

From Theory to Activity: Revisiting the Status of Filipino Philosophy

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Abstract: Throughout the years, many Filipino philosophers have sought to define what constitutes Filipino philosophy. However, despite these efforts, it remains a contested notion—its foundations unsettled, its scope unclear, and its legitimacy often questioned both within and beyond academic circles. This paper is inspired by Alfredo P. Co’s work, “Doing Philosophy in the Philippines Fifty Years Ago and Fifty Years from Now.” It aims to contribute to the discovery of Filipino philosophy by arguing that the very search for it may, in fact, be unnecessary. Primarily, the issue of Filipino philosophy is explored through the lens of Filipino identity, which has been fundamentally influenced by colonization and intertwining of cultures and identities. The roots of the Filipino identity are traced alongside an inquiry into what constitutes Filipino philosophy, if such philosophy exists. This discussion is further heightened by considering the Filipino in the context of a global society. Furthermore, this article engages with the thoughts of previous Filipino philosophers who have sought to define and give clarity to the nature of Filipino philosophy and examines the progression of philosophical discourse in the Philippines. Ultimately, this paper mainly argues that defining Filipino philosophy is not the final aim, but to be a Filipino philosopher engaged in philosophical activity. It suggests that, amidst the seemingly impossible end of tracing a Filipino philosophy, hope remains as long as there exists a Filipino who philosophizes.

Keywords: *Filipino Philosophy, Filipino identity, philosophizing*

Introduction

Have we finally arrived at a definitive discovery of a Filipino philosophy? Decades have already passed since the question “What is a Filipino philosophy?” or “Is there a Filipino philosophy?” had been posed.¹ Consequently, numerous Filipino philosophers have challenged their philosophical experiences by venturing into an undiscovered path. They accepted the quest of seeking an answer that would shed light on this problem. Each of these Filipino philosophers adopted their own unique approaches in tackling the question that led to a variety of answers. Nevertheless, this variety does not imply failure but progress, as each attempt contributes another piece to the puzzle. These efforts have not ended the quest, rather acted as fuel, which set ablaze the desire for a distinct understanding of Filipino philosophy.

To contribute toward the question of Filipino philosophy, this article is grounded in a writing made by one of those who attempted to face the task. “Doing Philosophy in the Philippines Fifty

¹ See Emerita Quito, *The State of Philosophy in the Philippines* (Manila, Philippines: De La Salle University 1979); Leonardo Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy* (Manila: Divine World University Publications, 1976); and Florentino Timbreza, *Pilosopiyang Pilipino* (Manila: Rex Bookstore, 1982).

Years Ago and Fifty Years from Now” is an article written by Alfredo P. Co which can be seen as one of the works that aims to bring clarity to the ambiguity surrounding the problem of a Filipino philosophy. Thus, the paper sought to trace the presence of philosophy throughout Philippine history and presents the progress of philosophical activity, such as the formation of organizations and associations and the evolution of philosophical trends in the country overtime.²

Furthermore, this paper extends what Co initiated in his article. It seeks to understand the nature of Filipino philosophy, including its possibility, since the term Filipino is another problem on its own. To add, this undertaking will engage with Co’s perspective on Filipino philosophy or the Filipinization of philosophy, as fundamentally rooted in the lived experiences of a Filipino engaged in the act of philosophizing.³ All these will be perfected through the utilization of the diverse perspectives of various Filipino philosophers, whether they dedicate themselves to their endeavors of doing philosophy or to the rigorous attempt of seeking for a uniquely Filipino philosophy.

Ultimately, this paper goes beyond merely continuing what Co started in his article. It has been more than two decades since Co wrote his work, in which he attempted both to look back fifty years to retrace the status of Filipino philosophy before and to project fifty years in the future, outlining his hopes for the development of Filipino philosophy. This endeavor positions itself as a halfway checkpoint of Co’s prediction. In continuing his arguments, I will highlight the changes that unfolded between the time he wrote the article and the present situation of Filipino philosophy. With this, I attempt to depict the current status of philosophy in the Philippines and see whether there are any semblances to the arguments of Co.

