

Literary Criticism as a Philosophic Praxis

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Abstract Much has been written about the problematic theme “Filipino philosophy” but it remains to be seen how much of this idiosyncratic pursuit has in fact contributed to the furtherance of Filipino intellectual tradition. On its own, the notion of a local philosophy appears to be harmless but when the same notion is assumed as a foregone conclusion rather than an ideal which must be critically nurtured, it becomes an invitation for a philosophic praxis that can only be described as parochial. To a certain degree, the perception that philosophy is a sterile intellectual terrain derives its validity from the propensity of this kind of doing philosophy to be a ready victim of its own domestic concerns. The need for philosophy in the Philippines to overcome this myopic orientation is a genuine concern. In this paper, I shall try to explore an alternative way by which this can be achieved. In my discussion, I shall propose, as a potential constructive strategy, the creation of an interface between philosophy and its kindred discipline, literary criticism. My basic claim is that such interface is crucial in prompting philosophy in the Philippine context to be more different, critical and inter-disciplinary. The whole paper is guided by the question: What can the interface between philosophy and literary criticism contribute to the advancement of doing philosophy in the Philippines?

Key words literary criticism; philosophy; critique; literature; Filipino philosophy

Introduction

The preceding years have seen a huge turnout of philosophic publications from a number of Filipino scholars. Anyone then on the lookout for textual evidences of Filipino philosophizing would find in these works a handy testament of

intellectual productivity.¹ However, it is one thing to trumpet our scholars' individual achievements and another to use them to gloss over the state of Filipino philosophic tradition or as some prefer to call it, Filipino philosophy. I believe this matter deserves to be further threshed out given the ambiguity inherent in the understanding and use of the said term. Does Filipino philosophy exclusively mean a philosophy written in Filipino language? If it were, how may one define Filipino language? Or does it suggest a philosophy advanced by Filipino scholars regardless of the language used? And if it were, once again, should such philosophy evoke a worldview that is patently ethnic or one that evokes a more universal resonance. These are some of the major issues which make Filipino philosophy a recurrent topic for discourse and ones that invite much invested engagement from its proponents. In this paper, I will try to address two elements which, precisely because they are often overlooked, require a more careful deliberation: these are, first, the propensity of some advocates of Filipino philosophy for identitarian thinking; and second, their seeming oblivion of the other sources of Filipino critical tradition. The former is manifested by the said advocates' chronic pursuit of Filipino philosophy as a

1 Some of the authors who have had their works published in the last decade or so include (in alphabetical order): Agustin Maria Rodriquez (*Governing the Other: Exploring the Discourse of Democracy in a Multiverse of Reason*, ADMU Press, 2009); May Laro ang Diskursong Katarungan, ADMU Press, 2014; Alfredo Co (*Across the Philosophical Silk Road: Comparative Philosophy and Postmodern Thoughts*, UST Publishing House, 2009); Emmanuel C. de Leon, (*Mga Tomasino sa Pilosopiyang Filipino*, Aklatng Bayan, 2019); Jove Jim Aguas (*Person, Action and Love: The Philosophical Thoughts of Karol Wojtyla*, UST Publishing House, 2014); Kenneth Masong (*Becoming-Religion: Alfred North Whitehead and a Contemporary Philosophical Reflection*, UST Publishing House, 2015); Ma. Liza Ruth Ocampo (*The Dignity of the Thinking Person: A Philosophical Reflection on Human Nature*, UST Publishing House, 2006); *Break Open A Stone: An Invitation to Metaphysics*, Lighthouse and Dynamite Publications, 2011); Moses Angeles (*God Beyond Metaphysics: The God-Question in Martin Heidegger's Problem of Being*, LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2012); Paolo A. Bolaños (*On Affirmation and Becoming: A Deleuzian Introduction to Nietzsche's Ethics and Ontology*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, UK, 2014); Ranilo Hermida (*Imagining Modern Democracy: A Habermasian Assessment of the Philippine Experiment*, SUNY Press, NY, 2014); Raymund Festin (*The Black Nazarene and Philosophy*, Logos Publications, Inc., 2018); Reynaldo Pilapil (*Recognition: Examining Identity Struggles*, ADMU Press, 2015); Robert Montaña (*Thomistic Ethics: A Beacon in the Contemporary Moral Landscape*, UST Publishing House, 2015); Roland Theuas DS Pada (*Axel Honneth's Social Philosophy of Recognition: Freedom, Normativity, and Identity*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, UK, 2017); Rolando Gripaldo (*History, Philosophy and Culture*, C&E Publishing, 2010). A more extensive and exhaustive documentation of Filipino philosophic publications may be found in Rolando Gripaldo's *Filipino Philosophy: A Critical Bibliography, 1774-1997* (DLSU Press, 2000).

