand against abortion. If the religious doctrine is right, the act of bracketing religious doctrine poses a problem. Especially for Sandel, the government should not choose either side because the contending claims are expressions of moral and religious doctrine.⁶ This question illustrates the idea that certain

² John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 9.

³ Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, 126.

⁴ *Ibid*, 10.

⁵ *Ibid*, 23.

⁶ *Ibid*, 198.

questions cannot bracket religious and moral claims. Ideally, both claims must be rejected by liberalism because public reasoning should be neutral and should abstain from any conception of the good based on the moral force of one's background.

Conceptually, the difficulty of disregarding communal backgrounds proves that it is impossible to think of a person as wholly independent. Persons are always constituted by the moral forces coming from their backgrounds as members of a family, community, nation, and the like.⁷ Instead, the self is radically situated with the existing values. Ideas of justice will always be an expression of the good. This means that justice is always attached to the situation and the community of values of the people. Justice is in the community, not independent of it.

Following the critical argument of Sandel towards the encumbered self-identity, illustrating that justice and good will always be attached to moral forces, this paper will argue that radical democracy is also attached on the same grounds. This includes the communal values embraced by the people. This is possible since freedom is the normative content of democracy, and freedom is the principle of justice. The achievement of empowerment in radical democracy will always be an expression of justice from a particular community. As Lummis expressed, in the face of the plurality of cultures, there is always a democratic vision from the respective culture. Democracy becomes a shared meaning because it is a communal goal.

Radical Democracy

Charles Douglas Lummis offers his critique of democracy, emphasizing the etymological roots of radical democracy. This serves as the starting point for establishing a theoretical framework. However, this framework is not institutional since democracy cannot be institutionalized.⁸ Rather, radical democracy is pointed out as a real power of the people.

Democracy is not only a power of the people, but a radical power. It is not the same as the modified types like liberal or socialist

⁷ Ibid, 179.

⁸ C. Douglas Lummis, *Radical Democracy* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), 159.

democracy. The radicality of democracy is an intensified power that refers to a primordial type of power, which is derivative only to the actions of the people and not generated by any institution. The radicality of democracy reflects the subversive aspect that goes against any unjust status quo. As Lummis would say, radical democracy is “quite precisely the thing itself.”⁹ It is the people – the very ‘thing’ of democracy – the source of power and legitimacy, and not coming from anything outside the people.

Democracy denies the class difference that there is democracy in a class. It also denies that democracy can be represented even if people support a leader. Lummis rather explores the civil society. In this context, democracy does not mean a power realized by anyone, but only by those who are like-minded people or radical democrats. This like-mindedness can take the form of civil society. To understand, Lummis argued that democracy is realized in a radical type of civil society.¹⁰ Civil society refers to the power autonomously generated separately from the established power (e.g., state control). The autonomous power of civil society does not aim to abolish or replace the state. Rather, the power of the people antagonizes the power of the state, since it is against the state. It can take different forms of organizations and diverse groups. These groups are either formal or informal, coming together for different purposes.¹¹

Of course, this type of civil society is not the same as what transpired in the Philippines. With different forms of antagonism present in Philippine society, the friction between the middle class (civil society) and the poor class (mass society) has created a sphere of rejection between moral claims. The civil society has questioned the legitimacy of the mass sphere, while the other did the same thing. The civil society in the Philippines is rather confronted with class differences, especially, different from the ruling elites and the mass sphere. This emergence of civil society is rather identified as moral individuals.

The formation of a civil society of like-minded people is not something that can happen out of nowhere. It is a return to the natural attitude of the people wanting to reclaim power, a power where they

⁹ Ibid, 25.

