From the Editor

During Martial Law, one of the few places (if not the only place) a copy of the New Yorker could be found was in the Rizal Library of Ateneo de Manila. These days, despite the availability of most other kinds of magazines in bookstores, it is still in the University Library’s periodical section where one can liberally access this great periodical. Another reading privilege Ateneans have is access to The Atlantic monthly, which in May 2011 marked the publication of its first-ever “Culture Issue.” James Bennet, the magazine’s current editor, explained that this move was triggered by an article Stephen King wrote in the New York Times several years ago that “lamented the decline in the publication of short stories, and with it, a decline in the quality of the short story itself.” The eminent fictionist said that the publishing world has degenerated to writing “for editors and teachers rather than for readers” (Bennet 21).

One sees now that it was not an accident that led me to pick up this copy of The Atlantic monthly because these developments in the publishing world touch our hearts directly. The harrowing discussions leading to establishing this new journal of the School of Humanities basically addressed these basic issues: Are we building a tradition of scholarship for editors and teachers? Are we publishing creative work? Who is our audience?

As an academic journal, our target audience is mainly composed of academics, even as we admit that the notion of academic requires closer tweaking among us. The assiduous local members of the Board of Editors have also decided to promote two major fields of study—the Humanities and the Arts. We have, however, recused publishing literary and creative works for purposes of streamlining the journal production in the School of Humanities, which aside from the present journal, hosts two other academic journals, namely, Kritika Kultura and Budhi. The former has heretofore specialized in publishing literary studies and creative work. Consequently, Asian Perspectives in the Arts and Humanities (or APAH) wanted to publish articles in all other fields of the humanities (but without excluding literary theory) and art forms. The intention to publish art studies remains elusive up to now since this second issue does not carry any such articles. In lieu of these, we have decided to create an Arts Review Section, thinking that an arts culture will thrive paralleled with
an equally dynamic review culture. We also feature some of the works in an exhibit of new paintings celebrating the Rizal Sesquicentennial.

Another audience share we wanted to address were “Asians,” as we recognized that we lived in the Asian century. In a gathering, a Professor emeritus remarked: “Asian covers the space between Syria and Mindanao.” Since the audience was wide enough, we went ahead to use the word “Asian” in the title, despite the objection that the idea of “Asian” was not defined. The journal, therefore, wishes to contribute to this process of understanding Asian identity. Judging from submissions we have received so far, the idea of Asian has now included—accurately or not—studies on the Eastern and Russian Orthodox Church.

For this issue, however, the idea of Asian is mostly the studies on the Philippines, which might confuse us with the most famous Ateneo journal, Philippine Studies. We distinguish ourselves from that more establish journal insofar as we publish articles studying the Philippines using the methods and language of the Humanities. Perhaps a cutting edge example of this is Fernando P. Gonzaga’s article, which uses the new theoretical framework of “Rhetoric” in analysing Philippine political culture. Another example is Agustin Martin G. Rodriguez’s philosophical disquisition on climate change, which might also put the idea of “Filipino Philosophy” in a completely different light.

Projecting to address an Asian readership might lead some to ask why an article by Josef M. Seifert is being published. A well-known Catholic and German theologian, Seifert is professor in Pontificia Universidad de Chile. He submitted to the journal via the good will of one of his Filipino mentees studying in Chile. The journal is greatly honoured to receive submissions from such an eminent scholar as he. He, however, thought that we published articles in Spanish as well. This betrays the fact that the identity of the Philippines as “Asian” is an object of interrogation by the world. For some we are not Asian enough because we have been westernized through our Christianity and our American-style democracy. Those who studied abroad would tell you that most professors would assume that Filipinos knew Spanish. This means that for others the Philippines is part of the discourse of the South, especially of the under-developed Hispanic South. Despite our contested Asian identity, our purported Asianity certainly does not exclude dialoguing with the rest of the world, especially the west. Our identity as Asian is a locus of dialogue rather
than of exclusion. For this reason, the journal does not publish articles based on race or nationality. This is a journal simultaneously by and for Asians.

In this issue, we are also publishing two articles evolving from the editor’s engagement with Medieval Studies. The first is by Anscar J. Chupungco, whose paper is actually the Magisterial Lecture he delivered to the Philippine Society for Medieval Studies in January 2011 at the De la Salle University-Taft. The other article is by Jason A. de las Alas, who systematically studies *Intramuros* as a medieval city. Despite their seeming anachronistic preoccupation, these articles mirror current events in Philippine society. They testify to our preoccupation with “piety” as well as with our ambivalent relationship with our colonial past. Without ostensibly speaking on what “ails” our society today, they manifest the on-going struggle between orthodoxy and practical exigency. Furthermore, Chupungco’s article offers a dire reminder of the fact that violence has also emanated from the reforms in Eucharistic liturgy.

Without consciously intending it, this second volume of the APAH, exhibits both the character and desire of the journal. It is primarily concerned about the welfare of the Filipino people insofar as we often fall victim to conflicting interests of our “elite democracy,” and now of “climate change.” At the same time, the journal advocates a brand of Christian Humanism that believes that the church, the Bride of Christ, as a historical event (or a pilgrim) marches within history even as she discerns the will of her Groom.

Ultimately our scholarship intends the creation of Filipino culture, which becomes our unique contribution to the global scholarship in the Humanities. This new-found identity rises as our society progresses when our Christian community (understood as including but not equal to the hierarchy) realizes that reform and conversion are required of it as well. Society benefits when the Church is renewed and purified. Such a process includes “an honest loving look on oneself.” If only the Philippine Church would see her responsibility for the corruption in government and the inequality in our systems, then she would hasten towards her own transformation. Thus, we propose that this journal serve as a venue of dialogue between opposing critical views, so that through the collision of horizons, we might become more. Our mission derives from the idea articulated by Adolfo Nicolas in “Nuestra Experiencia de Dios” as vivir plenamente el Magis. The journal is born (natus) from those who live the Magis
fully. We believe that we become more when we listen to voices not our own, which may even be opposed to us, and which can be prophetic and free.

Jovino G. Miroy  
August 9, 2011, Makati

Works Cited


Jovino G. Miroy is a faculty member of the School of Humanities of the Ateneo de Manila University. He has a PhD from the Katholieke Universiteit te Leuven (Belgium). He is the author of Tracing Nicholas of Cusa’s Early Development: The Relationship Between “De concordantia catholica” and “De docta ignorantia” (Peeters, 2008) and co-editor of Engaging Philosophical Traditions: Filipino Perspectives on Certain Philosophical Topics (Manila: Philosophical Association of the Philippines, 2007) and Quaerens, Searchings, Paghahanap: Filipino Essays in Medieval Studies (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2008). He is Co-Convener and President of the Philippine Society of Medieval Studies. In 1992, he wrote the libretto of the musical version of Jose Rizal’s El Filibusterismo, which was set to music by Ryan Cayabyab and was produced by the Tanghalang Pilipino of the Cultural enter of the Philippines (CCP).