

EDITORIAL

Democracy: New Problems, Old Questions

In the second chapter of *De Regno*, Saint Thomas Aquinas tried to answer the question “whether it is more expedient for a city or a province to be ruled by one man or by many.” Those among us who have a background of the Angelic Doctor’s political thought would not find it difficult to understand, without necessarily agreeing, his views on democracy. As he maintained, governance should reflect nature and “every natural governance is governance by one.” We have in Thomas an example of a critique of democracy in 1267 (CE). The issues that he saw in democracy are in one way or another reverberated in the 21st century though more informed by the methods and frameworks of modern political and social sciences. What many people of today consider as democracy’s deficiencies are not new assertions.

The emergence of leaders like Trump, Bolsonaro, Modi, and Duterte has put into question the promises of democracy particularly the liberal model. There are those who view rights-based American democracy as a failure. Thus, we have literatures that argue for an Asian or even a ‘radical’ democracy! Basically, we do not oversimplify democracy as it is theorized by the academia and applied in actual governance by different nation-states. We agree with David Held that there are “models of democracy.” However, whether our nomenclatures of democracy are a matter of vogue or serious reflection one thing remains unarguable: it has become more contested, contentious, and controversial than ever.

The landscape of Philippine politics in 2022 was no less divisive. We saw an election that resurrected not only past problems but also political issues which some thought, were already put to rest. The candidacy of Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr., and what some saw as the hand of “Duterte” guiding, either visibly or invisibly, whatever twist or turn would happen in Philippine politics, generated heated debates. Academics and scholars had to bring out their intellectual arsenal if only to prove their point. Precisely why the editorship of this issue thought it best to provide a platform for informed discussions – a revisit of (Philippine) democracy; a system of governance oftentimes interpreted in the context of contemporary (new) problems and enduring (old) concerns (questions) of centuries past.

Obviously, the release of this issue is delayed. While many if not most of our readers are worried that the journal would no longer see the light of day, in the greater scheme of things there seems to be a “reason” for its release past the Duterte administration. Just recently, the International Criminal Court (ICC) appeals chamber ruled that it “will

continue to investigate the drug war as it rejected the Philippine government's plea against the resumption of the probe.”

This journal's issue is not dedicated to former president Duterte, but it would be an understatement to say that his administration puts into question or even heightens the doubt of the 'democratic spirit' not only of our structures and processes but even people's values. That the ICC ruling still concerns many, proves that there are "enduring issues" that deserve discussion beyond a certain administration. Moral deliberations are timeless, and the philosophic foundations of politics go beyond whatever form a particular body-politic would take. This outlook is clearly discernable in the paper of **Charito Pizarro** who is primarily interested in Hermeneutics but has taken the challenge of stepping into political philosophy – a realm outside her 'homecourt advantage.' Still, one can read traces of her love for Gadamer and the entire tradition of Hermeneutics fully alive in how she discusses the "hermeneutics of evil as a political accoutrement and language as the instrument to truth.”

The essay of the **Imbong** brothers, **Regletto and Jerry**, and co-author **Patrick Torres** is radical enough a critique of radical democracy. Their intention is not to question the significance of this somewhat trending reading of democracy somewhere down south. On the contrary, they have boldly raised the question whether the interpretations especially of Chantal Mouffe are correct? Read for yourself their solid critique of certain interpretations of Mouffe and radical democracy which as they boldly claim are **misappropriations** of contemporary scholarship of radical politics in the Philippines, and which no less the Belgian philosopher herself, as revealed by their investigation, finds [it] "extremely dangerous" and a little bit troubling especially as a justification of Duterte's 'authoritarian politics.'

Divine Word (SVD) missionary **Raymund Festin** gives us another article, this time on Philippine democracy, which through his Platonic lens is 'unfortunately debased.' To prove his point, Festin pounds on the return of the Marcoses as indicative of the country's deranged democracy. One may call Festin's reading 'elitist', but no responsible and serious student or teacher of philosophy would refute a well-argued view with mere labels. His challenge is for us to answer the questions, '[c]an the Philippines still pride itself as a democratic country if the integrity of its election has been methodically compromised, emasculated, and deranged?'

Beljun Enaya in tandem with Filipinologist and Filipino philosopher **FPA Demeterio** navigated the works of homegrown thinkers during the Duterte administration. Their work contributes a hybrid approach to the analysis of academic discourses under an administration which has not spared philosophizing from division. Written practically in full Filipino, Enaya and Demeterio brings to the South a rather common advocacy from the North: '*ang pamimilosopiya sa sariling wika.*' In a similar fashion, **Anjon Mamunta** offers Leonardo Mercado's notion of *sakop* as an alternative reading to the populist philosophy of Tatay Digong.

Two articles in this issue enrich Phavisminda Journal's philosophical navigation of democracy's 'new issues' and 'old questions.' Second-time contributor **Joshua Ocon**'s expository essay on the age-old question concerning the relationship between state and Church. Using Jacques Maritain's political thought, Ocon argues in favor of the Church's role in the temporal sphere especially when a 'political' issue would already involve the spiritual sphere's ultimate concern: *salus animarum*.

The relationship between democracy and education is elucidated in **Prince Gapo**'s work that invites readers to 'rethink' the way society educates its future teachers. With the help of Jacques Ranciere's 'political interventions', hopefully the readers would be able to rethink the weaknesses and oppressive practices of our depoliticized teacher education.

Two points for our final note. First, I would like to formally inform the readers that this is my last editorship of the Phavisminda Journal. Time has come for it to be passed on to Dr. Jeffrey Ocaj and his team. We look forward to Professor Ocaj's abled leadership. The journal has been home of the writings of great scholars, teachers, and enthusiasts in philosophy. Hopefully, it shall continue attracting great minds who are not only interested in doing philosophy as an academic enterprise in the 21st century context of education but as a human activity that seeks to respond to the more profound questions that lie in the margins of human existence. Secondly, we remember the late Professor Ryan C. Urbano, former member of the Editorial Team of the Phavisminda Journal, who dedicated his scholarship to political theory and the study of democracy.

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