

# **New Directions in Filipino Philosophy: Challenges for the ‘Millennial Filipino Philosopher’<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract:** An inquiry on the direction of Filipino philosophy can be construed in two ways: 1) “What is the direction of Filipino philosophy today?,” and 2) “What should be the direction of Filipino philosophy in the future?” The first one is a descriptive inquiry while the second is a normative inquiry. Although providing an answer to the former is important, numerous scholars have already successfully answered such inquiry. Hence, considering what has been done and what is continuously being done, the more pressing task now for young Filipino philosophy scholars today, with their emerging enthusiasm and drive, is to answer the more challenging normative question. In light of such, this essay shall sketch three challenges for the “millennial Filipino philosopher” in addressing the question as to what direction Filipino philosophy should take in the future: 1) the challenge of contemporariness, 2) the challenge of contributing to the development of an ASEAN community philosophy, and 3) the challenge of unwavering dedication to scholarship and research.

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## **NEW DIRECTIONS IN FILIPINO PHILOSOPHY: INQUIRIES AND DISPOSITIONS**

An inquiry on the direction of Filipino philosophy can be construed in two ways: 1) “What is the direction of Filipino philosophy today?”, and 2) “What should be the direction of Filipino philosophy in the future?” The first one is a descriptive inquiry while the second is a normative inquiry. Perhaps, providing an answer to the former is less challenging than answering the latter. It is because answering the former would only demand that one knows what is happening in Filipino philosophy today. However, answering such question is no less important because before we continue further the journey that Filipino philosophy will be taking, we must know, first and foremost, where it is now. And, where it is now will help us in determining which direction it should take in the future. Any historian of philosophy could very well answer the first question. In fact, it has already been done and continuously being done. To cite a few examples: Rolando Gripaldo’s *Filipino Philosophy: A Critical Bibliography 1774-1997*,<sup>2</sup> Alfredo Co’s “Doing Philosophy in the Philippines: Fifty Years Ago and Fifty Years From Now,”<sup>3</sup> Feorillo Demeterio’s “Status and Directions of ‘Filipino Philosophy’ in Zialcita, Timbreza, Quito, Abulad, Mabaquiao, Gripaldo, and Co,”<sup>4</sup> and “Assessing the Developmental Potentials of Some Twelve

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<sup>2</sup> Rolando Gripaldo, *Filipino Philosophy: A Critical Bibliography 1774-1997* (Manila: DLSU Press, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> Alfredo Co, “Doing Philosophy in the Philippines: Fifty Years Ago and Fifty Years From Now,” in *Across the Philosophical Silk Road: A Festschrift in Honor of Alfredo P. Co, vol.6, Doing Philosophy in the Philippines and Other Essays* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2009), 49-62.

<sup>4</sup> Feorillo Demeterio III, “Status and Directions of ‘Filipino Philosophy’ in Zialcita, Timbreza, Quito, Abulad, Mabaquiao, Gripaldo, and Co,” in *Philosophia*, 14:2 (2013), 186-215.

Discourses of Filipino Philosophy.”<sup>5</sup> The task, then, of “millennial Filipino philosophers” today, with their emerging enthusiasm and drive, is to answer the more challenging normative question about Filipino philosophy’s direction, considering what has been accomplished and continuously being accomplished.

In light of such, this essay shall sketch three challenges for the “millennial Filipino philosopher” in addressing the question as to what direction Filipino philosophy should take in the future: 1) the challenge of contemporariness, 2) the challenge of contributing to the development of an ASEAN community philosophy, and 3) the challenge of unwavering dedication to scholarship and research.

However, answering the question requires some guiding wisdom. The Zen master Osho’s insight on direction and destination can provide us with a way of approaching the question we have posited; especially that some may mistakenly look at such question as implying that we are searching for Filipino philosophy’s destination.

A destination is a clear-cut thing; direction is intuitive ... Destination is in the future. Once decided, you start manipulating your life toward it, steering your life toward it ... By fixing a destination your future is no longer a future, because it is no longer open. Now you have chosen one alternative out of many, because when all the alternatives were open, it was future. Now all alternatives have been dropped; only one alternative is chosen.<sup>6</sup>

Hence, to impose a destination unto ourselves is to make us static, fixed, and attached; thereby, no longer open to other possibilities. Our decisions and actions are attached to that object of our destination. Life is

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<sup>5</sup> Feorillo Demeterio III, “Assessing the Developmental Potentials of Some Twelve Discourses of Filipino Philosophy,” in *Philippiniana Sacra*, 49:147 (2014), 189-230.

<sup>6</sup> Osho, *Intuition: Knowing Beyond Logic* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 2001), 187-188.

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secured but about to go a dead-end. A direction, on the other hand, “is alive in the moment ... it throbs, pulsates, here and now. And out of this pulsating moment, the next moment is created.”<sup>7</sup> Something is always ready to be discovered along the way.<sup>8</sup> To discover is to find. It is not simply a searching.

“When someone is searching,” said Siddhartha, “then it can easily happen that the only thing his eyes see is that for which he is searching ... unable to find anything or let any thought enter his mind ... he always thinks of nothing but the object of his search. He is obsessed by a goal; searching means having a goal ... in striving for a goal, there are many things that you don’t see though they are right in front of your eyes.”<sup>9</sup>

Such wisdom, I think, should give us the proper disposition. We are finding a direction for Filipino philosophy, not a searching for its destination.