¹⁰ Ibid, 30

¹¹ Ibid.

are in a state of democracy.¹² The civil society aims for the realization of freedom. According to Lummis, civil society does not demand freedom, but generates it.¹³

The civil society that bears the realization of radical democracy is different. But how exactly is this different? In terms of the condition of realizing democracy, there is an element of trust present in the gathering of like-minded people who reclaim the power. This is emphasized by Lummis in envisaging the realization of radical democracy in greengrocers.¹⁴ It is like thinking of a condition where a democratic civil society emerged because of the oppression by the state. These people are those who can think, speak, and act in freedom after emerging from oppression.¹⁵ This realization is not something that can be found in the vision and mission of the organization. This is mental, which means that people are becoming conscious of a decision to act. Of course, the decision to act is accompanied by fellow actors realizing a new organization out of the decision to act because of being conscious. This can also emerge in existing organizations where the decision to act may occur.

The occurrence of democratic civil society is the result of oppression and, can be said, of the frustration with the government, caused mainly by the decision to stop living in the status quo. This cannot be seen in its emergence due to a government's initiative. This emergence can then be seen in a multiplicity of face-to-face organizations.¹⁶

The occurrence of the organization is not about doing change in the organization, but the people themselves, who decide to change. According to Lummis, the idea of organizational change, discussing Havel, is only secondary, and the reason for this is that change occurs in the people's decision against the status quo and later forms organizations. The power of the people in principle is achieved because the state of mind, the state of democracy, happens when people generate this power, and this is democracy.¹⁷ As Lummis wrote:

¹² Ibid, 35.

¹³ Ibid, 31.

¹⁴ Lummis, *Radical Democracy*, 34.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid, 35.

¹⁷ Ibid.

At the same time, we can imagine a civil society movement acting to reduce state power radically, demilitarizing it and denuclearizing it, eliminating functions that have been made redundant by the autonomous organization of the civil society itself, and reforming or establishing new government institutions appropriate to the new situations.¹⁸

Even though democracy is manifested in civil society and both formal and informal organizations, democracy is also present in each culture. As Lummis discussed, democracy is a way of life.¹⁹ This symbolizes simplicity in the sense that it is expressed in ordinary language. This idea of democracy contrasts with what was elevated to intellectual and philosophical expressions that can only be accessed through academic endeavor. The ordinary language is a shared language. Democracy is carried in ordinary language in which the content of the language is democratic thought.²⁰ Democracy, in this case, has a sense of commonality where people come together, and power can be gathered. There is a common cause.

However, the commonality of democracy poses a difficulty to the cultural situatedness of the people. According to Lummis, democracy is at least being demanded by some community members of each culture in the world.²¹ By this demand, democracy is grounded in cultural empowerment. Despite the differences in culture, democracy can approach this relativity through faith that each culture contains the possibility of a democratic version. The power of democracy can be a way of flourishing where elaboration and intensification can occur.²² Each culture, then, despite the differences, can come together for the common cause of the primacy of justice. Democracy becomes a common denominator in different cultures.

As radical democracy is realized by like-minded people, this explosive power is not dangerous or chaotic but grounded in the notion of trust, which is essential in the realization of power. This

¹⁸ Ibid, 37.

¹⁹ Ibid, 21.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid, 43.

²² Lummis, *Radical Democracy*, 44.

power does not aim to abolish the government, so long as this has already been in a form of representationalism. This power is greater than tanks and armed power; it is a safe power and a non-violent movement. The safety of the power of radical democracy comes with order. Power in democracy is bounded by order, and this is possible because of trust.

What differentiates trust from a contract is that a contract is composed of different and numerous contracts and promises, while trust is grounded on freedom.²³ Since freedom is present, those who trust and the trusted will expect to do what should be and avoid what should not be. This notion of trust produces virtue since it will act as an order for people to follow in achieving power.

It is also undeniable that trust is coupled with a paradox because of betrayal. Even with the tendency of betrayal and the possibility of destroying the promises and contracts, the decision to trust is still there. Despite the madness of the world and the realism of suffering and unworthiness of the people, they still strive to achieve the hope they place in something. This is not about being foolish in just trusting or putting faith in a very unreasonable sense. In this context, trust is elevated to faith, which is to achieve and realize power.²⁴ Trust is no longer just a decision to trust, but an act to judge and to choose.²⁵ Trust or faith in human beings is steadfast despite the possibility of betrayal, because of the democratic vision that is possibly in each person. People cling to the idea that democracy will be realized by like-minded people who will decide, with faith, to realize power and to condition the state based on the freedom of the people. That is why, as Lummis puts it, democracy is here and now.²⁶ This is so because democracy is an action in itself.