Having this in mind, I contend that the challenge in the discovery of Filipino philosophy persists primarily due to the fluid and contested nature of Filipino identity. Moreover, in examining an event which was still very different twenty years ago, I contend that in the face of globalization, Filipino philosophy encounters additional challenges as it clashes with philosophies across the globe making it more difficult to continue tracing a certain thing that defines Filipino philosophy. Amidst this difficulty, this endeavor stands with the hope that there is a possibility for a Filipino philosophy to exist as long as there is a Filipino who is immersed with the very act of philosophizing itself. I argue that the focus must no longer be on the theory but on the activity.

Who is a Filipino?

The term ‘Filipino’ is essentially a contested concept. It is rich and overflowing with meaning yet with some not intertwined. For Co, the Filipino identity is tied with the history of the Philippines as a nation, which began during the Spanish colonization. In this view, the term ‘Filipino’ stemmed as a by-product of the Spanish colonization of the Philippines and would not have emerged otherwise.⁴ In fact, the possibility of having a national identity and the unification of the Philippine archipelago into a single country can be attributed to the arrival of the Spanish colonizers.⁵ However, to claim that a Filipino existed after the establishment of the nation raises the question of the historicity of the

² See Alfredo P. Co, “Doing Philosophy in the Philippines: Fifty Years Ago and Fifty Years from Now,” *Karunungan* 21 (2004): 1–18.

³ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵ Josephine A. Pasricha, “Doing Philosophy in the Philippines: Rereading the Canon through Feminism,” *Karunungan* 21 (2004): 71-72.

'Filipino'; who they actually were before being labeled as such. Emerita Quito offers a different perspective by arguing that one cannot simply abandon his cultural identity even after being rebranded as a *Filipino*. Traces of pre-colonial heritage still persist in an individual's daily life. For Quito, to seek what is truly Filipino requires a return to these indigenous cultures since being a Filipino is intertwined with this pre-colonial heritage. Through this process, one might unravel the *Volksgeist* or the soul-identity of the Filipino.⁶ However, I argue that this approach is problematic since the cultural background of the Filipino people is highly influenced by its archipelagic nature. This means that the possibility of having a central notion of what it means to be a Filipino is challenging as there is the existence of variations in cultural practices across regions, brought by ethnic and geographical differences – the reference of the idea of who a Filipino is.⁷ The Philippines, being an archipelago, made each area's culture distinct from one another. In contrast, contemporary globalization bridged these divisions of culture through technological aid, making these separations insignificant.

At first glance, defining a *Filipino* might seem straightforward since it could simply be understood as citizenship in the Philippines. However, even this legalistic view is insufficient. There are those who are not born as a Filipino but are naturalized to be Filipino, while others renounce their Filipino citizenship to adopt a different nationality. Additionally, many claim that being a Filipino is not a matter of legal classification but rather a question of personal disposition toward his love for his country and fellowmen. Simply, it is a question of nationalistic views. Meanwhile, others define Filipino identity through shared traits, traditions, and practices, yet these too remain difficult to pin down. Thus, the answer to the question, "Who is a Filipino" will not be the focus of the discussion and remains unclear throughout the paper. What is clear, however, it has been established that Filipino identity is in itself difficult to figure out where there may be different meanings of the term but is not inherently distinct from one another. The time before the Philippines, from the colonial period up to today, are all part of the country's historicity. Being attuned with this fact, then being Filipino is not an essentialist category but rather a historical outcome: it is what became of the people after colonization and nation-building.⁸ However, this recognition also leads to an unsettling reality, there is no *authentic* Filipino identity.

This *inauthenticity* is evident in the persistence of indigenous tribal groups, such as the Aetas, Ifugaos, and Lumads, who maintain their distinct customs, religious beliefs, rituals, and oral traditions. The Filipino identity, then, is largely a colonial construct: in the absence of the presence of a definite Filipino culture since there were only scattered islands and groups before the Spanish colonization.⁹ What were once merely separated islands became known as a single archipelago and what were once individual groups became collectively known as a single national identity all because the Spaniards arrived and imposed political and cultural unification. In addition, this Filipino identity is entangled with foreign influences, dominantly Western, and of our different roots.¹⁰ With all this in consideration, it may seem impossible to find a purely Filipino identity. Moreover, I contend that this seeming impossibility is exacerbated when the Filipino is situated in the context of globalization in which membership is not limited to one's nation alone but extends toward the entire globe and national identities no longer exist. As borders break down, the question of *who is a Filipino?* becomes

⁶ Jerwin M. Mahaguay, "The Philosophy of Education of Emerita S. Quito," *Malay* 30, no. 2 (2018): 9–10.

