

Mabini Review

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A note from the editor

On Church, Consumerism, Migrants' Idealization and Knowledge Economy in the Peripheries

This issue of Mabini Review gathers articles that converge in similarities and diverge in dissimilarities. All articles are bound by a single thread as they interrogate concrete social contexts—without going highly speculative that may baffle uninitiated readers. However, each article maintains distinctive voice in theoretical and methodological ways; and each intellectual investigation possesses uniqueness as authors elucidate, discuss and appraise concepts, praxis and milieus within their respective idiosyncrasies, academic orientations and styles.

Ballano, a thinker with a deep background on sociology of religion, concludes that “*the persistence of clerical abuses in the Catholic Church has something to do with the plurality of informal doctrinal, biblical, ethical, and cultural norms which compete with the ecclesial canonical provisions*”. With this plurality of standards, the church leaders are given wide latitude of options as regards construction and application of policies (which could benefit the abusers) especially when the lofty reputation of the church is at stake. The leaders of the church may perhaps lean towards the abusers’ favor within the bounds of the said standard (that is) if given a slightest opportunity. Of course, the church leaders deciding the cases remain to be harbingers of the overall church protection and welfare, notwithstanding their duty as deciders of cases.

Ballano notes that “*The Church has given the bishops more ecclesiastical powers to settle local cases*”. This empowers them to exercise their discretion having in mind the church’s concepts of “*forgiveness, unity, sanctity and eternal nature of the priesthood, and the ecclesiastical stand that clerical abuse should be dealt with internally within the church...*” Ballano stresses that diocesan leaders respond to sexual abuse allegations within the institution employing internal mechanisms such as investigation and administrative leave. In most cases, these internal actions are not transparent to those who are not in the church hierarchy. This response framework cultivates a suspicion of ‘cover-up’, ‘white-wash’ and ‘downplaying’.

‘Cover-up’, albeit used differently, is also a term that may describe what is going on in online media platforms as migrant workers

project themselves positively; and as official websites of state institutions portray migrants' conditions auspiciously. Aguirre calls this as *idealization* or *romantization*. Migrant workers, and so the State, tend to sugar-coat their plight. They show their families, relatives and friends the pleasures of life in a foreign country but (in some instances) all these projections are lies. Their agonies and pains are thickly clouded with narratives of success and enjoyment.

The Filipino migrants' self-presentation is attributable to the experiences they encounter in their daily lives. These experiences are shaped, cultivated and configured by both the home and host nations. With this, the migrants tend to construct images that their home and host nations want to see projected. Aguirre points out: "*Hegemonic images of 'home', 'family', and 'childhood' act as nodal points in setting up discursive boundaries*". These images are painted so beautifully in the migrants' online and offline self-projection despite the apparent ambivalence of their experiences. What dominate their narratives are those things which bring about auspicious picture of themselves. The migrants are caught up in the web of officially sanctioned discourses. Their individual narratives become part of powerful grand narratives that serve the interests of nation-states.

Aguirre observes, "*At the very least, they demonstrate the agentive capacities of individuals in using new media forms to signify and make sense of their diasporic lives. However, the agentive possibilities offered by the multimodal resources of online new media, in the particular case of social media engagement, do not necessarily translate to alternative or dissenting imaging and imagination of a romanticized and idealized migrant life*".

Ogatis' article explicates the possible salvation of Filipinos from the exceedingly consumerist environment that modern capitalism nurtured in its womb. She sharply criticizes the way capitalists manipulate the buying habit of consumers. "*The dominating power of the capitalist becomes more visible in its capacity to manipulate the mentality and desires of the members of the consumerist society*", Ogatis stresses. 'Reason' sometimes cannot fight against this 'manipulation' because of the latter's sheer strength. She says, "*It creates an infatuating technique which engenders "false needs" among consumers. This manipulation torments the very rationality of man*". Hence, consumerism destroys the very core of humanity that is reason. "*Reason can no longer create protective armor due to the fact that the common ideology of the consumerist society demands for a blind conformity*", she wittingly remarks.

Filipinos, like their global counterparts, are seemed to be taken over by the insanity that advanced capitalism proffers. Failure to distinguish what is 'true needs' from 'false needs' becomes the rule rather than the exception. People turn away from the "*true meaning of necessity*". Ogatis claims that the society creates a simulated culture that is consumer-centred which dilutes our intellectual culture. She points out, "*In effect, the new power of consumerist culture legitimizes the hedonistic tendencies...*"

Ogatis recognizes possible solutions for this problem. She opines that moderation (Aristotlean Golden Mean) can be an attempt to move away from the manipulative power of consumerism; save for some issues that she herself observes. Another, *“One possible solution to escape from this trance created by consumerism is to create a demystified state in one’s consciousness”*. She calls this demystification. *“It is important to note that in demystified state, man’s consciousness is no longer mesmerized by what is given in the consumerist environment. As Marx reiterated, once man becomes a victim of his very own consuming life, man is always being controlled and seduced by the Capitalist spell”*.

The importance of knowledge that springs forth from the peripheries is what Nelson Turgo emphasizes in his article. Turgo tries to find points of intersection between and among concepts like capitalism, local knowledge, knowledge economy, modernity and others. To realize this, he investigates the daily affairs of fishmongers, fishermen and fish traders as they locate their place in local economy. He observes, among others, how small scale fishing business which found its crude genesis from conversations that took place only on small boats and private spaces suddenly metamorphosed and expanded into public trading. Because of the limited resources available in the community, the fisherfolks *“created a pool of knowledge that they get to deploy in their quest for a living”*. This knowledge also helps them present their modern selves. This is all marshalled, he believes, by the demands of capitalism.

The scholar claims, *“As centre of knowledge production and consumption, the fish markets stand as the fishing community’s emblem and connection to modernity. As knowledge knows no boundaries and as information travel, the fish markets serve as the people’s expressed affinity to the wider world, to facts and figures that matter to their daily lives which are also very much a product of the outside world—of places, far and away”*.

He shattered the myths about (knowledge) economy. He believes that knowledge economy should not only be limited and associated with stock market, software programs, or other similar work regime and market actors. Knowledge economy from the margins should also be highlighted as this marks the desire of those in the peripheries to have an active engagement with the modern capitalist world. He recommends, in fact, that a continuous excavation of local or place-specific knowledge must be done.

With the articles herein featured, the Mabini Review hopes that the readers are given a clear view of the societal contexts that constitute the overall dynamics of public lives. May the readers reassess or re-evaluate their respective engagement with religious organizations, with compatriots abroad (online or offline), with state-sponsored industries, and with those small scale entrepreneurs in the margins. This is to allow the emergence of a critical public that thinks, reasons, and understands; and ultimately to nurture a public that is free from all forms of manipulation.

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