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Editorial

As researchers, scholars and academicians, we might have noticed that tracing an evolution of thought, irrespective of disciplines, almost always leads us to its beginnings in philosophy. However, it is ironic that in the last few years, scholars have expressed concern regarding the death of humanities, especially, philosophy. The concern is grounded in the reality of budget cuts, refusal of grants for 'pure humanities' subjects leading to the closing down of philosophy departments in universities around the world. This change has been justified by discourses that point out the irrelevance of conducting a course that does not facilitate skill development that is technical, contemporary and fails to ensure employability. Plummeting enrollments have been cited as a proof for revealing contemporary trend to justify that the death of humanities is not a myth but a fact.

In a scenario, where the discipline itself is targeted for being irrelevant, some universities have retained their commitments to these humanities departments. In order to understand why they have retained these interactions, one must not only focus on the trends, but step back and ponder over questions such as, "what has been the purpose of humanities?", "what has been the purpose of universities". The legacy of universities as higher education centres for learning has been to promote knowledge, not necessarily always measured by its proximate relevance measured by technocratic parameters. Writing *On the Slow Death of Humanities*, Daniel Falcone, reformulates the relation between humanities and universities and echoes what other professionals similarly argue— "...the study of the humanities should constantly remind students that liberal arts are important in order to discuss human values and human relations with the nonhuman world."¹ This should not imply that philosophy is esoteric. While it is indeed unfortunate that many scholars have presented it to be mystical, esoteric and

¹Falcone, D. July, 2016. On the slow death of humanities, Counter Punch. Retrieved from <http://www.counterpunch.org/2016/06/17/on-the-slow-death-of-the-humanities/>

beyond the comprehension of a common man, to many, in contrast, the task of philosophy has been to “examine whatever seems insusceptible to the methods of the sciences or everyday observation, for example, categories, concepts, models, ways of thinking or acting, and particularly ways in which they clash with one another, with a view to constructing other, less internally contradictory and (though this can never be fully attained) less pervertible metaphors, images, symbols and systems of categories” (The purpose of Philosophy, Princeton University Press, n.d., n.a.). Having a thriving philosophical foundation, therefore, allows us to formulate “a reasonable hypothesis that one of the principal causes of confusion, misery and fear is, whatever may be its psychological or social roots, blind adherence to outworn notions, pathological suspicion of any form of critical self-examination, frantic efforts to prevent any degree of rational analysis of what we live by and for” (The purpose of Philosophy, Princeton University Press, n.d., n.a.).

It is in this milieu, universities, research centres and institutes that have journals exclusively catering to philosophical deliberation have shown their resistance and facilitated discussions to contextualise philosophical debates, make it contemporary and related to the concerns of everyday life in modern societies. In similar lines, *Tattova*, the Christ University Journal of Philosophy, has aimed to bring together critical and detailed analyses of issues concerning human life and society to facilitate discussions that transform them. For the current issue of *Tattova*, we have an assortment of papers that primarily discuss issues pertaining how religions can be interpreted in contemporary times, how inter-religious dialogues can be initiated by virtue of shared principles and how religions are evolving in specific societies due to social, economic and political influences. Zaheer Ali Khan Sharvani, within a comparative philosophical framework, has attempted to analyse two distinct philosophical schools, *Visishtādvaita* and *Wahdatul-Wujūd* to deconstruct the similarities and departures between them. Merina Islam has aimed to carefully disentangle few misconceptions about J Krishnamurti’s concept of meditation to critically analyse what it denotes and how to practice it. Truong Phan Chau Tam has presented a case study of South Vietnam to explore the issues of spatial and temporal constraints of religious

conversion, its effect on social existence, the influence of “economic, cultural, social, religious factors and one’s own subjective religious convictions” on conversions. In another paper, Truong Van Chung and Nguyen Thoai Linh has described in detail the complexities in delineating “new religious phenomena” in Vietnam, its ramifications in social stability and religious policies.

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