Radical Democracy as Collective

Discussing Lummis' version of radical democracy shows that radical democracy is also rooted in communal goals. As democracy is an act, this act is also a public happiness.²⁷ This happiness refers to

²³ Ibid, 143.

²⁴ Ibid, 151.

²⁵ Ibid, 153.

²⁶ Ibid, 37.

²⁷ Ibid, 157.

democracy as a public goal. This public happiness pointed out a kind of goal that is grounded in a common cause; a kind of power that is a shared meaning. This means that radical democracy is also collective.

Along with the collectivity present in radical democracy in achieving public goals, there is also a sense of commonality and shared understanding that can be found in communities, families, friendships, and especially religions. For Sandel, the deliberation on the question of justice and rights cannot proceed without any reference to the expressions of many cultures and traditions.²⁸

Moreover, a sense of collectivity in democracy can be found because it is grounded on communal values and realizes public hope. In terms of communal values, it is discussed that the idea of self-identity is heavily indebted to one's community or culture. This means that it is inherent or immanent to conceptualize justice within the sphere of the community one is in. Justice is essentially encumbered by the situation of the people. Since there is no justice outside the community, justice is collective.

According to Lummis, democracy is a public hope, and this is a realization of the like-minded people or the radical democrats who choose to act and realize power. Democracy is not something experienced exclusively but entirely achieved. It is a public hope, a collective goal. It is the action of the people who choose to act and hold power in their hands. Democracy, as being encumbered and being a public hope, becomes the common good of the people towards the common cause.

Lummis explains that democracy is common sense because it is expressed in ordinary language.²⁹ Democracy, as being ordinary, means simplicity that can be expressed ordinarily, and this simplicity binds the people. The binding principle of democracy comes with the idea of commonality. It is a common cause. This means that the people are bound together with a common cause, which is created through moral discourse, choice, or action.³⁰ For Bolaños, such democracy cannot be reduced to a mere method but rather a goal or ideal.³¹ In addition, it is the participation of all members of a community.

²⁸ Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, 186.

²⁹ Lummis, *Radical Democracy*, 21.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Paolo Bolaños, "Critical Theory and the Prospect of Radical Democracy," *Kritike* 14 no.2 (December 2020): 23.

Since democracy produced cooperation or agreement towards a common cause, there is a presupposition of a community of equals. This sense of equality becomes a shared meaning between members of the community. As defined, the common good refers to the common interests of a particular people as one community bound by the same history, values, traditions, and notions of right and wrong.³² This means there is a common good presupposed in the community that binds the people.

The encumbered aspect of radical democracy does not presuppose that people are imprisoned in the culture and community one is in. This is to illustrate that rationality alone cannot ultimately compensate for the notion of justice and freedom without any regard for the situatedness of one's existence. Radical democracy, in this case, cannot impose power to colonize the ideals of justice of the people, but only approach each culture with faith. The reason for this is that the sense of power in each culture is different, and the democratic vision is practically different from others. However, radical democracy flowers in each culture. Radical democracy is not universal, but an opportunity for each culture to flourish. There is public hope in democracy, and justice is a shared value and meaning in communities.

The Problem of People Power

Lummis explores his notion of democracy, explaining the EDSA people power movement as a manifestation. The movement can be expressed as, to borrow the words of Jacques Rancière, the awakening of "those who have no part partake."³³ The people who were not part of the status quo (the victims of the oppressive control) formed a demonstration to overthrow the dictator. EDSA People Power becomes an enabling agent for radical democracy because it subverts the power of the dictatorial regime. This power then successfully brought down the oppressive power. However, the subversion did not aim to replace nor abolish the institutions but only to reform them based on the idea of justice and this justice is a condition based on people's freedom.³⁴

³² Christopher Ryan Maboloc, *The Question of Justice in Contemporary Liberal Theory* (Cotabato City: ElziStyle, 2024), 86.