## **THE ‘MILLENNIAL FILIPINO PHILOSOPHER’**

At this point, one might ask, “Who is the millennial Filipino philosopher?” A clarification is necessary because the three individual terms—“millennial,” “Filipino,” and “philosopher”—comprising such are controversial in themselves. What is a philosopher? It is fitting that we differentiate a “philosopher” *per se* from a “scholar of philosophy” and a “historian of philosophy,” since these terms are often confused with each other. Although they are related and that we can subsume one to the other, they have important differences. A scholar of philosophy is one who writes

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<sup>7</sup> Osho, *Intuition: Knowing Beyond Logic*, 188.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>9</sup> Hermann Hesse, *Siddhartha* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009), 130.

about an idea(s) of a philosopher and/or a history of philosophy who may or may not have the intent to struggle with philosophical puzzles/problems. It is because his or her preoccupation, as opposed to a philosopher *per se*, is oftentimes to explicate or expound philosophical topics and/or themes. On the other hand, a historian of philosophy is a scholar of philosophy whose preoccupation is to present philosophical ideas in a historical manner taking into consideration the historical contexts from which ideas were born. A historian of philosophy, like the scholar of philosophy, need not necessarily engage in answering philosophical puzzles/problems. He or she may not even necessarily have philosophy as a profession. On the other hand, a philosopher is someone who endeavors to answer philosophical puzzles/problems about reality, knowledge, life, etc.<sup>10</sup> Specifically, a philosopher attempts to a) answer foundational questions about reality, knowledge, life, etc., who b) uses a certain philosophical method, and c) whose answers come in a form of a claim supported by arguments.<sup>11</sup> Of course, what method to be used and the form by which one articulates one's claim and arguments will depend on what philosophical tradition one belongs to. What we have fleshed out are just the minimum marks of what makes one a philosopher. Further, a philosopher is also a scholar of philosophy for one cannot philosophize in a vacuum. And it is also an advantage if a philosopher is adept with the history of philosophy, but what makes a philosopher distinct from the two is the emphasis on having his or her own perspective/answer to a philosophical problem.

Meanwhile, the term "Filipino" is not immune as well to controversies. By "Filipino" here, I am problematizing it as applied to a person (specifically, a philosopher) and not to a concept (for example: philosophy, idea, worldview, etc.). It could have been very easy if we just say that X is Filipino if X's nationality is Filipino by virtue of Article IV of

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<sup>10</sup> Rolando Gripaldo, *The Making of a Filipino Philosopher and Other Essays* (Mandaluyong City: National Bookstore, 2009), 42-43.

<sup>11</sup> Napoleon Mabaquiao, Jr., "Isang Paglilinaw sa Kahulugan at Kairalan ng Pilosopiyang Filipino," in *Malay*, 23:2 (2011), 52.

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the 1987 Philippine Constitution. However, it would be very problematic if we apply such to the term “Filipino philosopher” because then any foreign philosopher, say Jean-Paul Sartre, who would change his citizenship into Filipino, will already be considered as a Filipino philosopher and his ideas as a Filipino philosophy. Surely that will raise eyebrows among philosophers here and abroad. On the other hand, there is a position contending that a philosopher is Filipino if the consciousness of such philosopher has the identity of being Filipino.<sup>12</sup> Such position argues that a consciousness has the identity of being Filipino if such consciousness is: directed towards objects or state of affairs related to the Philippines or to the Filipino people (condition 1), or is directed to objects or state of affairs that will respond to the needs of the Philippines or of the Filipino people (condition 2), or its directedness to an object or state of affairs happens in a framework that is Filipino (condition 3), or its directedness happens in the context of a place and time in the Philippines (condition 4).<sup>13</sup>

Lastly, when it comes to the term “millennial,” according to the Pew Research Center, strictly speaking, such term refers to the generation born between the years 1981-1996. Therefore, how the term “millennial” is understood by many today is mistaken; since oftentimes they refer to the generation born between the years 1997-onwards, which strictly speaking are called “Post-Millennials.”<sup>14</sup>

Now, for the purposes of this essay, by “philosopher,” I mean both “philosopher” *per se* and “scholar of philosophy.” After all, a philosopher is also a scholar of philosophy and that a historian of philosophy is also a scholar of philosophy. Although as one will see later, the fulfillment of the

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<sup>12</sup> Napoleon Mabaquiao, Jr., “Pilosopiyang Pilipino: Isang Pagsusuri,” in *Philippine Social Sciences Review*, 55 (1998), 204.

<sup>13</sup> Napoleon Mabaquiao, Jr., “Globalisasyon, Kultura, at Kamalayang Pilipino,” in *Malay*, 19:3 (2007), 89.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Dimock, “Defining generations: Where Millennials end and post-Millennials begin,” in *Pew Research Center* (1 March 2018; revised 17 January 2019), <<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/03/01/defining-generations-where-millennials-end-and-post-millennials-begin/>>.

challenges I am sketching will lead to a realization that for the future of Filipino philosophy, to be a “philosopher” *per se* rather than merely being a “scholar of philosophy” is an imperative.