national philosophy; the latter is demonstrated by the failure of the same to tap into other sources of Filipino critical thought like literary criticism. This paper hence is presented as an exploratory undertaking towards a possible interface between Filipino philosophic practice and literary criticism. In my discussion, I put forward a claim recognizing literary criticism as a tributary of Filipino critical tradition and therefore have the potential to introduce a new strand of Filipino philosophic discourse. I consider this interface significant as a measure not only to temper the pervasive pursuit of a national philosophy but also to close the gap between Filipino philosophic practice and other domains of critique of which literary criticism is a representative. With this undertaking, I hope I could introduce a more nuanced articulation of the link between philosophy and nationalism on one hand and on the other, between philosophy and literary criticism as kindred disciplines. My discussion shall proceed in three parts. In the first, I will problematize the philosophic practice in the Philippines by building on the arguments advanced by Prof. Alfredo Co and Prof. Paolo Bolaños on Filipino intellectual history. In the second part, I will propose an alternative trajectory of philosophic practice away from the self-legitimizing and identitarian proclivities of the advocates of a national philosophy. In the third part, I will lay down fundamental considerations to guide future explorations on the proposed philosophy-literary criticism interface. I will conclude by affirming the significant consequences once this interface is carried out and achieved.

Problematizing Philosophic Practice in the Philippines

More than three decades ago, Dr. Emerita S. Quito published a monograph on the state of doing philosophy in the country.¹ In the said piece, Dr. Quito mentioned a plan to establish an Asian Institute of Philosophy with the backing of UNESCO. She also cited several concrete initiatives meant to bolster philosophic education in the country such as the mandatory use of Filipino as a language of instruction in schools and universities across the country, her call for a more critical approach towards Thomism and her specific exhortation to both Ateneo and De La Salle to jointly put up a doctoral program in philosophy to disrupt the monopoly which the University of Santo Tomas until such time enjoyed.² The vision advanced by Dr. Quito certainly deserves revisiting, especially now that we are anticipating the 40th anniversary of her landmark monograph. To commemorate its publication,

1 Cf. Quito, Emerita S. *The State of Philosophy in the Philippines*. Monograph Series No. 5. Manila: De La Salle University Research Center, 1983.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 14, 56-57.

various universities and philosophic organizations in the Philippines might want to consider working on a common project to update and in fact expand Dr. Quito's work. The need to engage Dr. Quito and other leading Filipino intellectuals cannot be overstated. There is really a need for philosophic practice in the Philippines to breed and nurture a tradition of discourse. This is the kind of philosophic practice that must complement and supplement the current genres of celebratory essays, interview transcripts, taxonomic documentation and bibliographic reports which populate our local philosophic journals today. Discourse guarantees that what we speak and write about is in fact *philosophical*. According to Prof. Alfredo Co, authentic Filipino philosophic tradition, if such a one would eventually emerge, must coincide with the existence of a body of works which, in turn, is constituted by and constitutive of an active and sustained exchange among its progenitors. In a lecture delivered at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Prof. Co pointed out that:

Without a body of literary and philosophical writing, no culture could hold solid claim to a serious philosophy. Great philosophy comes with the birthing of ideas, these ideas have to be committed to a rational discourse and in writing to form a body of literature, refuted by an opponent, followed by many amplifiers supporting for or arguing against the ideas first raised by some great minds. Great ideas are discoursed along the corridors of time, honed by great hermeneutics across ages, to give birth to a body of literature that forms the core of the indigenous philosophy.¹

