

## EDITORIAL

---

### Philosophy and Christianity

*“In the beginning was the Word.  
And the Word was with God  
and the Word was God” (Jn. 1:1).*

We open our current volume with these lines from the Johannine Gospel as it reminds us of where exactly Philosophy and Christianity encounters: the *Word*. The *Word* which in Greek is *logos*, also associated with wisdom and reason, is what has been, for over two millennia, the subject of debates and reflections of both philosophers and believers. Yet Christianity professes that the *Word* is a person who was with God from all eternity, so that in the final analysis, the *Word* is God himself. The *Word* from whom beings were created is the creative power of God, the creator-Spirit, and God himself.

Our rekindling of the rich connections and shared histories of humanity’s two great influences (Philosophy and Christianity) is *Phavisminda Journal’s* modest participation in the Philippines’ celebration of the Quincentennial of Christianity’s arrival in the country. It is apparent that except for the “churched” the commemoration of the Quincentennial no longer draws much excitement as it did around sixty (60) years ago (when we commemorated the Evangelization of the country). Thus, one may ask whether there is still a point in talking about Philosophy and Christianity. In his essay *Phenomenology and Theology*, Martin Heidegger describes Christian Philosophy as a square circle. It is undeniable that the philosophies that developed in the Western world in the last two hundred years or more have become critical of Christianity. So, again, is it still worth our while talking about the relationship of both?

Despite the often-critical attitude of some philosophers towards Christianity, the latter actually has been a fellow sojourner of the former in the search for truth. After all, who was it who said that “the truth shall set us free”? It may be said that no one has the monopoly of truth but in the end even this proposition is no less an implicit cry that there is truth. Since its earliest days, Philosophy has been concerned with this. To say otherwise would make us think what for then are the questions “Who am I?” “Where do I come from?” and “What is the meaning of life?” These are elementary questions in Philosophy and because they are so fundamental, Philosophy cannot be Philosophy without them. But at the same time, these are, at their deepest, religious questions, which Christianity has tried to answer in its various traditions and spiritualities across two millennia.

Another expression of the relationship of Philosophy and Christianity is “faith and reason.” In his debate with Jürgen Habermas, Joseph Ratzinger emphasized his observation and position on how the absolutization of both faith and reason would lead to the emergence of social pathologies most concrete in our political life. Precisely why reason needs the continual

purification by faith. But on the other hand, faith must not be understood (and more so practiced) as a kind of “resignation of reason in view of the limits of our knowledge; it is not a retreat into the irrational...” (J. Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe?*, 110).

In this volume are three (3) featured essays and four (4) articles. Perfectly fit as the lead article is Santiago Sia’s ***Catholic Tradition and Philosophical Research***. His piece navigates the sustained support and interest of the Catholic Church in the study of Philosophy as evidenced by papal and magisterial texts. Apparently timely and interesting a reading for the Quincentennial of Philippine Christianity is Raymun Festin’s ***Magellan’s Circling of the World and its Historical Imponderables: The Shattering of the Medieval Worldview and the Birth of Christianity in the Philippines***. His, is a historico-philosophical appraisal of Magellan’s first circumnavigation of the world, and as explained in the work’s abstract: “Philosophically, the event may only be considered as a vicissitude of fate or fortune. Only from the historico-theological point of view that the Christianization of the Philippines gains some sense, meaning, and purpose.”

We welcome the essay of one of our members of the International Advisory Board: ***Confucian Respect***. This contribution by Umberto Bresciani, a scholar of Confucianism who’s trained in Chinese literature, aims to clarify the meaning of “respect” and focus on its importance in Confucius’ *weltanschauung*, given Confucius’ overall project. Bresciani’s contribution reminds our readers that a significant element in both Christianity and Philosophy is dialogue, and this means opening ourselves to cultures and religions other than those we believe to be the sources of our truth.