⁷ Roland Theuas DS. Pada, "The Methodological Problems of Filipino Philosophy," *Kritike* 8, no. 1 (2014): 28.

⁸ Co, "Doing Philosophy in the Philippines," 12.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

¹⁰ Pasricha, "Rereading the Canon through Feminism," 72.

even more complex—not just historically, but in a time where identity extends beyond the nation-state.

The Filipino in a Global Society

The self-determination of Filipinos faces yet another problem in the face of rapid technological advancements. Not long ago, the separation of lands and oceans helped shape distinct national identities. It hindered the external influences which existed outside the community that paved the way for the cultivation of what is uniquely their own. However, the world had drastically changed. The borders that once defined nations and communities have become easily connected anytime and anywhere more than ever. The separations caused by lands and oceans now seem to only be illusions since crossing and surpassing them is no longer an obstacle. The advancements in transportation and communication allowed interaction between different nations achievable which allowed the influence of something foreign to freely roam around in one's midst. This interconnected age of globalization presents both opportunities and dangers for nations that have yet to fully define their own identities.¹¹ While it fosters the opening of cultural boundaries and provides an avenue to understand each other's uniqueness. However, reality speaks differently – avenue of openness has become a means of standardization, homogenization, and erasure of national identities, particularly those of smaller and historically colonized nations such as the Philippines.¹²

For some, global integration offers advantages by broadening perspectives. It exposes nations to different ways of thinking and enriching cultural hybridity. This adaptation to external influences is often seen as a mark of progress.¹³ Cultural hybridization, though positive, might complicate the search for a Filipino identity. Whether through homogenization or hybridization – both will continue to blur the Filipino identity that has already been hardly perceived. As I have established earlier, the purely Filipino identity, if there is such, had already been hindered by the Philippines long history of colonization. Currently, one could argue that Filipinos are once again undergoing yet another form of colonization, not through military conquest but through. While the Philippines undoubtedly benefits from global trade, being included in a global society is a double-edged sword.¹⁴ While the Philippines undoubtedly benefits from globalization, its national identity becomes harder and harder to determine. The welcoming of the possibility of acquiring these benefits is tantamount to the welcoming of the risk of gradually losing its own identity in the process. The Filipino, in constant relation with other cultures, can no longer be seen in isolation. Instead, the other is already part and parcel of the Filipino experience. Given this reality, the Filipino must be understood not merely as a citizen of the Philippines but as a participant in an evolving, globalized world. Reality must be lived with the truth that the Filipino is caught in the crosshairs of technology and development and becomes not just a citizen of the Philippines but also a participant in the evolving, globalized world.¹⁵ The search for

¹¹ Aileen Baviera and Caroline Hau, "Ethnic and National Identity in the Age of Globalization: The Case of the Ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia (2002)," *ASLAN STUDIES: Journal of Critical Perspectives on Asia Individual* 57, no. 1 (2021): 33.

¹² *Ibid.*, 33.

¹³ Satoshi Machida, "Does Globalization Render People More Ethnocentric? Globalization and People's Views on Cultures," *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 71, no. 2 (2012): 436.

¹⁴ Melanie Pooch, *Diver City – Global Cities as a Literary Phenomenon: Toronto, New York, and Los Angeles in a Globalizing Age* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2016), 18.

¹⁵ Jovito Cariño, *Muni: Paglalayag Sa Pamimilosopiyang Filipino* (Manila, Philippines: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2018), xiii.

