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**FILIPINO PHILOSOPHY:
A WESTERN TRADITION IN AN EASTERN SETTING¹
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In tracing historically the development of Filipino philosophy as traditionally conceived, the author discovered that the early Filipino philosophers were Enlightenment thinkers. This was the direct consequence of the Filipino colonial experience and the explanation why the trajectory of Filipino philosophy is basically Western in orientation.

INTRODUCTION

Filipino historical experience gives birth to Filipino philosophy. Colonially governed by Spain for over three centuries, by the United States for half a century, and by Japan for about half a decade, the Filipinos towards the last decade of the nineteenth century began to absorb the Enlightenment ideas that came from Europe. These ideas helped trigger the 1896 Philippine Revolution against Spain.

The opening of the Suez Canal reduced travel from Europe to the Philippines from about six months to only a little over one month, or to be exact, to only thirty-three days. Spanish Enlightenment moved slowly in Spain, but in the first half of the nineteenth century, Krausism spread. Krause was a minor Kantian who wanted Spain to be progressive.³ In the second half of the nineteenth century, a number of Filipinos went to Spain to study. One of them, Jose Rizal, had a political agenda to unite the Filipino expatriates in Spain and seek reforms for the native country.⁴ While studying medicine in Madrid, Rizal read a lot and was familiar with the ideas of Voltaire and other Enlightenment thinkers.

Meanwhile, the Filipino intellectuals who remained in the Philippines read about the Philippine situation particularly through the works of Rizal—his two novels—*Noli me tangere* and *El filibusterismo*—that depicted the sad state of the Philippines, his political essays, and his annotations of Antonio Morga's history of the Philippines. They also read about the Spanish Revolution; the French Revolution and its ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity; and the lives of the American presidents, among others.

ENLIGHTENMENT IDEAS

The seventeenth century is traditionally described as the Age of Reason, the nineteenth century as the Age of Ideology while the eighteenth century as the Age of Enlightenment. The Age of Enlightenment (Berlin 1956) included such thinkers as John Locke, Voltaire, George Berkeley, David Hume, Thomas Reid, Condillac, La Mettrie, Johann Hamann, and Georg Lichtenberg. The Age of Enlightenment stresses the dominance of reason; contractual agreements; inevitability of progress; deistic, humanistic, or mechanistic religious persuasions; reliance on human effort to solve human problems; human rights; education as an instrument to progress; and the like. It was also the period of scientific pursuits and progress (the age of Robert Boyle and Isaac Newton), and the period of economic theorizing (the age of Adam Smith, the Physiocrats, and Malthus).

The early Filipino thinkers—the reformists (like Jose Rizal) and the revolutionists (like Bonifacio and Jacinto)—were Enlightenment thinkers.

FILIPINO ENLIGHTENMENT

Jose Rizal: Reformist

The alternative to a failed struggle for reforms in Spain, according to Rizal, is to work on the consciousness of the people in the native land itself. He wrote Marcelo H. del Pilar, the editor of the Filipino mouthpiece in Spain, *La solidaridad*, that he knew now the solution to the ills of the country: it is through *intelligence*, through *reason*, that the Filipino people should work with. Their consciousness should be freed from fanaticism, docility, inferiority, and hopelessness. Since nothing can be gained from formal education, which the Spanish friars controlled, Rizal thought that an informal organization, *La Liga Filipina*, should do the job of enlightening the minds of the people. Its goals were to unite the entire archipelago, develop agriculture and commerce, mutual protection in times of danger and need, defense against violence and injustice, and development of genuine education.

Rizal believed in the human capability to solve human problems. Human potentialities can be realized to the full except that in certain instances, there are hindrances. The greatest hindrance in the Philippine situation was Spanish colonization. It is important to work within such a colonial situation in what is now known in contemporary political thought as the development of a civil society. A *civil society* (McLean 2001) lies between the family and the state, and it attempts to fulfill needs of a community with or without the help of the state through solidarity (unity in purpose) and subsidiarity (cooperation to accomplish basic community goals). Religiously, Rizal believed in agnostic deism (see Gripaldo 2009a,33-56), the view that God created the universe with its laws, never to interfere with it again. We know God, according to Rizal, both through nature (the hard deism of Voltaire) and our conscience (the soft deism of Rousseau), but we do not know exactly

what his attributes are. Human problems are irrational human creations and can be solved through rational solutions. If reason commits mistakes, only reason can correct them.

