

The Language of Indigeneity in Filipino Philosophies (Second of Two Parts)¹

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Abstract: This paper reconstructs the language of Indigeneity in the discourses of Filipino Philosophies. It starts with an initial tracing of the diachronic presence of the concept of Indigeneity in the Philippines before it was employed as a qualitative modifier for doing philosophy. Following this is an exposition of the equation of Indigeneity to the inception of the idea of Filipino Philosophy thereby making the nationalist context of Filipinization coterminous with the early beginnings of Indigenous philosophizing. The next part elaborates the post-nationalist employment of the language of Indigeneity as exemplified by various works unified by the pluralist subtext of Indigenous philosophies in the peripheries. The final part first deploys the concept of indeterminacy as the precondition for both the nationalist and post-nationalist employment of the language of Indigeneity then redescribes Indigenous philosophizing as a critical enterprise of doing philosophy in its *particularity* understood in a recognitive framework.

Keywords: indeterminacy, Filipino Philosophies, recognition, (critical) indigenous philosophizing

Indigenous (Filipino) Philosophies in the Peripheries

A different deployment of the language of Indigeneity could be seen among works in diverse geospecific and sociocultural environments that resist subsumption into a singular category. This is evident in the usage of “Indigenous” in reference to localities, the employment of local

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language(s) and concepts, articulations of the experience of Indigenous peoples, and the thematic local “material” concerns and scope of its studies. The respective (regional) assertions in the act of philosophizing among the authors in this part show a multiplicity of identities that defy homogenization. It is in this sense that their works could be identified as a post-nationalist employment of the language of Indigeneity. They are also called “philosophies in the peripheries” not only in their distance from the centers where Filipino Philosophy has taken mainstream, but also for their coverage of marginal themes, issues, experiences, and subjects. But although these works deflect from a nationalist project, they could still be identified *conventionally* as “Filipino” in either the geographical or sociopolitical affiliations of the authors or of the thematic subjects and coverage of their work.² Roland Theuas Pada’s reminder is useful here in treating the conventionality of “Filipino” for purposes of identification. “We should not forget the fact,” he says, “that the word ‘Filipino’ is simply a marker that tells us that a person belongs to a political and geographic area of the Philippines.”³ In this vein, one should set aside “the illusion of unity” of an ontological and universal definition of Filipino but look instead at “shared experiences and concerns” of the people located geo-specifically in the archipelago.⁴

Danilo Alterado’s referential description of “Ilokano,” for instance, merges linguistic competence with subjects’ domicile. Geographic location, however, is more loosely applied than linguistic competence insofar as Ilokanos in the diaspora are still pulled in the self-ascription if the latter is maintained.⁵ The Indigeneity of Ilokano Philosophy in Alterado’s works and of other fellow Ilokanos is given distinction and unified by the common feature of articulating concepts in Ilokano language deemed as philosophical through an appeal to a shared collective ethnic worldview. “Ilokano language,” as Alterado writes, “can never be divorced from the Ilokano philosophy.”⁶ The efficiency of this ethnolinguistic grounding is leveraged by

² For other qualifications of being a Filipino in this sense, see Napoleon M. Mabaquiao, Jr., “Isang Paglilinaw sa Kahulugan at Kairalan ng Pilosopiyang Filipino,” in *Malay*, 23, no. 2 (2011), 39–56, <<https://ejournals.ph/article.php?id=8014>>.

³ Roland Theuas DS. Pada, “The Methodological Problems of Filipino Philosophy,” in *Kritike*, 8, no. 1 (June 2014), 28, <https://www.kritike.org/journal/issue_14/pada_june2014.pdf>.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Danilo S. Alterado and Aldrin S. Jaramilla, “‘Maiyannatup a Panagripirip’: Towards an Ilokano Indigenous Doing of Philosophy,” in *Philosophia*, 20, no. 1 (2019), 107, <<https://www.doi.org/10.46992/pijp.20.1.a.6>>.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 105.

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Aurelio Agcaoili in tracing the contours of Ilokano cosmology,⁷ epistemology,⁸ and education and social life.⁹ Agcaoili's articulation of the interconnection of these three areas evidently bears resemblance to the common patterns of Indigenous philosophies' premium on the interconnectedness of reality, ecology, and identity.¹⁰

This rising esteem in doing philosophy in the local languages is already shared amongst scholars in different regions of the Philippines at the beginning of the 21st century. Alfredo Co testifies to this occurrence in his 2004 update on the practice of philosophy in the Philippines, reporting the advent of "the search for a Bicolano Philosophy, Bisayan philosophy, perhaps also for Ilokano philosophy"¹¹ whose legitimation he questioned nonetheless as being philosophical by mere codification in the language.