Filipino identity may not be accomplished through a mere recollection of the past but of a critical engagement with the present. It could be worth noting that the Filipino identity may not be a single thread but an interweaving of various threads of culture and of identities – of indigenous traditions, colonial histories, and global influences.¹⁶

Weaving these reflections together, *who then is a Filipino?* Based on the preceding discussion, I argue that a Filipino is, first, one who is brought to existence by the formalization of the scattered islands into one single country, the Philippines. Second, a Filipino is one who exists at the intersection of various identities brought by indigenous roots, colonial influences, and global membership. The Filipino is neither entirely *one* nor entirely *the other*, but a continuous negotiation of both.

The Quest for a Filipino Philosophy

For now, I will set aside the discussion of who the Filipino is and shift toward the question of Filipino philosophy. Evident in earlier reflections, there is always an inclination to categorize and define matters. One is rarely satisfied with living in uncertainty and not knowing what it really is. The same impulse drives the quest to determine whether a distinct Filipino philosophy exists. For many years, the discipline was confined to select academic institutions, hindered by a lack of professors and limited public interest.¹⁷ Often, philosophy is taken in relation with priesthood and law school but not for its own sake which made it rare for the public to be familiar with it. Despite these challenges, a point came where eventually, a desire rose to determine what a Filipino philosophy is.

However, this endeavor led to difficulty amidst the different attempts of numerous Filipino philosophers. Various Filipino scholars have attempted to define and develop Filipino philosophy, yet the question remains unresolved. Some, like Dr. Emerita Quito and Fr. Roque Ferriols, sought to establish Filipino philosophy by advocating for the use of the Filipino language in philosophical discourse. Others, such as Dr. Ramon Reyes and Dr. Florentino Timbreza, are well known for their works examining Philippine folklore and proverbs in an effort to uncover Filipino thought embedded in cultural narratives. Meanwhile, Fr. Leonardo Mercado pursued a comparative study of native languages, searching for philosophical commonalities that could unify the multicultural landscape of the Philippines.¹⁸ Despite the efforts of various people who had tried, either directly or indirectly, to seek for a Filipino philosophy; even so, the slate remains blank. Uncertainties and questions remain to emerge and are waiting to be cleared and answered. If philosophy in the Filipino language exists, does that necessarily make it *Filipino* philosophy? Are folk wisdom and oral traditions sufficient foundations for a philosophical system? Can the Philippines' diverse linguistic and cultural traditions be reconciled into a coherent philosophical framework? Amidst all the attempts to answer these questions, more questions are generated and a definite answer is yet to be found.

¹⁶ Cariño, *Mumi*, xiii.

¹⁷ I do not contend that schools are not aware of the discipline of philosophy; however, by being offered at limited schools, I am referring to the limited offer of the bachelor's degree in philosophy. For example, in Pampanga, a Philosophy degree is only offered at the seminary. Among the numerous and prestigious universities and colleges all-over the province, the degree remains to be unoffered. Some mention that the reason is the lack of qualified professors which would make the availability of the program possible. On the other hand, some mention that the demand for a degree in Philosophy is not substantial which would necessitate for it to be offered.

¹⁸ Co, "Doing Philosophy in the Philippines," 10.

Having this in mind, is it possible that a distinct Filipino philosophy simply does not exist? While entertaining this idea may seem thrilling, the search may lead to a dead end. Unlike China, India, or Japan, civilizations with well-established philosophical traditions, the Philippines lacks a comparable, systematized body of knowledge.¹⁹ This absence raises the question of whether Filipino philosophy is merely a fantasy rather than a tangible reality. This coexists with the earlier mentioned idea that the very thing that makes a Filipino as such is indeterminate. In addition, to identify a Filipino philosophy at the present may seem to be unlikely since the culture of the Filipino is identified to only be at its genesis. In this aim to unlock the mysteries behind our Filipino culture and identity, our language can only be of limited insight as a time capsule due to the Filipinos' multilingual origins in which each language is a time capsule of various cultures.²⁰