On the other hand, when I say “Filipino philosopher,” in this essay, I mean that such philosopher does not only deal with philosophical puzzles/problems *per se* but also problems related to the existence, status, and direction of Filipino philosophy, since answering philosophical problems may not give the consciousness of the person philosophizing a Filipino identity—hence not qualified to be called Filipino philosopher—but answering problems related to the existence, status, and direction of Filipino philosophy does. It is because the need of an answer to such problems regarding Filipino philosophy can be considered as a need of the Filipino people consistent with condition 2 above — a need to finally settle what Filipino philosophy is and where it is going. By adopting this definition, we are able to avoid the problem that “Filipino’ by virtue of the Constitution” faces when applied to a philosopher. It is because at this point even if Jean-Paul Sartre will change his citizenship to Filipino, if his consciousness does not meet any of the four conditions above, he cannot be considered a Filipino philosopher.

Lastly, when it comes to the term “millennial,” I shall adopt how such term is strictly understood by the Pew Research Center and how it is popularly understood. Such definition provides us with a strict delineation of how I shall use the terms “young” and “old” in this essay. When I say “young,” I refer to people born from 1981 onwards; hence, the Millennial and the Post-Millennial generation. When I say “old,” I refer to people born in 1980 backwards; hence, the Generation X (born 1965-1980), the Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964), and the Silent Generation (born 1928-1945). On the other hand, I shall also accept how it is popularly understood today, since it will make the challenges that I will be sketching inclusive of the generation born in 1997 onwards, after all the challenge of directing Filipino philosophy in the future lies in their hands as well. Hence, when I

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say “millennial” in this essay, I refer to those belonging to both the millennial and post-millennial generation.

From the foregoing, therefore, when we say “millennial Filipino philosopher” in this essay, I refer to a person a) who endeavors to answer a philosophical problem/puzzle and/or the problems surrounding the existence, status, and direction of Filipino philosophy by using a particular philosophical method articulated through a claim supported by arguments, and b) whose consciousness has the identity of being Filipino, and c) is born in the year 1981 or the succeeding years. One might argue that attempting to answer the “problems surrounding the existence, status, and direction of Filipino philosophy” can already be subsumed under answering a “philosophical problem/puzzle” since such problems are already foundational, hence considered as philosophical. Why put an emphasis on such instead of just subsuming it? I find it important to emphasize since some challenges that I will be posing such as on contemporariness will be redundant, if not obsolete, even an insult, for those Filipino philosophers who are already doing contemporary philosophizing while simultaneously problematizing Filipino philosophy. Further, this is to emphasize as well that my critique of some modes of Filipino philosophizing are addressed to those who have the inclination to limit their philosophizing to problematizing Filipino philosophy while forgetting that there are other philosophical endeavors that they can engage in. Note, however, that this essay’s definition of a “millennial Filipino philosopher” is only meant to be operative, and not absolute.

### **FIRST CHALLENGE: CONTEMPORARY FILIPINO PHILOSOPHIZING**

Now, we begin our quest for finding the direction that Filipino philosophy should take. Considering the voluminous works that have been done, from the pioneers until the present, it is about time that we lessen the energies that we invest in searching for what a truly Filipino philosophy is.

Considering that there are new and pressing philosophical problems and puzzles in the various traditions and fields in the discipline today, Filipino philosophy should now engage itself in the table conversations of its contemporary philosophies. No longer should it pour all its energies in the search for the uniquely Filipino worldview and identity. It has done enough extensive and intensive journey of looking within and trying to establish itself. It is time that Filipino philosophers today be at par with how professional philosophy is done globally. I contend that by engaging into the contemporary philosophical problems, a fresh Filipino philosophy could emerge. It is because the way we answer and respond to those contemporary puzzles in whatever field in philosophy today, will in one way or another, will sooner or later, reflect the Filipino way of thinking and consciousness without explicitly asserting that this or that is the Filipino worldview. And we are assured that the “Filipino worldview” that will emerge is indeed philosophical because a worldview may not necessarily be philosophical as in ideological, religious, or scientific worldview. This is the first challenge for the “millennial Filipino philosopher”: to be contemporary.

### **TRANSCENDING “FILIPINO PHILOSOPHY”: A CRITICAL REFLECTION ON THE CULTURAL APPROACH**

I think that the fulfillment of such challenge and the other challenges rest on a condition: that it is only by transcending or outgrowing “Filipino Philosophy” that we can actually do Filipino philosophy. What is this Filipino philosophy in quotation marks?<sup>15</sup> This is the Filipino philosophy that most of those who hear the word understands it, that is, a philosophy that is genuinely, naturally, and uniquely Filipino. And a mode of philosophizing that seeks to find a philosophy that is genuinely, naturally, and uniquely Filipino. In other words, the kind of philosophizing that

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<sup>15</sup> I opted to place them in quotation marks to emphasize that such a philosophizing should not be deemed as the Filipino philosophy but only as a Filipino philosophy.