In the Bikol region, Indigenous philosophizing has been spearheaded by Wilmer Joseph Tria who does not merely use Bikol language for writing and teaching philosophy but reasonably defines the conceptual contours of the Indigeneity of philosophy itself rooted in the native language. Tria alludes to the Latin definition of *indigena* and designates primarily the use of native language for thought disciplines like philosophy as the initial means of Indigenization. Tria makes an important distinction between connotative and denotative terms granting premium to the former as the locus and material for culture-specific ideas for philosophical articulation. What renders thematic reflections as philosophical furthermore would be the capacity of the developed connotative concepts to extend its ambit of signification to common experience transcending its cultural origination.¹² This employment

⁷ Aurelio S. Agcaoili, "Nakaparsuaan, Kadagaan, and Panaglunit ti Daga: Climate Justice and Environmental Ethics in Ilokano Life," in *Budhi: A Journal of Ideas and Culture*, XXII, no. 3 (2018), 1–26, <<https://ajol.ateneo.edu/budhi/articles/149/1695>>.

⁸ Aurelio S. Agcaoili, "Sanut, Wayawaya, and the Naimbag a Biag in Ilokano Philosophy," in *Budhi: A Journal of Ideas and Culture*, XXIII, no. 1 (2019), 87–102, <<https://ajol.ateneo.edu/budhi/articles/236/2581>>.

⁹ Aurelio S. Agcaoili, "Saan a Maymaysat' Aldaw: Education in Democracy, Social Justice, and Inclusion in Ilokano Life," in *Budhi: A Journal of Ideas and Culture*, XXIII, no. 3 (2019), 65–94, <<https://ajol.ateneo.edu/budhi/articles/238/2599>>.

¹⁰ Peter Paul E. Elicor, "Philosophical Inquiry with Indigenous Children: An Attempt to Integrate Indigenous Forms of Knowledge in Philosophy for/with Children," in *Childhood and Philosophy*, 15 (June 2019), 10–13, <<https://doi.org/10.12957/childphilo.2019.42659>>. See also Lesley L. Grange and Carl Mika, "What is Indigenous Philosophy and What Are Its Implications for Education?" in *International Handbook of Philosophy of Education*, ed. by Paul Smeyers (Switzerland: Springer, 2018), 499.

¹¹ Alfredo P. Co, *Doing Philosophy in the Philippines and Other Essays*, in *Across the Philosophical Silk Road A Festschrift in Honor of Alfredo P. Co*, Vol. VI, 58.

¹² See Wilmer Joseph Tria, "Developing Indigenous Philosophies," in *Gibon: Ateneo de Naga University Journal*, 6, no. 1 (2006).

of Bikol languages in writing philosophy has gained quite a momentum following this pioneering initiative.¹³

A similar trend can be traced among disparate efforts of scholars in the Visayas and Mindanao. In the report of Kahambing and Demeterio, a handful of mavericks pursued the writing of philosophy in the Cebuano language.¹⁴ Amosa Velez' work, for instance, is a piece enunciating in Cebuano language what she describes as an "intellectual need" of man.¹⁵ In her study of academic journal publishing in Mindanao, Pamela Del Rosario-Castrillo records an early work of Renante Pilapil on philosophizing in Bisaya and Albert Alejo et al.'s Bisayan article on the ethics, aesthetics, and epistemology of cockfighting.¹⁶ Both Kahambing and Demeterio and Castrillo observe the minor preference of the Cebuano and Bisayan languages in writing philosophy among most scholars in Central and Southern Philippines. The former attributes this to the autonomous preferences of scholars in writing, while the latter situates it in the structure of academic publishing bounded by the official language of English strategically instituted to grow knowledge and cultural capital.

The employment of regional languages in philosophizing and writing philosophy largely remains in the periphery with a scant number of advocacy-driven laborers in the field. However, while local and Indigenous languages may not be an attractive medium for philosophizing, thematizations of Indigenous peoples'¹⁷ experience for philosophical articulation abound in literature. No single definition or approach in philosophizing could be used as a univocal category for these multitudes of works. To mention a few authors whose notable works have served as

¹³ For an inventory of the two-decade-old philosophizing in Bikol since Tria's pioneering efforts, see Victor John M. Loquias, "Roots and Offshoots of Bikol Philosophizing," in *Philippiniana Sacra*, LVII, no. 172 (January–April 2022), 23–48, <<https://philsacra.ust.edu.ph/admin/downloadarticle?id=9C32D7A18C3000D0E66FB10B2550EE DB>>.

¹⁴ Jan Gresil S. Kahambing and Feorillo Petronillo A. Demeterio III, "Doing Philosophy in Central and Southern Philippines: Interviews with PHAVISMINDA Presidents Velez, Gallamaso, and Suazo," in *PHAVISMINDA Journal*, 16 & 17 (May 2018), 161–198, <<https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/028b0f1b-224c-45f2-944a-0a4e4bbf7b2b/downloads/7%20PHAV%2017-18.pdf?ver=1643335799663>>.