³³ See Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus*. New York: Continuum, 2010.

³⁴ Lummis, *Radical Democracy*, 19.

The EDSA, despite its relative success in restoring constitutional democracy, is problematic in some terms. In the case of religious faith, Julius Bautista argues that there was a use and misuse of religious icons during the EDSA revolution. The use of religious icons has become a symbol of protests. This religious backing enables the people to endure harsh and dangerous situations.³⁵ The first occurrence of the EDSA revolution was highly participated by the Catholic church. As Bautista expressed, the success of the EDSA revolution can also be seen as the victory of the Catholic church.³⁶ The church plays an important role in the legitimization of the demonstration. This is rooted in the fact that there is a high participation of the church, especially in using religious icons and faith to demand what they ought to be just. To this extent, there is a question of the legitimacy of the latter movement of the 'People Power' *Dos* and *Tres*.

The later movements of the so-called People Power are tainted with issues. The People Power movement that influenced Estrada's impeachment, known as People Power II, was a success due to his very problematic administration. This movement, however, is tainted with questions of legitimacy because the movement of the people comes from a middle-class segment of the population in Manila, although this movement was also sanctioned by the church. This was headed by one of the important actors of EDSA, namely, Cardinal Sin, who expressed support for the movement and called for reenactment.³⁷ This movement replicates the 1986 EDSA revolution because it is a non-violent demonstration. Meanwhile, Estrada, as a populist leader, captured the sentiments of many poor people because of his pro-poor brand of politics. As a result, his impeachment caused reactions from the mass population.

The impeachment of Estrada caused an outcry from the poor people, which resulted in a people's power movement. However, this is hardly called a people's power because of its origin from the segment of the poor population that wanted to reinstall Estrada in his

³⁵ Julius Bautista, "The Rebellion and the Icon: Holy Revolution in the Philippines," *Asia Research Institute/Southeast Asian Studies Programme National University of Singapore* 34 no.2 (January 2006): 298.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 300.

³⁷ Wataru Kusaka, *Moral Politic in the Philippines*, (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2017), 99.

presidency. The important reason for this question of legitimacy is the church's withdrawal of support for the EDSA Tres (People Power III), which claims that the movement illegally used religious icons.³⁸ This caused friction between EDSA *Dos* and *Tres*.

The friction between the movements of EDSA *Dos* and *Tres* caused the moralization of politics. This developed good and bad branding in politics. Since EDSA *Dos* was sanctioned by the church, this movement is considered to be legitimate. As the scandals of the Erap administration, prayer rallies were formed to demand Erap's resignation. Other strategic groups from the business sector also pushed for the same cause.³⁹ The striking narrative is that the actors of the EDSA *Dos* are considered to be moral citizens. The EDSA *Dos* was the holy revolt of the civil society. Civil society was perceived to be moral citizens because they were aware of the need for change.⁴⁰

On the other hand, the counterdemonstration of the mass sphere, hardly named the EDSA *Tres*, was branded as unorganized and undisciplined. This happened because of the unpleasant behavior of some demonstrators. Speculations even arose that they were on drugs.⁴¹ This is even further demonized by President Arroyo branding the movement as an act of rebellion.⁴² For Bautista, the demonstration was not imbued with the same spiritual sanctity of EDSA *Tres*.⁴³ Much of the friction is due to the latter EDSA reenactment which failed to transcend class conflict and division. In Lummis's perspective, there is no public happiness achieved in this movement.⁴⁴

Undeniably, the People Power movement is significant for insisting on a just and functioning government. However, one problem lies in the transition, in which a leader becomes crucial for democratic realization. In the case of the reformist democratic projects of Cory Aquino and Fidel Ramos, they realized the democratization project of the country. Cory becomes an important factor in the restoration of democracy, and Ramos further achieves democracy, especially the

³⁸ Bautista, "The Rebellion and the Icon: Holy Revolution in the Philippines," 306.