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Gripaldo calls the Cultural Approach wherein “scholars in this field interpretatively describe the philosophical perspectives of tribes or nations in terms of their languages and dialects, folksongs, folk literature, folk wisdom, and riddles, and the like.”<sup>16</sup> Why then should we transcend or outgrow it? Why lessen much focus on what is uniquely Filipino or indigenous in our philosophy? The answer lies in the reasons and motivations for doing such mode of Filipino philosophizing. And so let us try to examine them one by one.

I find two major reasons why Filipino philosophers geared towards a cultural approach<sup>17</sup> to philosophizing; hence, became the most popular and dominant strand of Filipino philosophy. The call for the Filipinization of academic disciplines is one reason for the dominance of the cultural approach. “During those critical decades [1960s-1970s] ... Filipino cultural awareness was tremendously on the upswing and the academic climate then was very much conducive to teaching and doing research in

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<sup>16</sup> Gripaldo, *The Making of a Filipino Philosopher and Other Essays*, 42. On the other hand, Demeterio becomes more specific in that he spells out further this approach in his sixteen discourses of Filipino philosophy as “appropriation of folk spirit/philosophy,” “interpretation of Filipino worldview,” “research on Filipino values and ethics,” and “identification of the presuppositions and implications of the Filipino worldview.” See Feorillo Demeterio III, “Status and Directions of ‘Filipino Philosophy’ in Zialcita, Timbreza, Quito, Abulad, Mabaquiao, Gripaldo, and Co,” 208.

<sup>17</sup> Another approach identified by Gripaldo is the Traditional Approach wherein he argues that “the discipline of philosophy has the historical tradition of enumerating chronologically the names of a nation’s philosophers as in German or British philosophy” and that this “tradition goes as far back as the ancient Greeks where historically the philosophies of Thales, Plato, Aristotle, and so on, are studied.” See Gripaldo, *The Making of a Filipino Philosopher and Other Essays*, 41. This is akin to Demeterio’s “study on the Filipino philosophical luminaries.” Other approaches identified by Demeterio aside from what we have already mentioned in the earlier footnotes are “exposition of foreign systems,” “application of logical analysis,” “application of phenomenology and hermeneutics,” “appropriation of foreign theories,” “revisionist writing,” “academic critical analysis/philosophy,” and “philosophizing in the Filipino language.” See Demeterio, “Status and Directions of ‘Filipino Philosophy’ in Zialcita, Timbreza, Quito, Abulad, Mabaquiao, Gripaldo, and Co,” 208.

Filipino.”<sup>18</sup> In such move, each independent discipline is challenged to integrate what is uniquely Filipino in their respective areas of concern.<sup>19</sup> Of course, philosophy did not allow itself to not participate in such call; hence, philosophers tried to construct a Filipino philosophy. However, one can easily notice that it is difficult to see boundaries and limits of the Filipinized disciplines. It seems that they all depend on each other. Just in Filipino philosophy, for instance, it borrows concepts and methods from Filipino psychology and anthropology.<sup>20</sup> It seems that there are no pure and independent Filipinized disciplines. This is not surprising since this is a characteristic that is very Filipino. In Philippine arts, for instance, Felipe De Leon, Jr. argues that Philippine traditional arts cannot be categorized in the same way that the west categorizes its seven arts.<sup>21</sup> Philippine art is spontaneous, holistic, and borderless. The same is true with the Filipinized disciplines. It is interdisciplinary and integrated. Indeed, this is laudable in this respect; but problematic if we want to establish a real and independent Filipino philosophy. How can we establish such a philosophy if it is a mixture of other disciplines? How can it fulfill its fundamental and perennial roles if its existence is dependent upon other disciplines?<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Florentino Timbreza, “Filipino Philosophy,” in *Exploring the Philosophical Terrain*, ed. by Leni Garcia (Quezon City: C&E Publishing, 2013), 483.

<sup>19</sup> For an elaborate discussion on the Filipinization of the disciplines, see Prospero Covar, “Pilipinolohiya,” in *Larangan: Seminal Essays on Philippine Culture* (Manila: National Commission for Culture and the Arts, 1998), 27-34.

<sup>20</sup> For some examples, see Dionisio Miranda, *Loob: The Filipino Within - A Preliminary Investigation into a Pre-Theological Moral Anthropology* (Manila: Divine Word Publications, 1989), and Leonardo Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy* (Tacloban City: Divine Word University Publications, 1974).

<sup>21</sup> Felipe De Leon, Jr., “The Cultural Matrix of Philippine Traditional Arts,” in *National Commission for Culture and the Arts* (29 July 2011), <<http://ncca.gov.ph/about-culture-and-arts/in-focus/the-cultural-matrix-of-philippine-traditional-arts/>>.