¹⁵ Amosa Velez, "Mga Yangongo Sa Usa Ka Bata," in *PHAVISMINDA Journal*, 4 (2005), 1–7, <https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/028b0f1b-224c-45f2-944a-0a4e4bbf7b2b/downloads/1chta7bo6_251262.pdf?ver=1643335801128>.

¹⁶ Pamela Del Rosario-Castrillo, "Text, tension, and Territory: The Field of Academic Journal Publishing In Mindanao, 1968–2005," in *Tambara*, 29, no. 1 (2012), 14, <https://www.addu.edu.ph/tambara/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2017/07/Tambara_Vol29-December2012.pdf>.

¹⁷ That is, in the context of Casumbing-Salazar's definition of Indigenous peoples. See Melisa S.L. Casumbal-Salazar, "The Indeterminacy of the Philippine Indigenous Subject," in *Amerasia Journal*, 41, no. 1 (2015), 74–94, <<https://doi.org/10.17953/aj.41.1.74>>.

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references for succeeding studies in this line, we have Karl Gaspar and Albert Alejo who are both hailed by Raymundo Pavo as exemplars of what he calls as “social-scientist-philosophers” to be consulted in the south.¹⁸ Both are trained anthropologists and are deeply immersed in the ground with Indigenous peoples.¹⁹ For Pavo, this grounding on the empirical experience of specific (Filipino) groups provides the particularity of philosophy that is captured by the social scientist but is yet to pass the litmus test of universality. Pavo himself anticipates the conception of an “Indigenous Logic” with “sufficient and reliable” ground “experience with some indigenous people.”²⁰

Back to the north, Florentino Hornedo—another philosophy luminary in the Philippines—had already practiced the multidisciplinary approach in research advocated by Pavo. Hornedo’s ethnographic studies on Ivatan culture and other Indigenous peoples in northern Luzon did not only provide valuable accounts of their experiences but also gave Hornedo material bases for his claims on some aspects of Filipino experience such as the Indigenous aspects of religion, society, cosmology, and relation with the environment.²¹

This recognition of Indigenous peoples’ experience as a resource of philosophical insights for articulation proves valuable for various themes in philosophy. In the south, Jeffry Oca’s project of understanding a “philosophy at the margins” from the experiences of Indigenous communities in the Philippines contributes to this still growing literature of “Filipino Philosophies” in the peripheries. Through his ethnographic study of the philosophy of work of the elderly people of Sitio Pinayuna-an in Negros Oriental, Oca finds material basis for reinforcing the notion of “indigenous work ethics” with its elements of sustainability, cooperation, small-scale progress, uncommodified labor, and environmental friendliness

¹⁸ Raymundo Pavo, “Filipino Philosophy and Postmodernity,” in *PHAVISMINDA Journal*, 10 (May 2011), 28, <https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/028b0f1b-224c-45f2-944a-0a4e4bbf7b2b/downloads/d%20PAPER_PAVO.pdf?ver=1643335800367>.

¹⁹ Among their numerous works, see Karl Gaspar’s *Manobo Dreams in Arakan: A People’s Struggle to Keep Their Homeland* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 2011) and Albert Alejo’s *Generating Energies in Mount Apo: Cultural Politics in a Contested Environment* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 2000).

²⁰ Pavo, “Filipino Philosophy and Postmodernity,” 33. Pavo’s proposal of a “local grounding” for philosophizing which merges the function of social science and philosophy necessitates him to go to the peripheries—to Indigenous experiences as material bases for his project. See also Raymundo Pavo, “The Social-Scientist Philosopher Perspective: A Possible Contribution to a Filipino Philosophy,” in *ACTA: Proceedings of the Quadricentennial International Philosophy Congress* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2011).

²¹ See Florentino H. Hornedo, *The Favor of the Gods: Essays in Filipino Religious Thought and Behavior* (Manila, Philippines: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2001).

as a richly philosophical resource for “countervailing the destructive tendency of globalization.”²²

Through his fieldwork with Indigenous peoples in Mindanao, Roger Bayod writes about the prospect of “developing an indigenous ethics” based on their concept of land as sacred that conditions a holistic outlook in life and community as manifested by their Indigenous knowledge of healing that both treats the physical and spiritual elements, and their Indigenous perspective of justice which has nonetheless been misrecognized as immoral from the outside by mainstream community.²³ In a similar vein, Christopher Ryan Maboloc opines that the local wisdom of Indigenous peoples “are good models for the harmonized relation between human beings and nature”²⁴ which could counter the effects of global climate change. This claim is premised on almost the same outlook that Oca and Bayod who have already gleaned from the experience of Indigenous people’s communities such as the sacredness of nature and respectful intercourse with nature for material subsistence. This time however, Maboloc highlights the viability of Indigenous people’s lifeways for global environmental sustainability which are still largely unutilized.