A revolution to succeed must have military leaders, sufficient funding, sufficient arms and ammunition, sufficient numbers, and a proper political orientation. Otherwise, it will only be a massacre and innocent lives, women, and children will perish in the struggle. Rizal prefers first the people's experience in human basic freedoms or in basic democratic rights before the grant of independence. A nation can be independent without being free or free without being independent. He once said: "What is the use of independence if the slaves of today will be the tyrants of tomorrow?" He was well aware of some independent states of Latin America, which remained despotic despite having gained independence from their colonizers through bloody means.

Falsely accused of fomenting the 1896 Philippine Revolution, Rizal was eventually executed in Bagumbayan in December 1896. While in prison in Fort Santiago, he learned about the successes of the revolution in nearby Cavite province. In a desperate situation where the revolution he originally spurned was succeeding in certain parts of the nation, Rizal could only hope for its success, and in his last poem, *Mi ultimo adios*, he appeared to support it: "I see tints in the sky begin to show / And at last announce the day" and "Pray too [Fatherland] that you may see your own redemption."

Andres Bonifacio: Revolutionist

Bonifacio is the founder of the revolutionary society, *Katipunan*. When Spanish authorities discovered it, it ably recruited some 30,000 members in a period of approximately six months. Three days after the founding of *La Liga Filipina*, Rizal was banished to Dapitan in Mindanao, the southern part of the Philippines. Bonifacio, a member of the *Liga*, thought that was the end of the line and founded the *Katipunan*.

Bonifacio's philosophy of revolution was published in the revolutionary newspaper, *Kalayaan* (literally, "Freedom"). Agoncillo (1956,12) attributed the phenomenal increase of *Katipunan* membership to the dissemination of the revolutionary ideas in *Kalayaan* as the "power of the written word."

Making use of the Enlightenment idea of a contract, Bonifacio (1963) transformed the blood compact between the Spanish explorer, Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, and Sikatuna, the chieftain of the island of Bohol, in central Philippines, as a *kinship contract*. The blood compact, *Sanduguan*, consisted in mixing in a vessel drops of blood taken from the wrists of at least two individuals and drunk by both of them. It signifies the union of the two as blood brothers. It means a *contractual agreement* of helping each other in their needs and development.

While the social contract to set up a government by the people is based on societal needs to provide them security in their lives and properties, the blood contract refers to kinship ties and is more basic than the societal

contract. A betrayal of the blood contract has depth in significance in that it is a betrayal of a brother against another brother.

A revolution or war is justified, according to Bonifacio, when there is a breach of contract. The natives of the Philippine archipelago were economically prosperous, free, and happy prior to Spanish colonization. It was—in a relative sense—a paradise. While the natives did their part of the contract—by building Spanish ships, manning them, fighting their wars, and constructing their forts and churches—the Spaniards failed miserably on their part of the contract. They transformed the natives into docile religious fanatics and debased them—without human and political rights. They exploited the natives through forced labor and through buying native products at low government prices. They paraded their riches while the natives wallowed in abject poverty. Only few natives benefited from the colonizers' greed. For Bonifacio, such a breach of contract required a violent upheaval. A revolution was justified to restore the lost paradise.

Emilio Jacinto: Revolutionist

Jacinto (Gripaldo 2002) capitalized on the Enlightenment idea of a free reign of reason, of the freedom to think and do (i.e., intellectual liberty) rather than the freedom to will and do (i.e., volitional liberty). He apparently believed that the issue on which comes first, the freedom to think and do or the freedom to will and do, is highly situational. In a colonial situation where both will and thinking are suppressed, where intellectual fanaticism is the rule, where one's will is conditioned to submit to tyranny, it is intellectual liberty that becomes primary. The freedom to think and do is a rebellion against a tyrannized will. In such a debased situation, there is no will to think freely, there is only a leap to exercise the freedom to think (intellectual freedom). One should be able to think through his situation clearly before he can will anything significant at all.