<sup>22</sup> For those who are still preoccupied with the question of whether or not there is such a thing as Filipino philosophy, I do have a minor suggestion. Among those who attempted to answer such a question, I have never read anyone who dared to see how the other Filipinized disciplines answered their own question. It is not too familiar with those into Filipino philosophy that psychologists also once asked if there is a Filipino psychology. One of which is Jose Samson, “Is there a Filipino Psychology?,” in *Sikolohiyang Pilipino: Teorya, Metodo, at Gamit*, ed. by Rogelia Pe-Pua (Quezon City: UP Press, 1982), 56-63. We

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The striving to fight colonial mentality and other imperialistic tendencies is another reason for the inclination towards the cultural approach. If we review Philippine history, the 1940s until 1970s is a period where our country is struggling to stand on its own after being colonized. And one of the ways to veer away from foreign influences is to establish a solid and firm identity as a Filipino people and to strengthen such identity. This inspired Filipino philosophers to venture into the Filipino worldview, ways of thinking and life. The call for nationalism in the academe and in society has contributed to this cultural approach in philosophizing. Leonardo Mercado is one of the pioneers who explicitly admitted that nationalism is one of his motivations.<sup>23</sup> Taken into its proper context, such cultural approach in Filipino philosophy is indeed fruitful and has contributed to a deeper understanding of ourselves as Filipinos. But today, I find that to invest all our time and energy to such approach can be problematic. To focus too much on finding our identity and fighting colonial mentality could be an attachment to an endeavor, although noble, that is not in its proper historical context anymore. I am not saying that we must stop our search for an identity and eradicating traces of colonial mentality, what I insist is that we must learn how to transcend and outgrow them by simultaneously venturing into other philosophical endeavors that are not limited to the cultural approach. If we want a new direction for Filipino philosophy, it cannot again be stuck with such motivations. To

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could only surmise that other disciplines such as anthropology and maybe theology also did something similar as well. Now, for those who are still into the existence or non-existence of Filipino philosophy, I suggest they look into how these other disciplines answered their respective questions as to the existence or non-existence of their Filipino psychology or Filipino anthropology, etc. And maybe they could get some insights and wisdom as to how they arrived at their respective answers. It will be very interesting to see how a different discipline having a different disposition answered such a question. This will also contribute to an interdisciplinary approach to Filipino philosophy as some would insist.

<sup>23</sup> Leonardo Mercado, *Essays on Filipino Philosophy* (Manila: Logos Publications, 2005), 11-26.

impose such motivations unto others might already be borderline propaganda.<sup>24</sup>

A possible counterargument is that, first, our identity as a Filipino people is grounded on our indigenous/cultural philosophy and is our shield against the threats from outside both past (colonialism and imperialism) and present (globalization). Hence, if we are to lessen our efforts on such cultural approach then we might be susceptible to such threats. Second, if Filipino philosophy is to be faithful to the Socratic dictum of knowing thyself then it must turn inward, establish its identity, and ground itself to what it truly means to be a Filipino. To both I reply that we must also remember that Socrates did not say know thyself (*gnothi seauton*) first and then live.<sup>25</sup> Knowledge of the self is a lifelong and continuing process. And to be stuck with oneself is to have an isolated, solipsistic, and individualistic

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<sup>24</sup> And to such "...a philosopher who uses his professional competence for anything except a disinterested search for truth," Bertrand Russell admonishes, "is guilty of a kind of treachery. And when he assumes, in advance of inquiry, that certain beliefs, whether true or false, are such as to promote good behavior, he is so limiting the scope of philosophical speculation as to make philosophy trivial; the true philosopher is prepared to examine all preconceptions. When any limits are placed, consciously or unconsciously, upon the pursuit of truth, philosophy becomes paralyzed by fear, and the ground is prepared for a...censorship punishing those who utter 'dangerous thoughts' – in fact, the philosopher has already placed such a censorship over his own investigations." See Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1965), 835.

<sup>25</sup> A close reading of *Phaedrus* 229e, *Philebus* 48C, and *Laws* XI 923a reveals that, for Socrates, knowledge about one's ignorance is sufficient for one to be able to engage in other endeavors in life, especially endeavors that, Socrates contends, have a tendency to cloud knowledge of one's ignorance such as statesmanship, poetry, and artisanship. Hence, complete self-knowledge is not a prerequisite in order to live. Knowledge of one's ignorance is enough. Knowledge about other aspects of one's self is achieved by living one's life – a life that is lived with others. Construing self-knowledge in this way, opens the possibility of attaining self-knowledge in a relational and not in a solipsistic way. See *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), 478, 1129, 1474-1475. As Miranda in his reflection on *Gnothi seauton* once said, "...we become aware of ourselves and some of our characteristics as much through introspection as through contact with the external world...we become more and deeply aware of ourselves through encounter with another subject. We understand ourselves better not through sheer introspection but through forced confrontation with ourselves because of an encounter with another person." See Miranda, *Loob: The Filipino Within - A Preliminary Investigation into a Pre-Theological Moral Anthropology*, 56.

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attitude in one's life. It prevents genuine relations with others and a failure to recognize that knowledge of the self is also knowledge of other selves. The same is true with Filipino philosophy, if we want to really arrive at an "authentic" Filipino philosophy; we cannot be stuck with just unraveling our own worldview. Now more than ever, there is a need to engage on what contemporary philosophers in the world are doing. Too much of the cultural approach can lead to individualistic, and even narcissistic tendencies.