Whether Indigenous concepts can be employed in teaching a required philosophy course standardized in the curriculum has been proven to be both empirically and practically doable by Guiraldo Fernandez and Geraldine Villaluz. By integrating Cebuano-Visayan Indigenous peace concepts on the relation between subjects, environment, and the transcendent into the K-12 course Philosophy of the Human Person, Fernandez and Villaluz report a more relevant, responsive, culture-sensitive, and context-based learning of philosophy among students.²⁵

Still in the area of education—perhaps even most importantly in this line—a pathbreaking attempt to articulate the theoretical foundation for integrating Indigenous forms of knowledge in the emerging child-centered

²² Jeffrey Oca, “Philosophy at the Margins: Exploring the Philosophy of Work of the Elderly People in Some Remote Areas of Negros Oriental,” in *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 1, no. 1 (October 2015), 10, <<http://ses-journal.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Philosophy-at-the-Margins-Exploring-the-Philosophy-of-Work-of-the-Elderly-People-in-some-Remote-Areas-of-Negros-Oriental.pdf>>.

²³ Roger Bayod, “Developing an Indigenous Ethics: On Recognition and Social Justice,” in *Eubios Journal of Asian and International Bioethics*, 29, no. 1 (January 2019), 10–13, <<https://eubios.info/assets/docs/EJAIB12019.226220136.pdf>>.

²⁴ Christopher Ryan Maboloc, “Liberal Environmentalism and Global Climate Change,” in *Eubios Journal of Asian and International Bioethics*, 30 (March 2020), 54, <<https://eubios.info/assets/docs/EJAIB32020.226215907.pdf>>.

²⁵ Guiraldo C. Fernandez and Geraldine D. Villaluz, “Teaching Indigenous Peace Concepts from Visayan Fisherfolks and Farmers through the Course Philosophy of the Human Person,” in *Recoletos Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, 5, no. 1 (2017), 32–50, <<https://ejournals.ph/article.php?id=13063>>.

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educational program of Philosophy for/with Children (P4wC) is performed by Peter Elicor.²⁶ Grounded in his experience of the program with Indigenous children in a rural area in Southern Philippines, Elicor introduces “presentational epistemology” as a “counter-weight” to the analytic-representational epistemology which dominantly forms the current assumption of knowledge in P4wC. This characterizes the epistemic condition of Indigenous knowledge based on the common patterns of relationality and situatedness of Indigenous thinking culled by Elicor from the literature of Indigenous studies. Correlatively, pedagogy itself is equally rethought whereby the pedagogue should become increasingly aware of their positionality²⁷ in order to mitigate the epistemic violence that could accrue from the learning process. This violence could manifest when the pedagogue assumes the “view from nowhere,”²⁸ which is a kind of a disentanglement from their normative social milieu, thereby impinging upon their relationship with the children taking on an objective attitude instead of the participative and relational mode in the learning process. The latter entails the recognition of the context and thought resources of children and an Indigenization of the communal experience of philosophical inquiry *with* children.

This partial inventory of research that substantiate discourses in different areas of philosophy using field experience with Indigenous peoples commonly showcase the nonchalance towards the signification of Filipino philosophy as a nationalist endeavor. Although they could be conventionally identified as Filipino philosophies, their works cannot be subsumed under the homogenous context of Filipinization in their shared signification of Indigeneity in the peripheries. What is observable rather is a translocation of philosophy into the proximity of peoples’ experience distinguished from each other ethnically, linguistically, and culturally yet esteemed as potent material resources for doing philosophy itself—in other words, the agentive shift of doing philosophy in the immediacy of culture specific contexts. However, this agentive emphasis in doing philosophy was also previously shown as operative in the context of Indigenization as Filipinization. What is the precondition for the flexibility of the language of Indigeneity to be iterated in both nationalist and post-nationalist levels of signification? The next part addresses this question and further introduces a way of understanding Indigenous philosophizing based on the practices that have already been introduced.

²⁶ Elicor, “Philosophical Inquiry with Indigenous Children.”

²⁷ See his separate discussion of this concept in Peter Paul E. Elicor, “Resisting the ‘View from Nowhere’: Positionality in Philosophy for/with Children Research,” in *Philosophia*, 21, no. 1 (2020), 19–33, <<https://doi.org/10.46992/pijp.21.1.a.2>>.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 21–22.

(Critical) Indigenous Philosophizing as Coping with Indeterminacy

Indigenization in the context of Filipinization emerged as a response to the exposure to difference and experience of “indeterminacy” or a lack felt as a “vital need”²⁹ by the luminaries of Filipino philosophy that led them to engage in a project of self-determination in the philosophical enterprise. For instance, Emerita Quito’s pioneering initiative of teaching other philosophical frameworks like phenomenology, existentialism, and structuralism, which she learned from her doctoral studies abroad, provided a “fresh air”³⁰ in the mode of thinking that was dominated by Scholasticism during her time. As de Leon reports, Quito perceived the need for more freedom in philosophizing.³¹ Translation of mainstream philosophies and the use of the Filipino language itself in doing philosophy was deemed instrumental for the flourishing of philosophy in the country. Hence, even those who professed non-allegiance to the project of Filipino philosophy were implicated in it via their utilization of the Filipino language(s) in philosophizing.

