

Rethinking Our Options

One Japanese thinker has described the twentieth century as nothing more than the nineteenth plus technology.

He was referring to the unchallenged persistence of nineteenth-century concepts in this century — in spite of great advances in technology. Old economic notions dating back to the Industrial Revolution and political doctrines formed around the Treaty of Westphalia permeate our understanding of our lives at the dawn of the Information Age. Such ideological persistence explains many of the gaps in our praxis — as well as the resilience of old policies and old movements in the political terrain.

Those who call themselves 'radical' in the sphere of politics resemble more and more the radical extremists in the religious sphere: they plow up antiquity and retrieve the beliefs of yore in the

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vain effort to cover up a crisis of the imagination afflicting contemporary society.

In the Philippines, the 'radical' mass movements are hobbled by the continued predominance of old thinking: notions scavenged from European thought circa the Industrial Revolution and even tired symbolisms pilfered from folk belief systems.

Filipino 'nationalists' continue to be infatuated with mercantilist ideology, proposing infantile protectionism as the 'alternative' to the present drift of the economy. Filipino leftists continue their vigil for the polarization of classes — against the drift of a society becoming more complex as it is carried forward by technological change. A 'revolutionary' movement continues to guise itself, not as Gramsci's collective 'Prince,' but as a latter-day exorcist, purging an otherwise good society of its 'demons' and 'bad elements.'

Towards the end of the twentieth century — and in the face of growth-induced changes in Philippine society — it becomes even more urgent to reinterpret our society and rethink its options. The twenty-first century can no longer be the nineteenth, armed with information technology.

In this issue of *Kasarinlan*, a selection of 'think pieces' have been collected as a preliminary sampling of new and emerging perspectives on our economy and our political system. This collection hopefully sustains the central theme of this issue: rethinking Philippine society and its options.

The theme was selected with the intent of projecting new ideas and fostering economic and political debate on new premises.

The central concern of most of the papers in this collection is the Philippine state.

The role of the state in the new economy, the impact of new technologies on our politics, the contending models of development based on state-mediated process and the place of NGOs (or the 'non-profit sector') in the scheme of things are reviewed by the essays we have put together here.

To be sure, this collection does not cover all the points of rethinking that is now going on with great enthusiasm in every field of intellectual concern in Philippine society. *Kasarinlan* plans on making coverage of new and emerging ideas about Philippine society a continuing concern.

In future editions, *Kasarinlan* hopes to cover new ideas in the areas of science and technology, culture, production, and business. It is always difficult to assemble a journal issue on a clear theme and to identify contributors (especially those extensively engaged with the transformation of our society) who would devote their time and write down their thoughts for a journal that pays no honorarium for even the best thought-out contributions (an oddity in the market driven-environment we must now work with).

We hope this collection will spark enough interest to motivate an intensification of the debate on new options and new concepts. The pages of this journal are open to those who would want to engage the first set of papers we put out with this issue.