It cannot also be the case that we keep on insisting that Filipino philosophy is either western or eastern only. Filipino philosophy in its journey cannot just stay on either location. That would be an end to the journey. Both east and west are only parts of the intellectual endeavor. Exhaust all insights and wisdoms that could be exhausted and then move on. Indeed, there are insights that we cannot get from the west which we can only get from the east, and vice-versa. But to be too attached with the lux that the east gives is problematic. Light does not shine on the east alone, but it shines on different parts of the world every day. The same is true with philosophia. It lends its sophia not just on one geography but to anyone willing and ready to partake in the Truth, Beauty, and Goodness that it gives. I share with the insight that Co provided in his realization that:

... the Filipino culture is East and West, North and South. Truly we are at once Postmodern and Global. We are beyond definition, beyond recognition, beyond identification and beyond description ... Ours is the identity of the new age - ambivalent, polymorphous, processual, always becoming ... Those of us who are still toiling in a desperate search for the Filipino soul and the Filipino philosophy are really lagging behind.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Co, "Doing Philosophy in the Philippines," 62.

Indeed, what is unique about the Filipino identity is that it is not static, but spontaneous and open. However, one must also be cautious. One can be too attached with the characteristic of being postmodern and global. I think a proper attitude that Filipino philosophers should embody is being open to what the spirit of the times will bring. If it happens that in Filipino philosophy's journey, it finds its true and everlasting identity along the way, why is that a problem? If it happens that indeed there is none, then it should not hamper us to continue our philosophizing. What is important is that we do not get attached or stuck to being postmodern or eastern or western or whatever it is that we think we are, for we are only as good as we think, and we are almost always better than we think. Otherwise, the journey would reach a dead end.

## **SECOND CHALLENGE: TOWARDS AN ASEAN COMMUNITY PHILOSOPHY<sup>27</sup>**

Alternately, if some would really insist on the cultural approach alone, I do have a suggestion. It is not unfamiliar anymore that we are continuously strengthening our involvement and relationship with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). However, much of what people know about the ASEAN is limited only to political and economic aspects. Even in the academe, researches focus more on the implications of the ASEAN integration on such aspects. But these are just two of the three pillars of the

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<sup>27</sup> John Lambino makes a distinction between “ASEAN” and “ASEAN Community.” When we say ASEAN, it refers only to the association itself as an institution which is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations which may be limited only to economic and political aspects, or even just to the political leaders active in the institution. On the other hand, when we say “ASEAN Community” we do not refer to the association but to a community; in short, to the people of Southeast Asia having a culture interacting with each other. See John Lambino, *An Introduction to ASEAN and the Asean Community* (Quezon City: Bluewater Publishing, 2014), 5-7. Hence, I find it more appropriate to use “ASEAN Community” since we are not striving for a philosophy that will only be limited to the institution alone but is inclusive of the Southeast Asian people building a regional community. After all, it is the goal of the ASEAN to transition from being a mere association to a community.

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ASEAN Community. There is also the socio-cultural.<sup>28</sup> Filipino philosophy could contribute to the socio-cultural pillar especially those pertaining to culture, arts, and education. This is the second challenge that I am posing for the “millennial Filipino philosopher.” In line with being contemporary is the task of opening oneself to our closest neighbors: the countries forming the ASEAN Community. I dare young philosophers to see what role Filipino philosophy can play in the establishment of an ASEAN identity and soon an ASEAN community philosophy. In the same way, it could borrow insights from its fellow ASEAN countries in enriching its own philosophy. Much of what has been integrated to Filipino philosophy are from China, Japan, and India, but none are from Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand, among others. Now that is worth exploring. And it would entail the use of the cultural approach, but this time on a wider scale and not anymore resting on the motives of fighting colonial mentality. Such endeavor would also open collaborative projects among young philosophers in the region, thereby contributing to the fourth ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community’s Plan of Action’s core elements, which is: “strengthening the foundations of regional social cohesion towards an ASEAN Community.”<sup>29</sup> Philosophy, whose concerns are foundational in nature, can surely offer something valuable to turn into fruition such plan of action.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Lambino, *An Introduction to ASEAN and the Asean Community*, 33.

<sup>29</sup> Lambino, *An Introduction to ASEAN and the Asean Community*, 77.

<sup>30</sup> Actually, the gathering of philosophers in the region, if ever, will not happen for the first time. In fact, it already happened in 1983. Quito recalls, “At the recent UNESCO-sponsored meeting of experts in the teaching and research in philosophy in the Asia-Pacific region held in Bangkok (21-25 February 1983), the philosophers of the region agreed, after a protracted debate, that the formulation of an indigenous philosophy, if it exists, is a noteworthy field of research...Among the recommendations of the meeting was to put up an Asian Institute of Philosophy to encourage regional cooperation through exchange of professors and students as well as publications of the works of local philosophers.” See Emerita Quito, *The State of Philosophy in the Philippines* (Manila: DLSU Press, 1983), 13-14; and UNESCO For Education in Asia and the Pacific, *Teaching and Research in Philosophy in Asia and the Pacific: Report of a Meeting of Experts* (Bangkok, 21-25 February 1983) (Bangkok: UNESCO Regional Office for Education in Asia and the Pacific,

## ON WHAT EXACTLY IS CONTEMPORARY FILIPINO PHILOSOPHIZING

Now that we have examined the cultural approach in Filipino philosophizing—and I have shown that although it has some problematic aspects, such approach could still bear fruit in another direction – we are now ready to delve into what I mean by contemporary philosophizing. If one looks into the suggestions made by our luminaries on Filipino philosophy, this challenge is not new. Apparently, it has been neglected by some. Romualdo Abulad ventured into a reflection on how Filipino philosophy can be more responsive in the 21st century.<sup>31</sup> The spirit of his article advocates for diligence in studying a philosophy with all due respect and benevolence, and discipline in giving the best, rightful, and most faithful interpretation to the philosopher’s ideas. According to him, this can be achieved by engaging in the exploratory approach, wherein a scholar shall fully immerse oneself on the works of a philosopher that one is interested in and from there begins one’s philosophical journey. One of the possible fruits of such an endeavor is an in-depth critical exposition of the philosopher’s ideas.