Claro Ceniza’s statement articulates best that generation’s penchant for nationalism that Filipino Philosophy hopes to realize despite Ceniza’s non-enthusiasm to this project: “if we are to build our spirit of nationalism,” he says, “we must first build a spirit of pride in ourselves as a people.”³² However, he adds, “a national philosophy must not be the ultimate goal of Filipino philosophizing.”³³ Nationalism is but a historical reaction to colonial oppression experienced by the people which could nevertheless become a powerful tool for mobilizing collective determination. Once nationhood is attained, Ceniza proposes a transcending of nationalism so that Filipino philosophy could be steered towards the course of a philosophy of being.³⁴

The agency in doing philosophy is manifestly intrinsic to the employment of Indigeneity as a qualitative modifier of philosophizing by Filipino philosophy luminaries. Yet it has also been shown in the preceding section that the conventionally labeled Indigenous “Filipino” philosophies in

²⁹ This is Charles Taylor’s famous description of what recognition has become in the present. See Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. by Amy Gutmann (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994).

³⁰ This is Romualdo Abulad’s description of Quito’s teaching. See Emmanuel De Leon, “Emerita S. Quito (1929–): Ang Ugat ng Isang Panibagong Direksyon ng Pamimilosopiya sa Pilipinas,” in *Malay*, 29, no. 2 (2017), 37, <<https://ejournals.ph/article.php?id=11538>>.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Claro F. Ceniza, “Self-identity and the Filipino Philosophy,” in *Sophia*, XII, no. 1 (Manila: De La Salle University, May–August 1982), 21–22.

³³ *Ibid.*, 24.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

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the peripheries are likewise fueled by the esteem for the culturally specific contexts of the philosophers, or of their subjects, in the region—confidence in agency albeit detached from the nationalist project. We can glean from these claims a view that the language of Indigeneity shared among these scholars is an applied context of the struggle for recognition in the agentive authorship of philosophy. This can be aligned with the characteristic features of struggles for recognition that lay focus on “identity and difference, equality and inclusion, and concern for differential treatment.”³⁵

The precondition for the self-determination mobilized in the deployment of Indigeneity among the preceding discourses in philosophy is the inherent element of indeterminacy of Indigeneity itself. Indigeneity, as Benjamin Gregg underscores, does not have a “broadly accepted understanding” but “in its indeterminacy, the term allows for very different groups to claim indigeneity and to claim it in very different ways.”³⁶ We can further glean from Francesca Merlan’s contention that Indigeneity does not have an “objectively ascertainable” meaning “but like many other social categories, is a contingent, interactive, and historical product.”³⁷ With Merlan, Gregg insists that Indigeneity is hence a social construct. It is from this point of view that the Indigenous phase as a historical response to the extended colonialism in the towering system of Scholasticism appears. Rhoderick John Abellanosa’s claim would synchronize with this as he explains that “the beginnings of Filipino philosophy...must be understood within the context of the struggle, not just for political recognition, but more importantly to establish a distinct identification of the Filipino people, capable of reflecting about the world and the events around them.”³⁸ Postwar nationalism was a strengthening—thus, a postcolonial extension—of the ascription of Indigeneity attached to colonial resistance in the Philippine revolution against Spanish rule. This was a coping with indeterminacy in a wider scale or what Merlan identifies as “indigeneity in the first-order sense of local

³⁵ Renante D. Pilapil, *Recognition: Examining Identity Struggles* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2015), xi.

³⁶ See Benjamin Gregg, “Indigeneity as Social Construct and Political Tool,” in *Human Rights Quarterly*, 41, no. 4 (November 2019), 824, <<https://doi.org/10.1353/hrq.2019.0063>>. A notable example closer to home is Alejo’s stratification of at least ten identity assertions that Lumads, or the Indigenous peoples in Mindanao, can take to advance their solidarity strategies respective of the forms of struggle that they experience locally, nationally, and globally. See Albert Alejo, “Strategic Identity: Bridging Self-determination and Solidarity among Indigenous Peoples of Mindanao, the Philippines,” in *Thesis Eleven*, 145, no. 1 (2018), <<https://doi.org/10.1177/072551361876383>>.

³⁷ Francesca Merlan, “Indigeneity: Global and Local,” in *Current Anthropology*, 50, no. 3 (June 2009), 319, <<https://doi.org/10.1086/597667>>.