³⁹ Kusaka, *Moral Politic in the Philippines*, 98.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 303.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 106.

⁴² *Ibid*, 104.

⁴³ Bautista, "The Rebellion and the Icon: Holy Revolution in the Philippines," 304.

⁴⁴ Lummis, *Radical Democracy*, 157.

liberalization of the economy. This approach to democracy is problematic because power is not about a leader who will rule; but the people will rule.

Even if there is a constitution, this does not equate to the power of the people. The same goes for the liberalization of democracy. For Lummis, development is anti-democratic by nature. Although Lummis did not reject the development approach, he merely delivered his position of being anti-democratic of development. The position of the undemocratic nature of development, although important, does not equate to democracy. No matter how crucial leaders and their programs and brands are, democracy centralizes the power of the people.

From the gradual occurrence of people's demonstrations against the failed system, the name *People Power* lost its credibility because people are seeking a leader to achieve democracy. This resulted in political branding from leaders like Cory and Ramos' reformist democracy, and Estrada and Duterte's populist democracy.⁴⁵ Moreover, the perspective of People Power becomes symbolic or even rightly called People Power if it happens in Manila or within the same geographical location, especially if the movement is sanctioned by the Catholic church. EDSA becomes the stage for People Power without the real power of the people being realized. Not to mention how the later EDSA movement created derogatory terms distinguishing moral people from those who are not.

The Radical Democracy in the Higaonon Tribe

After the People Power *Dos* and *Tres* pose a question of legitimacy to the realization of democracy, it is rather plausible to think of democracy as a realization of cultural flourishing. As discussed, democracy is encumbered by the notion of justice tied to the radical situatedness of the people. When people decide to empower themselves, it is a call for justice, and this call for justice is a call for communal justice. Communal justice seeks a public hope that will be shared by the members because they gathered for a common cause. Radical democracy is the shared meaning of the people.

⁴⁵ See Mark Thompson, "The politics Philippine presidents make: Presidential-style, patronage-based, or regime relational?" *Critical Asian Studies* 46 no.3 (2014): 433-460.

Aside from the conceptual connection of the encumbered aspect of radical democracy to communal values, since self-identity is embedded with the moral forces coming from one's community, this section will particularly discuss the embodiment of radical democracy and communal values in the Indigenous Community. This is crucial to practically illustrate the connection between justice and communal values. However, this must not be thought of as a radical democracy exclusive to or realized only in the Indigenous community. This is only to think of a concrete example.

The Indigenous Communities of Mindanao experienced threats and harassment that stemmed from the Spanish colonization. This was later intensified in the American regime, where foreign interference impacted the communal and environmental life at the time. According to Gaspar, the Lumads and the Moro people experienced severe chaos and contestation for access to land because of commercial interests.⁴⁶ As a result, the Indigenous people were disenfranchised from the rights of their land. Some IPs asserted their land rights, resulting in many conflicts in many parts of Mindanao, especially the armed conflict.

Efforts were made by the state to aid the problem of land conflict by instituting the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 (IPRA). This law aims to protect and preserve the rights and what the IPs value. However, the implementation is problematic since many of the Indigenous communities experienced displacements and threats of land disputes. Many of the ancestral lands of the IPs were subject to mining extraction. For Gaspar, the implementation of the law protecting the IPs has not taken place because the state lacks the political will to protect the Lumad or IPs.⁴⁷ Of course, the larger implication of the failure is the prevailing interests of the leaders in capital. This drives some of the IP members to take sides in armed struggle because of the failure and injustices of the state.

The displacement of the many IPs from their land is an injustice. It deprives ancestral rights and attacks the culture of the people. This has significantly carved in the socio-political context of the country, where those who are in power are the leaders from the north or the

⁴⁶ Karl Gaspar, "No End to Lumad Dislocation from Their Homeland: The Case of Sarangani Manobo and B' laans in Davao Occidental," *Kasarinlan* 30 no.2 (2015): 73-74.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 74.