Yet, despite these challenges, the search for Filipino philosophy may not be so futile for the case of discovering a Filipino philosophy. The paradox is that philosophy does not have to intend to seek it for it to be revealed. A random Filipino philosopher cannot simply declare that what he is doing is a Filipino philosophy. The only thing that a philosopher has control of is where and when to start philosophizing – to start the process. In doing so, it serves as a spark which ignites the possibility of the unintentional emergence of Filipino philosophy since its starting point is indefinite, contributing to a Filipino philosophical discourse.²¹ History suggests that philosophical traditions are not deliberately *created* but rather *develop naturally* over time. Chinese philosophers did not possibly think of developing a “Chinese philosophy” when they started philosophizing. Rather, their philosophical traditions emerged organically through centuries of continuous thought and debate. Similarly, forcing the question of Filipino philosophy may be as futile as “blowing bubbles against the wind” – a pursuit that dissipates the moment it takes form. Instead, Filipino philosophy exists not through deliberate construction but may rather come by accident as a result of attempts to engage in the mere act of philosophizing.²² In this sense, the quest for Filipino philosophy is not about discovering something pre-existing but about creating the conditions for its emergence by allowing it to take shape on its own terms.

A Filipino Philosophizing

There is more to Filipino Philosophy and the Filipino identity that can be understood by suspending the search for a fixed definition, but by focusing on the activity of philosophizing itself. The pursuit of a rigidly defined Filipino philosophy may, paradoxically, hinder its very emergence. This was expressed perfectly by Co when he stated:

Those of us who are still toiling in a desperate search for the Filipino soul and the Filipino philosophy are really lagging behind. Many of our Filipino thinkers have already done their part by philosophizing and writing. In the process, they have become philosophers. And because these are Filipinos philosophizing, then we call the body of their works Filipino Philosophy. For when the Filipino philosophizes, he at once claims the right to claiming his own views.²³

¹⁹ Pasricha, “Rereading the Canon through Feminism,” 71.

²⁰ Co, “Doing Philosophy in the Philippines,” 10.

²¹ Romualdo E. Abulad, “The Filipino as a Philosopher in Search of Originality,” *Karunungan* 2 (1985): 5.

²² Roque Ferriols, “A Memoir of Six Years,” in *Pagdiriwang Sa Meron: A Festival of Thought Celebrating Roque J. Ferriols* S.J., eds. Nemesio S. Que and Agustin Martin G. Rodriguez (ADMU - Office of Research and Publication, 1997), 216.

²³ Co, “Doing Philosophy in the Philippines,” 17.

The key to a Filipino philosophy, then, is to simply philosophize and engage in the act of doing philosophy. As such, other attempts toward seeking a definition of Filipino philosophy are not futile as long as they are engaged in philosophical endeavors. There is no necessity to exhaust all studies through the discovery of what makes philosophy or identity as Filipino. An action must be done rather than fixating on its discovery. Philosophy is not a mere definition, but it constitutes an action.²⁴ Dr. Romualdo Abulad echoes this sentiment, emphasizing that the task at hand is not to search for Filipino philosophy but to create the conditions for its emergence:

What, then, is the challenge of Contemporary Filipino Philosophy? My answer is simple: To keep on going, to resist the temptation of slithering back to the ways of idleness and mediocrity, to develop the stalwart spirit that dares to think beyond the scope of the popular conception; in one word, to philosophize...to philosophize until our children will finally see the day when they can proudly proclaim to the world that here, at last, is our FILIPINO PHILOSOPHY.²⁵

These two quotations coming from Dr. Co and Dr. Abulad both perfectly stress that it may seem pointless to hope to arrive at a Filipino philosophy; nonetheless, the goal is to not define it but rather focus on the main task, that is, to engage in the act of philosophizing. The Filipino philosopher must recognize that philosophizing is not done for the sake of discovery of something Filipino but the discovery of the truth.²⁶ The concern whether Filipino philosophy emerges as a distinct tradition comes second to the responsibility of engaging in critical thought.

Returning to the etymological roots of philosophy in which a philosopher is a lover of wisdom, I contend that a philosopher is one who is loving something lacking in one's being and it is a loving that will not end since the lover can never catch the beloved – continuously seeking and questioning rather than finding definitive answers. For the hopes of a Filipino philosophy, the quest for Filipino philosophy is not about reaching a final destination but about rekindling this love for wisdom and continuously engaging in philosophizing.