³⁸ Rhoderick John Abellanosa, “Local Discourse, Identity and the Search for a Filipino Philosophy: A Re-exploration through the Lens of Reynaldo Ileto,” in *Asian Perspectives in the Arts and Humanities*, 3, no. 1 (2013), 39, <<https://ajol.ateneo.edu/paha/articles/53/483>>.

connections and belonging” where Indigeneity is “applied much more broadly than to just those we might understand as ‘indigenous peoples’.”³⁹ The nationalist claim for Indigeneity was not an impossibility because “claims to indigeneity can be expansive, elastic and dynamic, and driven by any number of disparate goals.”⁴⁰ The “fundamental criterion”⁴¹ of self-identification in being able to philosophize is herein deployed in Indigeneity as a quality of the imagined community as a nation. This “self-grounding” element of Indigeneity, as Gregg further avers, is not primarily bent on asserting truth claims about one’s Indigeneity but of advancing goals and value commitments such as that of gaining recognition and rights.⁴² In the case of Filipino philosophizing, it is the esteem in the agency of philosophizing itself grounded on their experience and cultural and linguistic resources.

Michael Roland Hernandez’s critique articulates the dangers of a monolithic nationalist project, either in historiography or in philosophy – that is, not only the epistemic violence of a colonial identity trap but the tendency of vertically aligning geo-politically and culturally diverse collective projects into a homogenous identity of the nation-state.⁴³ This implies that even if the nationalist project identified with the idea of Filipino philosophy emerges as a historically critical response to oppression, it is not a project immune from problematizations. “Indigeneity is not tied to any one particular historical experience.”⁴⁴ Not only did Indigeneity shift in its significance historically but the archipelagic context of the Philippines with diverse ethnicity, culture, historical experience, and identity makes the terms “Indigenous” and “non-Indigenous” fluid categories.⁴⁵ The post-nationalist category of Indigeneity has therefore always been a possibility once decentralization from the homogenous project of Filipinization is mobilized. The emergence of Indigenous philosophies in the peripheries has shown the practical actualization of this decentralized mode of philosophizing from nationalism. However, what was not displaced in either the nationalist or the post-nationalist level is the agentic owning of doing philosophy.

³⁹ Merlan, “Indigeneity: Global and Local,” 304.

⁴⁰ Gregg, “Indigeneity as Social Construct and Political Tool,” 829.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 825.

⁴² Gregg clarifies nevertheless that “goals and truths are not mutually exclusive” and therefore do not make the truth claims irrelevant. “Constructions also create facts about systems of belief and forms of life, and in this respect, they can be assessed in terms of truths claims.” *Ibid.*, 826.

⁴³ See Michael Roland F. Hernandez, “Trapping Identities: Filipinization and the Problems of a Nationalist Historiography,” in *Suri*, 5, no. 2 (2016), <https://suri.pap73.org/issue7/Hernandez_SURI_2016.pdf>.

⁴⁴ Gregg, “Indigeneity as Social Construct and Political Tool,” 831.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

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Indigeneity, so to speak, has become, among Filipinos, a framework that coincides with the clamor for recognition in the enterprise of philosophy—that is, the indeterminacy which initially manifested as a symptom in the consciousness of the absence of a formal history of philosophy compared to the long history of both the Western and Eastern traditions and in the search for a distinguishing mark of a “Filipino” way of thinking. Furthermore, indeterminacy could be interpreted as a clamor for a more normative orientation in philosophy accruing from the “freedom” in its performance or activity.

Indigenization as coping with this indeterminacy can be qualified as a critical turn in doing philosophy in the Philippines. This clamor was fully articulated by Paolo Bolaños in what he identifies as “the social deficit of philosophy.”⁴⁶ “The philosophical enterprise here in the Philippines, as we know it,” according to him, “suffers from a failure to reflect on factual realities that materially shape our psycho-sociopolitical behavior and the ensuing pathological consequences therein.”⁴⁷ Hence, there is a need for a departure from speculative-essentialist thinking towards a reorientation of philosophy into social and political life which is “both the *sanction* and *critique* of [our] normative standards” (Italics mine).⁴⁸

In Demeterio’s classification of Filipino philosophy discourses, however, a critical philosophy was identified as already being practiced in the form of “Filipino Philosophy as Academic Critical Analysis.” He describes this as a discourse that “examines the political and economic structures of the Philippine society and culture”⁴⁹ drawing inspiration from critical theoretical systems such as Marxism. He also describes the proximity of this way of philosophizing with Filipino Philosophy as the application of phenomenology and hermeneutics, and its conduct of “current methodologies brought about by postmodernism and post-structuralism.”⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Paolo A. Bolaños, “The Ethics of Recognition and the Normativity of Social Relations: Some Notes on Axel Honneth’s Materialist Philosophical Anthropology,” in *Suri*, 1, no. 1 (2011), 16, <https://suri.pap73.org/issue1/Bolanos_SURI_2012.pdf>.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 16. Bolaños attributes this deficit to three reasons, namely: the failure to appropriate critical theory because of the neglect of intellectual history, the fear of materialist/Marxist philosophy, and the failure to overcome the language of transcendentalist or essentialist philosophy in the body of Scholastic metaphysics. See also Paolo A. Bolaños, “What is Critical Theory: Max Horkheimer and the Makings of the Frankfurt School Tradition,” in *Mabini Review*, 2, no. 1 (2013), 15, <<https://mabinireview.weebly.com/uploads/9/0/9/1/9091667/bolanos.pdf>>.