The use of the vernacular alone, in other words, and much less, appeal to nationalism will not enhance the local philosophic practice if the larger context of hermeneutic exchange is missing. A genuine hermeneutic engagement requires an honest effort to bring oneself into an interface with an opposite voice to induce, not an interpersonal conflict, but an epistemic crisis which eventually finds its resolution through a well-argued discourse. The rigor involved in this interface is exacting as it demands a proponent to be conversant both with the argument she brings into the

1 Co, Alfredo. "The Legacy of Filipino Philosophy Pioneers that Shaped the Emerging Filipino Consciousness." An unpublished paper presented on the occasion of the UNESCO 2018 World Philosophy Day Celebration of the Department of Philosophy and Humanities, Center for Philosophy and Humanities and *Societas Philosophiae* of the Polytechnic University of the Philippines, 29 November 2018. My profoundest gratitude to Dr. Alfredo Co for allowing me access to his lecture for this research.

table as well as the specific issue represented by the thinker she is reacting against. Sadly, not too many among us have the appetite and competence to do this. The customary tact has been either to trumpet the legacy of our philosophic heroes or to simply dismiss what does not fall within the range of our interests. This is oftentimes the stigma that ails the reception of various philosophies in the country like Thomism. In a number of lectures and publications, I have heard and seen Thomism reviled as medieval, colonial, conservative, metaphysical, essentialist, Catholic among others and hence, according to its haters, it has little philosophic consequence, or more specifically, it has little Filipino philosophic consequence.¹ The popular logic has it that because Thomas Aquinas was a friar and Filipinos were once subjugated under the oppressive dominion of the friars, Thomas Aquinas and the philosophy that he espoused, so the convention goes, were anti-Filipino. What is ironic is that despite the sustained polemic against the philosophic heritage of Thomas Aquinas, one is yet to see a scholar from the opposite side willing to take up an issue with Manuel Piñon on metaphysics or Fausto Gomez on bioethics. Hardly can one find a conscious attempt among practitioners of philosophy in the Philippines to take interest on the latter's works enough to read or write on them. Once again, this detached attitude may be attributed to the prevailing trend which confines Filipino philosophy within the parameters of nationalism. While it is not impossible to be philosophical and nationalist at the same time, it is nonetheless naive to assume that mere nationalist sentiment can supply the critical merit that an infirm philosophic work does not have to begin with. What can be said with this misencounter with Thomism is as true when one turns to other frontiers of philosophic research like ethics, political theory, epistemology, philosophy of religion among others. We have enough number of scholars who can discourse on any philosopher, from Aristotle to Zizek, but there are not too many of us who can be bold enough to call out each other on key philosophic questions, at least not on paper. It is this absent conversation between and among ourselves that Dr. Co decried when he lamented the non-existence of a "body of philosophy"² which alone, said he, can warrant the authenticity of a native philosophic tradition. Dr.

1 See for example Demeterio III, Feorillo Petronilo. "Assessing the Development Potentials of Some Twelve Discourses of Filipino Philosophy," *Philippiniana Sacra* XLIX, 147, May-Aug (2014): 189-230; Abulad, Romulo. "Contemporary Filipino Philosophy," *Karunungan : the official Journal of the Philippine Academy of Philosophical Research* 5 (1988): 1-13; Quito, Emerita. Ed. "Pilosophiyang Filipino." *Ensayklopidiya ng Pilosopiya* (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1993) 38.

2 *ibid.*, p. 4

Paolo Bolaños, for his part, referred to this missing exchange as our “historical memory,”¹ that is. the chronicle of our collective spirit which for now remains inarticulate pending the cultivation of a culture of a discourse among peers via the medium of writing. Both these reputed scholars, Prof. Co and Dr. Bolaños, think that we have much to prove and improve on this score.