Such suggestion is laudable. In fact, every scholar, not just in philosophy, should engage in such an approach. One must have an exploratory attitude as one begins one’s academic journey. However, the problem arises when one gets stuck in such an exploratory-expository approach. If for example, a scholar today would want to study a

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1983). But did we see such noble endeavor come into fruition? Were we able to establish a regional collaboration in philosophy after thirty-five years, especially among the young? Mercado also recalls in one of his classes in Filipino philosophy “where around seven Indonesian seminarians were enrolled” and that he “encouraged them to discuss their Indonesian counterpart of loob and they found the exercise most rewarding.” See Mercado, *Essays on Filipino Philosophy*, 23-24. But did such rewarding and engaging activity reach a national or even a regional level? We have yet to see Indonesian or Malaysian or Cambodian philosophy being integrated to our very own Filipino philosophy.

<sup>31</sup> Romualdo Abulad, “Doing Philosophy in the Philippines: Towards a More Responsive Philosophy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” in *Suri*, 5:1 (2016), 1-20.

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philosophical luminary who has used such approach all one's life, then what would such a scholar study about the "philosophizing" made by such philosophical luminary? His or her writing style? But we are not in the field of literature or the languages. His or her personal and intellectual biography? But we are not in the discipline of history. The least a young scholar could do is to evaluate how correct or faithful the philosophical luminary's interpretation is. It seems that the study to be done by the young scholar is no less different from art as mimesis of which Plato is averse of. Art is just an imitation of an imitation of Reality, a copy of a "poor" copy of Reality.<sup>32</sup> The same is true with the study of the young scholar. It is simply an interpretation of an interpretation of a philosopher's original idea. What insights can we get then from such young scholar? Where will it lead him/her in one's philosophical journey? How can it be responsive to the 21st century?

The exploratory-expository approach should only be our point of departure in philosophizing. Anyone who insists that this approach should be dominant in Filipino philosophizing remain attached in the spirit of the time of Emerita Quito, wherein Quito had to be contented first by her expository works since only a few scholars in the Philippines knew what she was introducing. To proceed into a critique, a treatise, or a philosophical system that is originally hers would jeopardize the learning of her students whose knowledge about Marcuse, Husserl, Bergson, Sartre, and others are still raw. That is why she simply had to do numerous exploratory-expository works in order to expose her students to contemporary philosophies during that time. But for us to totally remain in that disposition today is to forget that the spirit of the times is changing and not permanent. In addition, what is contemporary during Quito's time is not contemporary anymore in our time. To remain in Quito's shoes by investing all of one's intellectual energies to what Quito deemed as contemporary in

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<sup>32</sup> See Book X of the *Republic*, trans. by Paul Shorey, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), 819-844.

her time, is to neglect other philosophies that are emerging in our own contemporary period.

Therefore, I agree with Abulad's advocacy to be disciplined, diligent, and rigorous in one's exploration of a philosophy; but to just invest all energies to such approach as some young scholars would do – for I have heard fellow students who would opt to write expository more than argumentative theses – I do not. Again, just like the cultural approach, it need not be discarded. An argumentative research goes hand in hand with exploratory-expository approach because one cannot argue, criticize, synthesize, or produce something creative without first mastering a certain philosophy. In addition, there are emerging philosophies in different parts of the world that needs to be explored and exposed, especially the marginalized ones.

Mercado gives us another proposal for future undertakings:

... that the philosophical institutions encourage various Filipino philosophers to write on a common theme. If various Western philosophers through the ages wrote on the individual and human rights and individual freedom and therefore enriched the topic, something can be done if Filipino scholars write on the Filipino as a social being, on human duties and their implications ... There may be other themes ... In this postmodern age, we may thus show the rest of the world the riches of Filipino thought.<sup>33</sup>

I agree with his proposal that we can write on a common theme such as God for example. But I do not agree with him in saying that by writing on such topic we must aim to unravel what the Filipino notion on such topic is; hence, Filipino view of God. What I think and propose when we say Filipino view of God, for instance, is the Filipino philosopher's contribution

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<sup>33</sup> Leonardo Mercado, "Reflections on the Status of Filipino Philosophy," in *Kritike*, 10:2 (2016), 27.

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to ongoing puzzles in recent philosophy of religion, without asserting the Filipino worldview on such topic. To just unravel the Filipino worldview on contemporary topics is insufficient to fully engage in contemporary philosophizing. As I pointed earlier, our answer to such contemporary puzzles will reflect our Filipino consciousness without explicitly asserting that this or that is the Filipino worldview.