⁴⁸ Bolaños, “What is Critical Theory,” 16.

⁴⁹ Feorillo P.A. Demeterio III, “Assessing the Developmental Potentials of Some Twelve Discourses of Filipino Philosophy,” in *Philippiniana Sacra*, XLIX, no. 147 (May–August 2014), 195, <<https://philsacra.ust.edu.ph/admin/downloadarticle?id=59B579D8D8B39A52239B019E33ABFF2B>>.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 214.

It is obvious that the reasons⁵¹ mentioned by Demeterio for the high sustainability of this discourse already speak of the materiality of philosophy that Bolaños speaks of. However, Demeterio understood “Academic Critical Analysis” from the perspective of nationalism. On the other hand, if one of the theoretical inspirations of Bolaños’ critique—the theory of recognition by Axel Honneth—is extended, the very inception of the idea of Filipino philosophy could in turn be already identified as an early manifestation of this normative thinking and coping with indeterminacy. Philosophy as social critique, in Honneth’s recognitive theory, demands a grounding in the intersubjective structures of human experience which are culturally defined.⁵² It is in this context that the efforts of the early proponents of Indigenization as Filipinization could be aligned as normative. It was a stage naturally undertaken as a reaction to colonialism but, as a homogenous representation of a collective in a singular history, its “illusion of unity” is inimical to difference and diverse normative struggles for recognition.

Indigenous philosophizing in the peripheries is this post-nationalist mobilization of the language of Indigeneity. The empirical methodological approach that accompanies this mode of philosophizing is a symptomatic response.⁵³ This is a response to the “social deficit” of philosophizing, thus a critical turn—in the sense of localizing philosophy, or rendering philosophy normative in the different social conditions of the Philippines.⁵⁴ Indigenization in the peripheries emerged as a struggle for recognition which could be aligned with Honneth’s third sphere of the struggle for recognition applied specifically to the performativity of philosophy in their *particularity*. This is the sphere that grants individuals or social groups a healthy self-understanding in being able to contribute to the flourishing of society. Recognition in the form of esteem is a precondition for social solidarity in so far as it allows for inclusion in discourse and collective decision-making in

⁵¹ “...the context of our tottering economic structures, deformed democracy, ailing bureaucracy, and colonial culture.” *Ibid.*

⁵² See Axel Honneth, *Disrespect: The Normative Foundation of Critical Theory*, trans. by John Farrell (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).

⁵³ Demeterio has already noticed earlier that the critical analysis is engaged more by specialists in cultural studies, humanities, and social sciences. See Demeterio, “Assessing the Developmental Potentials of Some Twelve Discourses of Filipino Philosophy,” 214. See also Pavo, “The Social-Scientist Philosopher Perspective” for another advocacy of the social-empirical approach in philosophizing.

⁵⁴ This coincides with the anthropological turn of critical theory. Bolaños writes, “Critical Theory focuses on ‘real situations’ or social and historical factors that condition the possibility of scientific inquiry in the first place.” Philosophizing in this sense is no longer thinking in a vacuum but should be anchored in the material conditions of life. “Through the anthropological turn, the social, political, psychological, and cultural dimensions of life are regarded as grounds for critical analyses.” Bolaños, “What is Critical Theory,” 6–7.

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various areas of human concerns.⁵⁵ Philosophizing, as it were, is something owned and even modified in the agentive appropriation of individuals or groups who claim Indigeneity. This is something observable in the literature of Indigenous studies like that of Joe Kincheloe's vision for a critical ontology from which emerges the importance of Indigenous and subjugated knowledge. Kincheloe turns philosophy both into a diagnostic and programmatic enterprise for while individuals gain "critical ontological awareness" that signifies understanding of "how and why their political opinions, religious beliefs, gender role, racial positions, and sexual orientation have been shaped by dominant cultural perspectives," new insights for becoming or of "ways of being" are charted.⁵⁶

Indigenization is itself transformative of thinking. Indigenous philosophizing (in the peripheries) activates the "mobility of thought"⁵⁷ which I take to signify the precondition of operative local ideas and concepts to become more interactive thereby rendering itself open to further thought connections, meaning attachments, wider significations, parallelisms, or transversality⁵⁸ with other thought systems. In their definition of Indigenous philosophy, Grange and Mika identifies two ways in which the term "Indigenous philosophy" could be used; the first is in reference to the distinctive philosophies of disparate local Indigenous communities while the second "concerns doing philosophy from the standpoint of all colonised peoples of the world and has a decolonising agenda aimed at decentring (not destroying) Western philosophy by giving legitimacy to Indigenous philosophy in the academy."⁵⁹ The recognitive dimension of self-determination and project is immediately visible in the second sense. But

⁵⁵ See Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, trans. by Joel Anderson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995).