While there might be an absence of a systematized Filipino philosophical tradition comparable to other nations, there is still a characteristic that is unique to Filipinos which other philosophical disciplines possess – the relentless pursuit of understanding.²⁷ The philosophical awe that great philosophical thinkers of the Chinese, French, Germans, and all those established nations have experienced is a shared human experience that exists within Filipinos in virtue of their common humanity.²⁸ As long as this desire for philosophizing burns within the Filipino soul, there remains hope for the emergence of Filipino philosophy.

The Current State of Filipino Philosophy

Filipino philosophy remains an evolving discourse, yet to be fully defined. It may take years or generations of Filipino philosophers engaged in philosophical undertakings, before it might reveal itself. Even so, the current state of Filipino philosophers has the potential to surpass or at least equal the achievements of the 'first wave' of Filipino philosophers. This notion agrees with the hopes and

²⁴ Mark Joseph Calano, "Ang Pilosopiya at Si Roque J. Ferriols, SJ," *Perspectives in the Arts and Humanities Asia* 5, no. 1 (2015): 7.

²⁵ Romualdo E. Abulad, "Contemporary Filipino Philosophy," *Karunungan* 5 (1988): 11.

²⁶ Calano, "Ang Pilosopiya at Si Roque J. Ferriols, SJ," 13.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁸ Florentino T. Timbreza, "Understanding Filipino Philosophy," *Karunungan* 4 (1987): 11.

visions of Co for Filipino philosophy.²⁹ The increasing number of published works by various Filipino philosophers from across the country is a promising sign. This increase plays a great significance because over time, the collective body of these writings may provide concrete evidence of what Filipino philosophy truly is.³⁰ Furthermore, conferences, associations, organizations, and events continue to cultivate philosophical discussion. In addition, the philosophical achievements of modern times are greatly owed to the development of technology. This aided the problem of accessibility of information that Filipino philosophers of older generations had to face. It was harder to write due to the devices used and due to limited resources found in one's library. Currently, a Filipino philosopher possesses the capability of accessing a work written by another author found on the opposite side of the globe through the mediation of technology. This lessened the need to go abroad to have a chance to study works of foreign authors unavailable in the Philippines.

Similarly, publishing opportunities, both local and international, have expanded. This allowed Filipino philosophers to contribute to global discourse as long as their work meets rigorous philosophical standards. However, globalization is a double edged-sword which presents both opportunities and challenges to Filipino philosophy. While it enriches Filipino philosophical thought by exposing it to diverse intellectual traditions, it also makes it more difficult to distinguish a uniquely Filipino philosophy. Filipino philosophers are engaging with well-established philosophical systems from other cultures before having the chance to fully articulate their own. Yet, as Co reminds us, it is unnecessary to intentionally search for a distinctly Filipino philosophy. Instead, the emphasis should be on philosophizing with excellence:

And so, you will perhaps ask, what happens now to Filipino Philosophy? As I said, you need not worry any longer about the search for a Filipino philosophy, for when you philosophize with excellence, your articulation is bound to be recognized here and elsewhere, now or later. And since you are a Filipino philosophizing, then that philosophy of yours becomes Filipino.³¹

In some way, this perspective shifts the focus from the problem of defining Filipino philosophy toward the problem of flourishing in philosophizing. As long as Filipinos engage in rigorous philosophical reflection, a uniquely Filipino perspective will naturally emerge. The task is not to impose labels and the search for theory must be suspended and must be moved toward activity – allowing philosophy to develop organically through lived experience and active intellectual engagement.

Father Roque Ferriols, in his discussion of Chuang Tzu and Chinese Philosophy, remarked: “When all that can be said has been said, the most important things cannot be said yet, he felt compelled to say all that he could say.”³² Much has been written about Filipino philosophy and trying to do so is not completely useless. However, when one has exhausted all there is to say, it might be time to keep silent and what is left is the act of philosophizing accordingly. What is intriguing is: there is still the compulsion to continue speaking suggesting that there is still something to be explored. In the search of a Filipino philosophy, much will surely be available to be said. In the end, Filipino

²⁹ Co, “Doing Philosophy in the Philippines,” 17-18.

³⁰ Abulad, “Contemporary Filipino Philosophy,” 10.