If Filipino practitioners of philosophy seem to be disengaged from each other, it should not come as a surprise if their rapprochement with other sources of critical thought outside philosophy appears equally less encouraging. I remember an incident where I overheard a senior scholar excitedly announced to a group of peers the invitation he received from a foreign university for a lecture on art and politics. Our senior scholar was beaming with pride and enthusiasm. It was not usual after all for an intellectual from a third-world country to get invited for a lecture by a university of a more celebrated stature. He described the whole prospect in glowing terms and praised the topic as something that is truly novel. According to him, the novelty of the theme was indicative of how backward our philosophic scholarship is compared to the progress other universities have made. Initially, I was inclined to disagree with our good senior scholar. I would have wanted to correct him and tell him that no, we are not too far behind and I was willing to point out his invitation as proof of this claim. On second thought however, I realized that maybe our senior scholar was right. Maybe, we are indeed lagging behind and the fact that something like “art and politics” can still surprise a scholar of a supposedly superior caliber may confirm this point. One of his peers tried to engage him and suggested Theodor Adorno as a potential research take-off point. Our senior scholar took the suggestion with a detached smile and with Adorno’s name, the conversation was abruptly terminated.

As someone eavesdropping, I would have been delighted to learn where the conversation would have led had it in fact proceeded. A struggling academic that I was, there was eagerness on my part to listen in on the conversation of my betters and pick their minds. And yet I know I would probably end up as tight-lipped as our senior scholar had I been in the same situation. Very few among us after all could really be conversant about art and politics and much less about Theodor Adorno. Despite the plethora of available resources relevant to such, Filipino practitioners of philosophy have been relatively out of the loop because of our estrangement from the very discipline which treats art and politics as staple motifs; such discipline is literary criticism. Art and politics are research topics our

1 Paolo Bolaños, “Foreword” in Cariño, Jovito V. *Muni: Paglalayag sa Pamimilosopiyang Filipino* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2018) 163.

local literary critics have been pounding on for a long time yet we in the domain of philosophy act like the good neighbor who is simply too immersed with his own business and won't be bothered with the goings-on at the other side of the fence. Apparently, the lacuna in our intellectual history alluded to by Prof. Co and Prof. Bolaños is far more serious than it seems. It is true, as they claimed, philosophic practice in the Philippines is held back by our inability to read and write on each other; what they didn't mention is that this default is conditioned partly by our disengagement from the larger Filipino tradition of critique. This sorry state of affairs is demonstrated no less by our liminal recognition of literary criticism as a tributary of our native critical tradition. As a consequence, we have become victims of our literary naivete which usually rears its ugly head when a situation crops up similar to what our senior scholar has found himself in. Such constraint would have been easily avoidable had he been adequately exposed to the writings of our more known Filipino literary critics, past and present. A good starting point would have been Salvador P. Lopez's *Literature and Society* (1940) or Epifanio San Juan Jr.'s *Toward a People's Literature: Essays in the Dialectics of Praxis and Contradiction in Philippine Writing* (1984) or Patricia Melendrez-Cruz's *Filipinong Pananaw sa Wika, Panitikan at Lipunan* (1994). Other selections may include Bienvenido Lumera's *Writing The Nation / Pag-akda ng Bansa* (2000) and Virgilio Almario's *Ang Pag-ibig sa Bayan ni Andres Bonifacio* (2012). An extended list of authors and works should likewise include the works of the likes of Soledad Reyes, Rolando Tolentino, Reynaldo Ileta, Vicente Rafael and Caroline Hau among others. The list can go on if we bring in the contributions of emerging yet equally gifted literary critics. Any researcher, in other words, who wishes to write on this theme with the Philippines as the main context surely will not start from scratch. Even if he finds the name Theodor Adorno intimidating, he could have his plate abundantly full by poring over the works of our local literary gurus alone.