⁵⁶ Joe L. Kincheloe, "Critical Ontology and Indigenous Ways of Being: Forging a Postcolonial Curriculum," in *Keywords in Critical Pedagogy*, ed. by Kecia Hayes, Shirley R. Steinberg, and Kenneth Tobin (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2011), 334.

⁵⁷ I take a similar view with Jessica Dubow who re-describes mobility as an "originary condition of thought" contesting the modern Enlightenment view of the traversal of boundaries as a conquest for the Same, and imperial logic of progress in knowledge. Mobility installs a "radical open-endedness" to thought as an origin which is at once "distance and dislocation itself" and thus, "remains irreducible to the gains of positive knowledge." See Jessica Dubow, "The Mobility of Thought: Reflections on Blanchot and Benjamin," in *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 6, no. 2 (2004), 227, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369801042000238346>>.

⁵⁸ I follow Hwa Yol Jung notion of transversality as a "seismic confluence of differences ... which deprovincializes and widens our intellectual horizons concerning foreign lifeworlds as more than the negative mirrors of our own." This entails for Jung a going beyond ("trans") and "overcoming of all polarizing dichotomies" that paves the way for a more planetary thinking. Hwa Yol Jung, *Transversal Rationality and Intercultural Texts: Essays in Phenomenology and Comparative Philosophy* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011), 10.

⁵⁹ Grange and Mika, "What is Indigenous Philosophy and What Are Its Implications for Education?," 499–500.

what leverages local Indigenous philosophies into a collective movement is the very mobility of Indigenous thinking itself. Decentralization is apparently the mobilization of thought that dominant systems have rendered static and invisible. The language of Indigeneity has provided a platform for academic philosophizing. Philosophizing in academia overlaps with the social, cultural, and political recognition that collective (Indigenous) groups struggle with in coping with indeterminacy. The very contents of academic works that bear the language of Indigeneity has translocalized thinking to diverse environments which grant the materiality of diverse philosophical discourses.

The language of Indigeneity in the discourses of philosophy in the Philippines as reconstructed herein has been a series or process of “strategizing identity.”⁶⁰ From the inception of the idea of Filipino philosophy to the emergence of Indigenous (Filipino) philosophies in the peripheries, what can be seen is a multiplicity of identity assertions that Indigeneity itself has rendered possible. Yet in each mode of Indigenization, philosophizing has been showcased as a critical enterprise in the particularization or translocation of philosophy into the material conditions of thought itself. Hence, the assertion of identity becomes coterminous with social praxis as it articulates and addresses material concerns unique to different social and historical conditions through philosophizing.

Concluding Remarks

Indigeneity in the preceding considerations has been demonstrated as a conceptual base for self-determination, for owning the philosophical enterprise, and for providing a particularity of thinking. Based on the conditions of its emergence or deployment, Indigeneity is a critical act of thinking—on the one hand, as a decolonial project in its Filipinist orientation; on the other hand, as a differential recognition of the experience of diversely normative historical and sociocultural conditions of thinking through Indigenous philosophizing in the peripheries. Indigenous philosophizing, in other words, activates the critical aspect of philosophy in that thinking can no longer take “the view from nowhere” or thinking apart from normativity; but rather, a kind of thinking that is not confined in its situated conditions for articulation as the indeterminacy in Indigeneity itself allows for the mobility of thought. Critical Indigenous philosophizing, as coping with indeterminacy, grants particularity to philosophy as it brings home the

⁶⁰ I borrow this term from Alejo who employs it more specifically in reference to the Lumads as a conceptual bridge between their struggle for self-determination and their search for solidarity in the context of globalization. See Alejo, “Strategic Identity.”

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philosophical enterprise to the material conditions of human experience from where thinking should be fundamentally grounded.

In the Philippine experience, Indigeneity has been a strategic language for doing philosophy “with a normative content,” that is, in response to the historical exigencies and diverse environments of the people. From its earliest deployment, Indigeneity exclaims the value and importance of the labor which philosophy practitioners in various regions of the Philippines must carry out in making philosophy more socially and politically responsive to the demands of their locality, in preparing the intellectual and moral conditions for social change and engagement in the society. However, in the archipelagic context of the country where material concerns are as diverse as its people (critical) Indigenous philosophizing remains to be fully mobilized in terms of its normative thrust and value.

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