³¹ Co, “Doing Philosophy in the Philippines,” 18.

³² Ferriols, “A Memoir of Six Years,” 216.

philosophy is not merely about what is said, but the possibility of saying what the life of a Filipino who philosophizes.

Conclusion

Finally, we ask: *What do you seek?* At various points in history, we had all exerted our energies in pursuit of something we had lost or probably just misplaced. Often, our lives continue to play out as they usually do until a catalyst comes up. This cataclysmic event varies from one person to another, but it is something which would give impetus to seek. In some instances, it could arise from a recognition of necessity. For a student, for example, it may be the urgency of an upcoming examination; for another, it may be the sentimental value attached to an object long believed missing. There are those who spend an enormous amount of time and energy searching for a picture, a letter, a shirt, a memento or anything that one has given a high degree of importance. However, going back to the core of each desire to pursue something, one would find that one engages in a search for something due to a conviction that there is something to search for. The acknowledgment that something is lost or misplaced necessitates a search for it. In fact, the very act of searching is, in many ways, an acknowledgement of its existence. It is absurd to dedicate oneself to the pursuit of something one believes to not exist.

Many have sought to define *Filipino Philosophy*, a pursuit driven by the perceived necessity and importance of its discovery. Nevertheless, this search is rooted in a firm belief that a Filipino Philosophy exists and awaits its discovery. What we may find absurd is that its discovery might result from philosophizing and a process of not attempting to venture into the discovery in the first place, rather than from an intentional search. The recent years have proven that many venture into the search of what Filipino Philosophy is and until then, there remains a deep and dark abyss of uncertainty – Filipino Philosophy remains to be elusive. Have those who sought it failed? In a sense, yes – since they were unable to arrive at a final destination; however, they may have succeeded, as their search was a testament of their engagement in their expression of the act of philosophizing. On the question, ‘what is philosophy?’, Martin Heidegger considered it as a path in which in order to reach the destination, one has to consider that there are multiple trajectories in answering the question.³³ It does not yield a singular answer, but rather opens a plurality of paths, each contributing to an ongoing conversation.

The efforts of those who sought Filipino Philosophy, though incomplete, laid the foundation for the philosophical community the Philippines now has. One might continue to search and choose whatever path one pleases. Whether one chooses to continue this search or to forge new directions, as I have explicated earlier, what truly matters is participation in the philosophical endeavor—through thought, speech, and writing. As Dr. Co states:

From such writing, they will create a great corpus of Filipino philosophical cogitation—in time, Filipino consciousness will emerge with greater clarity. From such a clear day, you will find FILIPINO Philosophy, for they are the very Filipino thinkers' legacy, and the rest of the world will judge them as

³³ Martin Heidegger, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Jean T. Wilde and William Kluback (USA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1956), 19 and 21.

Filipino Philosophy. Meanwhile, we just have to keep working and wait patiently. After all, Patience is a great virtue.³⁴

Like Filipino identity itself, Filipino philosophy remains an open question, a mystery. However, this being a mystery must not be taken negatively or as a limitation but an opportunity for deeper engagement. The truth of what Filipino Philosophy actually is can't be forced to unfold. In many ways, this echoes the Greek understanding of truth as *aletheia*, which means unveiling which occurs in its own time. Truth, in this sense, will unveil on its own and cannot be forced into the open. As seekers of truth, our role is to remain vigilant, ready to recognize and articulate its unfolding. In the meantime, we continue to face the different circumstances we encounter and contribute in strengthening the foundation to where Filipino philosophy would arise.³⁵ More than two decades after Co's article, a definitive Filipino philosophy is still missing. Even then, we have come so far. The current state of philosophical inquiry in the Philippines may not be perfect, but it continues to develop. Filipino Philosophy will unveil itself in due time. In the meantime, our task is clear: to remain patient, persist, and continuously pursue the necessary – to philosophize!

³⁴ Alfredo P. Co, "Introduction," in *Doing Philosophy in the Philippines: The Thomasian Collection (1951-1959)*, ed. Alfredo P. Co (Manila, Philippines: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2022), xvii.

³⁵ Timbreza, "Understanding Filipino Philosophy," 19.

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