Unfortunately, practitioners of philosophy in the Philippines, like our senior scholar above, seem to take very little notice of the works of our literary critics due to an intellectual horizon which restrains us from looking at literary criticism as a kindred philosophic discipline. Even at the level of the undergraduate philosophic education, very few (or almost none at all) could recognize that what they are reading from Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Hume, Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Marx, Sartre, Levinas among others are in fact extensions of literary criticism. If we turn to the East, as pointed out by Prof. Co in the aforementioned lecture, we find ourselves saddled with the same predicament. We would sometimes cite in our lectures thinkers like Terry Eagleton, Roland Barthes, Frederic Jameson,

Gilles Deleuze, Gyorgy Lukacs among others, but our appeal is made more to their authority as philosophers rather than as literary critics. This sad state of affairs which put philosophy on one side and literary criticism on the other has only the philosophy students and practitioners at the losing end and ultimately, the very public we cater to. There has to be a way by which this phantom divide may be overcome and in my estimate, it is we, Filipino practitioners of philosophy, who have much to gain when this is done.

A Question of Nationalism

I introduced this paper by pointing out the need for philosophic practice in the Philippines to develop a closer link with literary criticism. This link, as I claimed, is crucial if Filipino practitioners of philosophy do not wish to be willing captives of philosophy's own solipsistic language-game. In the segment that followed, picking up from the insights of Prof. Co and Prof. Bolaños, I problematized further the philosophic practice in the Philippines by tracing its pathology to an intellectual culture with an underdeveloped discursive practices. I also raised a concern over the current academic trend of pitting both philosophy and literary criticism as polar singularities. The persistence of these perspectives, I pointed out, is counter-productive to the discursive formation of native philosophic thought. In the ensuing paragraph, I will further explain why such dichotomy is untenable and I will show as well how, by developing its kinship with literary criticism, Filipino philosophic practice cannot avoid but be political in the process.

I wish to begin by clarifying what I mean by political. In an essay entitled, *The Social Function of Philosophy*, Max Horkheimer, one of the pioneer theorists of the Frankfurt School, pointed out that: "The real social function of philosophy lies in its criticism of what is prevalent... Philosophy exposes the contradiction in which man is entangled in so far as he must attach himself to isolated ideas and concepts in everyday life."¹ This view of Horkheimer on the dialectical function of philosophy provides the larger theoretical context of my proposal to imagine a political turn for our local philosophy via its interface with literary criticism. This is not to say that a work on philosophy becomes less worthy of its name when it has little or almost zero political content. I am only suggesting that, if we take Horkheimer's remarks seriously, there will be no other recourse for philosophy to fulfill its mandate except to confront or articulate what is otherwise. A philosophic undertaking of this kind takes critical engagement and not self-legitimation as its primary goal. The

1 Max Horkheimer, "The Social Function of Philosophy" in *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*. Trans. Matthew J. O'Connell et al (New York: Continuum, 2002): 264-265.

decision to juxtapose philosophy with literacy criticism is meant to highlight this important point. By making philosophy turn to something otherwise (though not completely otherwise), I was hoping I could provoke willing listeners to look at philosophic practice in the Philippines otherwise. As I have earlier advanced, taking from Horkheimer's original claim, a philosophic practice becomes political when it assumes a critical stance against what is dominant and identitarian. Stretched to its necessary conclusion, it is probably safe to say that the imperative for philosophy in the Philippines today, besides the challenge to do otherwise, is to be otherwise.

This is how I frame my main contention against equating philosophic practice in the Philippines with crass nationalism. In its crude form, nationalism serves as a political surrogate of identity thinking. Philosophically, it represents a thought system that feeds on a self-contained, self-absorbed and self-legitimizing discourse. In a more traditional expression, nationalism provides the kind of argument that trumpets identity both as a premise and a conclusion. No wonder that for an identitarian thinker, nation has ceased to be something imagined but one that is conjured as a one-dimensional, monolithic entity. One detects the telltale signs of a philosophic writing absorbed into this nationalist bandwagon in the way it makes Filipino philosophy so predictable. It usually begins by assuming the phenomenality of Filipino philosophy and concludes by affirming the same assumption. Sometimes, this takes the form of an exposition of the scholarly feat of one's philosophic hero or a bibliographic report to validate the latter's intellectual pedigree. There are several labels that can be used to describe these initiatives but the word *philosophical* may not be one of them. If we take Prof. Co's advice, the designation *pre-philosophical* might do a better job as a descriptive term. Is there a way then to do philosophy and advance nationalism without falling into the trap of identity thinking?