Prior to Spanish colonization, the natives were autonomous agents and in democratic barangays or communities, they exercised this freedom to think.⁵ They also had the freedom of expression to a certain degree. All these were gone when the Spaniards ruled over the natives. Jacinto was committed to the ideals of the French Revolution: liberty, equality, and fraternity. In his philosophy of revolution, which was published in *Kalayaan*, Jacinto (1897) had Liberty telling the Filipino youth who consulted her that the medical cure of the ills of his brethren is to embrace her again with a price, a bloody revolution. They must get rid of Slavery (Spanish colonization) who came to them with the mask of friendship, prosperity, civilization, and the like. They embraced Slavery and forgot all about her, Liberty.

AMERICAN AND JAPANESE COLONIAL INTERLUDES

The explosion and sinking of the American warship, *Maine*, in a harbor of another Spanish colony, Cuba, provided the reason for the United States to

intervene in the revolutionary situation of the Philippines. What began as an American friendly intervention in the Philippine revolution against Spain turned into the suspicion by Filipino leaders that America, under the Republicans, had no intention of leaving the country. A misunderstanding of a military command to halt by an American sentry led to the shooting of three Filipino revolutionists, and the incident became the American excuse for waging a war against the Filipinos. As expected in this Philippine-American War, after leaving behind several thousand American soldiers and Filipinos dead or wounded,⁶ the Filipino military eventually succumbed to American superior military might.

Manuel Luis Quezon: Political Philosopher

Quezon fought against the Americans in the Philippine-American War. But the surrender of Philippine President Emilio Aguinaldo to the Americans signified, for Quezon, the end of the military struggle for independence. The fight for freedom, Quezon believed, should now shift through peaceful means in the U.S. Congress. By defeating the Federalista Party whose platform was to make the Philippines a state of the United States, the Nacionalista Party whose platform was “immediate, complete, and absolute independence,” sent Quezon to the U.S. Congress to fight for independence. The United States, in the Cooper Law of 1902, allowed two Filipino resident commissioners to represent Philippine interests in the U.S. Congress. They could discuss and debate on Philippine issues in the Lower House and they could influence the Upper House (the U.S. Senate), although they could not vote.

Quezon’s political philosophy consists of two strands: political pragmatism and political preparation for an eventual Philippine independence. *Political pragmatism* is the principle, which says that one must fight for a goal, but if obstacles towards that goal are difficult to surmount, then one must fall back to an alternative that is better than nothing provided it is in the right direction. Quezon realized it was difficult to obtain from Congress an immediate and complete independence because Democratic President Woodrow Wilson, whom Quezon thought would be different from Republican presidents, would not allow it. So he persuaded Congressman William Jones to author a bill, which would promise Philippine independence as soon as a *stable government* in the Philippines could be obtained. Erving Winslow, the secretary of the American Anti-Imperialist League, persuaded Senator James Clarke to author an amendment in the Jones bill that would make the Philippines independent in four years. Quezon supported and fought for its passage, but the Clarke amendment was defeated in the Senate by one vote. The Jones Bill of 1916 eventually became a law.

Unfortunately, the president of the Nacionalista Party, Sergio Osmeña, mishandled his influence in running the government (which Democratic Governor General Francis B. Harrison rapidly Filipinized) by political patronage and corruption. By the end of President Wilson’s second term, the Philippine government was in near-bankruptcy and the stable government was

nowhere in sight. The Republican administration that succeeded President Wilson nixed the independence issue. This incident led to the split between Osmeña and Quezon whom the latter won. As head now of the Party and the Philippine Congress, Quezon began the second strand of his political philosophy: *the preparation for an eventual Philippine independence*.

A new round of peaceful struggle for independence in the U.S. Congress led to the passage of the Hare-Hawes Cutting Act creating the Philippine Commonwealth in 1935 and making the Philippines independent in 1945, but the Philippine Congress rejected it. Quezon wanted the military provision therein that leaves to the U.S. President the decision to retain or not the U.S. military bases and installations in the Philippines revised. President Franklin D. Roosevelt later acceded and this led to the passage of the Tydings-McDuffie Act. The Philippines would decide after independence whether to retain or not the American bases in the country.⁷

Elected as the Commonwealth president in 1935, Quezon now buttressed his political ideas with some educational and social thought. He believed in Social Darwinism—that governments are products of political struggles for survival. He viewed political parties as necessary only when they have competing platforms of government because the partisanship is clear-cut. But he opposed political parties whose programs of government are not different from the party in power but whose existence is premised simply in criticizing the government in order to grab power. If political parties have no distinctive political programs, then a *partyless democracy* may be necessary.