Manila-centric power, with less regard for the people of the south or the people from Mindanao. This is the result of the elitist nature of political domination. The call of many Muslims in the south for autonomy is a reflection of the exclusion of the development of the region. This resulted in the grant of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao. This step is a call for justice.

In turn, one great example of the embodiment of communal justice and radical democracy is the Higaonon tribe of Sumilao in Bukidnon. The Higaonons are dwellers in Bukidnon in central Mindanao who were considered the original people of the region. According to Duhaylungsod, the Lumad or the non-Muslim indigenous people had roughly 803,840 hectares with both grasslands and mountainous areas.⁴⁸ Despite the large portion of the ancestral land, the Higaonons and other Lumad people were displaced from the lowland inhabited areas to the mountains and forests due to the expansion of land conflict caused by the migrants. As Duhaylungsod explains, the land is not for commercial use nor possession but for the means of cultivation for their communal use.⁴⁹ However, the state misidentified the land as uninhabited and failed to recognize the cultural domain and sovereignty, resulting in the unjust displacement of the tribe.⁵⁰

In October 2007, the Higaonon tribe made a historic event of people power by marching 1,700 kilometers from Sumilao, Bukidnon, to Manila in two months. There were fifty-five people from the tribe, of whom forty were men and fifteen were women. After arriving in Manila, they had a hunger strike in front of Malacañang. The reason for the protest was to demand that the government stop the conversion of their ancestral land to industrialization. This struggle is the result of resisting the expansion of liberalization in the country which allowed foreign investors to occupy land for industrialization. As a result, the Indigenous communities experienced the displacement of their ancestral lands.

The significance of the 1,700-kilometer hike of the Higaonon envisaged the very idea of a call for justice. It is the gathering of like-minded people, especially from their community, wanting to stop the

⁴⁸ Levita Duhaylungsod, "Higaonons and Bukidnon Forests Incorporated: "Will the Twain Ever Meet?" *Agham-Tao* 8 no.5 (1996): 84.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 86.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*.

industrialization projects affecting their lands and their way of life. This is a great example of the realization of radical democracy. It is the people who initiated the movement with their solidarity among members pushing for a non-violent protest as a retaliation for the unjust governance, and lack of recognition of their domains and rights. The Higaonon's action is the perfect example of communal justice, and this justice empowered them to stand their ground. This extent reached the revocation of the conversion of 355.824 hectares of land and returned it to the farmers.⁵¹ This act fits perfectly with the ideals of radical democracy, and this democracy is rooted in their communal goals.

Situatedness of Democracy

It is illustrated that democracy is rooted in the communal background of the people. Lummis pointed out that each culture must contain a possible democratic version.⁵² The realization of democracy, as a gathering between like-minded people or radical democrats, is not something that happened out of rational decision alone. According to Bolaños, freedom is the normative content of democracy.⁵³ This is the principle behind the call for justice for the people. Freedom essentially becomes the reason for the eradication of injustice. This idea of freedom is rooted mainly in the background culture of the people. This will emphasize that justice is not something universal or a claim by any class, but a claim of any community, as justice is grounded in communal values, which are part of one's constitutive attachment.

Michael Sandel discussed the idea of the situatedness of self-identity, which claims that it is impossible to think of an identity separate from one's background because the background constitutes one's identity.⁵⁴ This means that self-identity is always rooted in the moral forces coming from various references such as community, religion, and family. Justice, the same as identity, is not something entirely decided in rational agreement but a product of different conceptions of the good. On the other hand, the separation of the self

⁵¹ Jeffrey Oca, *Critical Theory at the Margin* (Davao City: Alethia, 2023), 182.

⁵² Lummis, *Radical Democracy*, 44.

⁵³ Bolaños, "Critical Theory and the Prospect of Radical Democracy," 26-27.