I will attempt to address this issue by making a distinction between a *national* philosophy and a *nationalist* philosophy.

In very general terms, a *national* philosophy is commonly considered as an expression of a collective worldview which, in itself, is deemed as ethnocentric in character. For its advocates, a national philosophy is key to the understanding and articulation of what they purport to be a national identity. Every detail of culture, every aspect of socio-political life, every episode of history, every facet of language is for them emblematic of an identity that is either inarticulate or damaged hence the necessity to re-create it through different modes philosophical exploration. As a medium of identity, a national philosophy shares the symbolic value of the other fixtures of popular culture like the national costume, national fruit, national animal, national flower, national food among others and partakes likewise of their inherent

fetishistic character. My critique of national philosophy is informed by this claim. Its complicity with identitarian discourse is ingrained and is counteractive to the emancipatory aims of a genuine philosophic exercise. It is national philosophy that writes from within the genre of the honorific, the bibliographic, the taxonomic, the interview transcript, the anthropological, the descriptive, the repetitive. As philosophic outputs, they too have the potential to be political but only if the propensity for identity thinking is overcome.

Nationalist philosophy, in contrast, is the type of philosophic discourse that sets aside the problem of identity and raises the question of what is otherwise. It is not as if such thinkers are unconcerned with the value of collectivity or shared worldview; they are merely convinced that either of the two cannot supersede critical engagement which is the basis of any philosophic activity. The impetus to ask what is otherwise stems from the imperative of critique. Scholars of the nationalist philosophy make it their constant stand to be suspicious of everything including nationalism itself. This to me is necessary as it is timely given the strong local and global resurgence of nationalism and its complicity with the rise of authoritarian regimes. I have earlier suggested that the main philosophical distinction between a *national* philosophy and a *nationalist* philosophy is defined by their polar positions on the issue of identity. If nationalism then is taken as a political extension of identity thinking, one can only imagine how this distinction may be further magnified if nationalist philosophy confronts nationalism head-on. The purpose of such critique is to discredit not so much nationalism per se but the way it plays into the ideological machinations of a totalitarian order like what is current in the Philippines today. If the philosophic practice then in the Philippines should pursue the political, it is necessary, as I already manifested, that it insists on what is otherwise than the identitarian imaginary. This undertaking however is no ordinary feat as it requires a re-evaluation not only of our thought processes but also of our research practices. In the next segment, I shall discuss initial considerations for the discursive formation of an otherwise nationalism and explain why advocates of a nationalist philosophy should turn to literary criticism to achieve this.

Philosophy in the Philippines and Literary Criticism

Earlier I have advanced a claim underscoring the close affinity between philosophy and literary criticism as kindred disciplines. This claim needs no further belaboring given the adequate examples both from the Eastern and Western philosophic traditions that would warrant such. What I wish to do in the current segment is offer preliminary considerations which can serve as guideposts to any taker who

wish to explore my proposal to turn the direction of our philosophic research from near obsession with national philosophy to a critical engagement with nationalism. Besides boosting the prospect of sharpening its political edge, this strategy can also be useful in forging an alternative to a *national* philosophy which for lack of a better term I provisionally call *nationalist* philosophy. In the segment that follows, I wish to lay down fundamental considerations to further clarify the essential features of this alternative and use them to argue why it is obtainable via the interface between philosophy and literary criticism.

First, nationalism is a narrated phenomenon. One therefore cannot simply barge into a nationalist discourse without considering the larger narrative tradition which set the context of an issue in question—be it national identity, national consciousness or even nationalism itself. That nationalism has a narrative origin clearly underscores the need to recognize and understand its literary origins. An important requisite therefore of a critical engagement with nationalism includes adequate exposure on texts that take up the question of nation or those that examine the formation of national consciousness or national identity as one may read in Florentino Hornedo,¹ Reynaldo Ileteo² or Vicente Rafael.³