Of the philosophical luminaries, I think it is the idea of what makes a genuine philosopher (according to Gripaldo) in a sense encapsulates the challenge that I have been posing since the start:

To master a philosopher's philosophy or to master a field of specialization within a discipline is good, but we need to grow either outside or within that philosopher or that specialization. One ought not to be a Kantian forever, if by Kantian we mean we simply mouth Kant's ideas in our lectures and writings, that it is to say, we do not innovate ... We become an intellectual through him ... Many of us are like this Kantian. We become Nietzschean or Heideggerean or Rortyan through and through. We forget about our own independence of mind. We forget that we can innovate or tread a new path.<sup>34</sup>

And this path, I think is the direction that Filipino philosophy should be taking today. It is about time we go beyond the confines that we have imposed unto ourselves. What are some means to thread this path?

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<sup>34</sup> Gripaldo, *The Making of a Filipino Philosopher and Other Essays*, 65. Gripaldo's insight echoes that of Miranda who says that "If philosophy is to be philosophy, and if it is to be Filipino, one must go beyond the received assumptions and modes of philosophy to the very roots and sources of philosophizing. At a certain point one must cease being a mere student of someone else's philosophy and begin doing it oneself." See Miranda, *Loob: The Filipino Within - A Preliminary Investigation into a Pre-Theological Moral Anthropology*, 127.

(1) we can innovate ... (2) we can reject an old philosophical thought and create a new path to philosophizing, and (3) we can review old philosophical questions and offer a new insight or philosophical reflection.<sup>35</sup>

This time Filipino philosophizing is not anymore limited to just unraveling Filipino identity, values, and worldviews. Numerous paths and directions are opened. Part of contemporary philosophizing is to dare ourselves to transcend the comforts that usual way of Filipino philosophizing has given us. It is now time to outgrow that which we are too attached with and engage ourselves with what is being debated upon in contemporary philosophy. For instance, John Searle's "The Future of Philosophy" provides six problems areas that we can venture into: contemporary approaches to the traditional mind-body problem, philosophy of mind and cognitive science, philosophy of language, philosophy of society, ethics and practical reason, and philosophy of science.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, there are emerging studies on feminism,<sup>37</sup> environmental philosophy, experimental philosophy, computer ethics that are also interesting. In eastern philosophy, one could assess comparative studies done by our luminaries (such as Quito, Mercado, Timbreza, and Co)

<sup>35</sup> Gripaldo, *The Making of a Filipino Philosopher*, 66.

<sup>36</sup> John Searle, "The Future of Philosophy," in *The Royal Society*, 354 (1999), 2073-2079.

<sup>37</sup> "Philosophy is also more multicultural now than it has ever been. In past centuries leading philosophers in the Western world were white men who perpetuated a European tradition of thought. Most notable now is the presence of women in the discipline...This rising number of female philosophers sparked an interest in philosophical issues that directly address the concerns of women. Some of these discussions have a politically revolutionary tone and draw attention to the ways that male-centered culture has oppressed women. Other discussions explore how uniquely female ways of thinking impact traditional problems of philosophy, such as theories of knowledge, ethics, and aesthetics." See Samuel Enoch Stumpf and James Fieser, *Socrates to Sartre and Beyond: A History of Philosophy* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2008), 445-446.

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in the light of issues confronting comparative philosophy today: skepticism and incommensurability.<sup>38</sup>

### **THIRD CHALLENGE: AN UNWAVERING DEDICATION TO SCHOLARSHIP/RESEARCH**

We are now at the end of our attempt to answer the twofold question that we have posited in the beginning. There is only but one last challenge for the “millennial Filipino philosopher”—to be able to actualize all that we have just sketched out. We must continue our dedication to scholarship and research. “Millennial Filipino philosophers” must not be afraid to attempt to submit their works to journals and participate in conferences while at the same time mindful that quantity of research publication and conference participation does not necessarily amount to a Filipino philosophy that is of quality.<sup>39</sup> It is also about time that young philosophers should stop looking at philosophers that they study as “gods” in the philosophical Parthenon who are unattainable, but as fellows or peers in the philosophical agora. After all, as Samuel Stumpf and James Fieser notes, “Paralleling other academic disciplines, philosophy now is driven less by the thoughts of great individual minds and more so by great issues and movements within the discipline.”<sup>40</sup> How productive and fruitful it is to see young Filipino philosophers engaging in polemics, done in the spirit of collegiality, with their contemporary philosophers, old and young. It is my hope that the challenges that I have sketched in this essay, inspire my fellow young philosophers, in one way or another, to continue to contribute to the

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<sup>38</sup> David Wong, “Comparative Philosophy: Chinese and Western,” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (31 July 2001; revised 4 August 2020), <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/comparphil-chiwes/>>.

<sup>39</sup> I wish to thank the anonymous reviewer of this journal for pointing out the importance of continuously interrogating the means and measures by which the academe validates philosophy, and for that matter the humanities, in terms of quantity of publications, especially that philosophical endeavors being subjected to neoliberal exploitation is not an impossibility anymore.

<sup>40</sup> Stumpf and Fieser, *Socrates to Sartre and Beyond: A History of Philosophy*, 445.

flourishing of Filipino philosophy. While we look back with gratitude and respect to the contribution of our forerunners, we look forward with hope and trust in the contribution we can make in the future.

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