⁵⁴ Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, 179.

from the attachment is made because, as for liberals, the self is prior to the goods. This means that any sort of aims and desires do not define the identity of the person. Rather, the person will choose what goods are to achieve based on their voluntary choice. With autonomy, the conception of the person as detached from anything is possible. In this way, as Sandel expressed, the self is irreducible prior to one's values and ends.⁵⁵

However, the sense of identity and justice is always tied to the embedded background of the people. As Sandel expressed, each person is located uniquely in time and space, family and society, and different circumstances that heavily build who the person is.⁵⁶ The sense of identity and justice, as tied to one's constitutive background coming from the community, is also heavily founded on the background of the people, since there is no idea of justice that is external to the history and community.⁵⁷ It goes by saying that the radical democrat's realization of democracy is founded on one's valued call for justice based on one's communal background.

It is then undeniable to see the conceptual link between the communal sense of justice and radical democracy, for radical democracy is the empowerment of communal justice. Radical democracy flourishes in every culture that has a democratic version of itself. This is precisely the 'very thing' of democracy, a real power of the people whose idea of the good is expressed as the call of justice. As an example, the Higaonon tribe in Sumilao, Bukidnon, perfectly fits this very idea. They hold justice as the principle and become radical democrats by realizing this principle.

The Higaonon's call for justice was able to alter the dominant industrialized and foreign interests through a non-violent but arduous kilometer hike from their area to Malacañang. The justice they embody is rooted in their way of life, the culture they embrace, and a justice that has communal content. This justice is not just experienced by the farmers who have done the hike and hunger protest. It is a collective, shared, and public happiness experienced by the entire tribe. It is a successful and real power realized by those who experience oppression and injustice. The indigenous people decided to

⁵⁵ Ibid, 22.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 51.

⁵⁷ Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 211.

act and realize power and embody the ideals of democracy that made the status quo change according to their notion of justice, without necessarily destroying the state. So, the state recognizes them. In this case, justice is communal, based on Higaonon's call for justice and radical democracy, as the empowerment of their cultural movement is undeniably present.

Conclusion

This paper argues that radical democracy is encumbered. The encumbered aspect of democracy means that democracy is situated with the idea of justice grounded on the people's communal values. Conceptually, there is a connection because people's call for justice is always rooted in the moral forces from where the person is coming. Every conception of justice is not something decided by means of rational agreement but radically situated with the family and community one is in. The idea of justice is always conditioned by the background of the people.

As justice comes from the background of the people or has a communal sense, and the content of democracy is justice, a call for justice is essentially a realization of radical democracy. This radical democracy, as the real power of the people, realizes justice imbued with communal values and aims. Unlike the later movement of EDSA People Power, namely, the EDSA *Dos* and *Tres*, these movements only create class friction. The latter EDSA movements no longer embody the spirit of radical democracy.

A practical example of the link between communal justice and radical democracy is the historic march of the Higaonon tribe. The kilometer hike and hunger strike are non-violent protests against the injustices of the tribe. The tribe fought in an extralegal means that successfully influenced the state despite the dominant powers and interests of industrialization. They formed a power that is not derived from the state but from the call of justice. As they achieved the stoppage of the conversion of their land, justice was not only enjoyed by the farmers who marched, but also by the members of the same community. The principle they hold is communal justice, and the power they realize is radical democracy. However, it must not be thought of as democracy exclusively realized by the Higaonon tribe. This only envisaged the idea of the connection between radical

democracy and communal justice. This connection can be sought from other tribes and indigenous communities.

Radical democracy can be present elsewhere so long as there is a sense of justice inside the community. Communitarians may have considered the role of values and practices in the community as the content of justice or that the values and practices of the community are the very source of justice so long as it is radically inclined in the sense of the collective realization of power, where it is grounded in hope, and it is a non-violent movement as Lummis envisages radical democracy. Cultural differences are never a problem since radical democracy flourishes and empowers each culture. Rather, each culture may have found common ground because democracy moves in a common cause.

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