Second, nationalism is a complex ideology and is very far from being a monolithic political concept. The nationalism adopted by Ferdinand Marcos to defend his decision of placing the country under martial rule is completely different from the kind of nationalism which compelled Lorenzo Tañada to oppose it as it is different from the variant of nationalism Jose Ma. Sison is espousing to justify his protracted war against the state. There is also a specie of nationalism common among the global Filipinos spread across the world today. One finds a facet of sentimentality in this latter kind which makes its critique all the more compelling and timely. Still another is the brand of nationalism which leans closely towards populism, the kind that fuels the dictatorial fantasies of strongmen like Rodrigo Duterte. The perspectives of a global intellectual like Caroline Hau would certainly be useful in helping us make sense of the multi-layered nature of nationalism as a literary phenomenon.⁴ Eventually, the critique of these multiple strands of

1 Florentino H. Hornedo, "Notes on the Filipino Novel in Spanish" in *Ideas and Ideals: Essays in Filipino Cognitive History* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2001): 109-158.

2 Reynaldo C. Ileteo, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1920* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1989): 131-159.

3 Vicente L. Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1988): 23-54.

4 Caroline S. Hau, *On the Subject of the Nation: Filipino Writings from the Margins, 1981-2004* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2004): 227-270.

nationalism should lead to the formulation of a more liberative social imaginary hence the importance of my third point, that is the formulation of new grammar for nationalism.

Articulation of a new grammar for nationalism begins with a critique of its theoretical underpinnings. It may be conceded that Marxism continues to be a dominant paradigm of the current forms of nationalist literary discourse as one would read, for example, in Epifanio San Juan, Jr.¹ However, over the years, we have seen how a variety of phenomena like labor migration, the rise of populism, the dominance of market economy the spread of digital economy, the demand for recognition by LGBTQ community, the continuous marginalization of indigenous groups, the worsening environmental degradation among others continue to pose challenge not only on the way we understand ourselves as a nation but on the manner by which we select and apply theories to synthesize and interpret these experiences. Adopting new grammar for nationalism should not necessarily result to the creation of a new national identity; it only suggests that the identity we thought we knew be examined in a different light and, if need be, be interpreted otherwise. One may find examples of this initiative in some of the works of Resil Mojares² or Virgilio Almario.³

Conclusion

Ultimately, this interface between philosophy and literary criticism should lead to a better understanding of the wider latitude of Filipino critical tradition. For the moment, such tradition awaits recognition until such time that the phantom divide putting philosophy on one side and literary criticism on the other is overcome. This proposal to put philosophic practice in the Philippines in close proximity to literary criticism points towards this direction. It may appear initially as if this initiative is no longer necessary given the pronounced philosophic bent of the writings of our local literary critics; however, since the reciprocal warming up to literary criticism has yet to find a written form in Filipino philosophic practice, I believe the project still merits consideration. The disproportionate account of

1 Epifanio San Juan, Jr., "Ideology, Class Consciousness, History: A Reading of Rizal's Novels" in *Rizal In Our Time: Essays in Interpretation* (Mandaluyong City: Anvil Publishing Inc., 2011): 89-144.

2 Resil B. Mojares, "Time, Memory and the Birth of the Nation" in *Waiting for Mariang Makiling: Essays in Philippine Cultural History* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2002): 270-296.

3 Virgilio S. Almario, *Ang Pag-ibig sa Bayan ni Andres Bonifacio* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2012): 168-219.

my own discipline herewith presented is aimed precisely at making a case for this interface. I also resorted to the same deliberately as a strategy to open up a space for philosophic practice in the Philippines to be otherwise. As I have argued, to do an otherwise philosophy in the Philippines is to articulate philosophy differently. It means moving beyond the limits of its parochial domain and disabusing itself from the discourse of self-legitimation. Doing an otherwise philosophy also demands philosophy to be political, that is, it imposes upon philosophy the imperative to be self-critical as it should be critical of an identitarian social imaginary. Necessarily, an otherwise social imaginary must be inclusive and emancipatory. A task of this kind cannot be performed by Filipino philosophic practice unilaterally. Seen from this perspective, an interface between philosophy and literary criticism will not only appear compulsory but doable. Hopefully, philosophic practice in the Philippines will take this challenge and forge a path that would make our philosophic discourse truly Filipino.

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