Bernardo Caslib Jr.’s article explores and examines the Filipino concepts of *pag-ibig* and *pagmamahal*. It is his response to Armando Bonifacio’s seemingly limited and positivistic approach in understanding Filipino concepts. He relates both concepts to St. Thomas Aquinas’ notion of *amor* and *caritas*. Hopefully, his article would revive interest among our readers in the Angelic Doctor’s philosophy.

In the face of Church scandals, John Romel Nuñez’s exposition of Simone Weil’s notions of the impersonal, the process of decreation, and the Absent God, is a timely contribution. Weil’s insights into the Christian Church serves as an essential reminder that a Christian should not be too attached to the world. An equally important and timely contribution is a paper on the environment by Ian Anthony Davatos which explores Christianity’s insights and contributions to the debate of anthropocentrism and nonanthropocentrism. Focusing on Pope Francis’ 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si’*, Davatos argues that the Gospel of Creation can be developed to supplement the so-called shortcomings of the aforementioned camps.

The relationship of science and religion is another topic that cannot be missed out in this volume. Joshua Jose Ocon’s paper analyzes the ‘conflict’ between Christianity and evolution as narrated by neo-atheists represented by Richard Dawkins. Ocon’s analysis uses Alvin Plantinga’s epistemological critique of naturalism as a lens complemented by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s conception of evolution as ‘hominization’ and ‘complexification.’ This contribution would hopefully invite readers to take greater interest in philosophical questions or problems that are at the intersection of science and Christianity.

Anton Heinrich Rennesland's short piece is a gentle response to Dr. Paolo Bolanos' "Becoming-virus, Life from the Viewpoint of a Virus." Taking some bolder steps forward, he explicitly contends: "We cannot see life from the perspective of the pathogen because it is something completely foreign." In the face of our problems brought about by COVID-19 we cannot just stretch "our thought experiments to more radical extremes lest we get caught up in semantic arbitrariness especially pertaining to actual experiences of death, the death of our fellow human beings" he adds.

A review of Martin Hägglund's *This Life* is the closing piece of this issue. Worth contemplating is whether a belief in an afterlife makes us more committed to the struggles and pains of this life. One need not agree with Hägglund's thesis, but it would be enriching on the part of any believer to step back and take a reflection on the challenge of secular faith and the call to commit to this world whether a life eternal awaits us or not.

A question asked earlier deserves reiteration: is there still a point talking about Philosophy and Christianity? An answer to this is no less from John Paul II who, in 1998, wrote in *Fides et Ratio* these beautiful lines: "the human being – the one who seeks the truth – is also the one who lives by belief" (FR, 31). Philosophy and Christianity may take different stances and approaches to the many issues and questions in life but, in the end, they both remind us that we are not made to live alone, and within the community that we live the "range of truths" that we test and eventually accept are held and respected not just because they are verifiable and absolutely certain, but because we "trust" one another and "entrust" (ourselves) to the knowledge acquired by other people (FR, 31).

We apologize to all our readers for the delay in the release of this issue. Some unforeseen obstacles came our way. The pandemic and the limitations that have affected our daily operations make it all the more challenging for us in terms of the delivery of results. Nevertheless, we always take comfort in the fact that we have the capacity to adapt as rational individuals and thus gradually find ways to manage our concerns.

Further, we take the opportunity to thank all the reviewers of the articles; we also thank our three guest contributors, all members of our International Advisory Board, whose works are here featured: Santiago Sia, Raymun Festin, and Umberto Bresciani. We look forward to receiving contributions from other scholars. The *Phavisminda Journal* may have remained non-indexed up to now, but we take consolation in the fact that we maintain a decent and reliable standard of peer review. Our commitment, primarily, is to philosophy and only, secondarily, to whatever pragmatic value or consideration, such a vocation may carry.

We dedicate this volume to Saint Thomas Aquinas, patron saint of universities.

Rhoderick John S. Abellanosa  
Editor-in-chief