He supported the American democratization of education for all social classes by constructing more classrooms and hiring more teachers, and by guaranteeing free public education from the elementary to high school. He believed in the development of a national language that would be spoken by all. He also believed that the aims of education must be good citizenship and preparation for livelihood; that the foremost duty of the citizen in times of peace is to pay his taxes and in times of war, to fight for the survival of the nation. He envisioned a government with distributive justice, which means that the bourgeois desire for wealth must be tempered by the social amelioration of the working class through government intervention in terms of legal measures and economic regulations whenever necessary. He honestly sought a code of ethics to strengthen the character not only of citizens but also of government employees.

He believed in justice for all, a social justice that would allow the working class to receive decent compensation to enjoy culture and leisure. His social justice program included higher wages, credit facilities that would allow the Filipinos the opportunity to earn a decent livelihood, and the protection of the rights of women and the poor, among others. He believed that inequity of the distribution of wealth among nations should be corrected so that every nation was permitted to have equal access to essential raw materials, which certain countries had monopolized, and world trade—controlled by few nations—would be allowed to take its natural course.

Knowing that such a new world economic order was not yet forthcoming, he advised the youth to prepare for national defense.

A national defense for the Philippines during the Commonwealth Period would assume a defensive nature under the umbrella of the military might of the United States, which would assume the offensive stature. Quezon thought that a country would invade another country only for economic gain so he envisioned to train some twelve divisions of soldiers, which would make it so costly for an invader to undertake in terms of human and material resources. At the time, Quezon developed a defensive air force and also a skeletal defensive navy. He believed that even after independence in 1946 the defensive nature of the Philippine military must be maintained and strengthened. A military treaty with the United States could be obtained to guarantee the external security of the country.

Jose P. Laurel: Political Philosopher

Individuals, according to Laurel, cannot forever remain in solitude. No man can be an island unto himself. What throws individuals into a social cohesion is this psychological “fear of solitude.” Although a person is gregarious and cannot live without others, he or she realizes it is not likewise easy to live with each other. They have personal differences (in terms of temperaments, ideas, and ideals) and social idiosyncrasies. There is this constant personal attraction and a tolerant social repulsion, a love-hate relationship. I love my neighbor but I also hate my neighbor.

What goes among individuals goes likewise among nations. Japan wanted isolationism, but military and economic survival required that it should circulate itself among other nations. Its massive industrialization necessitated a constant supply of raw materials and greater trade within a larger area. A Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (Gordon 2000) was needed. To ensure such a success, a costly military adventurism far exceeded the expectations of the British, French, and American colonial masters of Asia, and even the gain-loss equation of Quezon. It may be costly to invade the Philippines, but the economic gain far outweighs the cost in terms of the long-term East Asia Co-Prosperity scheme. When Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, the die was cast.

Quezon decided that Laurel should stay in the Philippines to help Jorge Vargas, the mayor of Manila, welcome the Japanese, who entered the Philippines through Northern Luzon in Aparri and Vigan, and Southern Luzon in Legaspi, by making Manila an open city. Quezon himself would head the Commonwealth-government-in-exile in the United States. Laurel as a lawyer earlier helped Japanese businessmen open up agricultural lands in Mindanao. He also received an honorary doctorate degree from the University of Tokyo.

These Japanese connections enabled the Japanese to gain confidence in Laurel who later became the President of the Japanese-sponsored Philippine

Republic. After the war, Laurel while in Sugamo prison in Japan wrote his memoirs and some of his moral and political ideas.

Laurel believed that the love-hate relationship necessitates some rules of ethical behavior for individuals in the form of laws, customs, and traditions, and for nations, in the form of treaties and executive agreements. The law differentiates between what is legally good or evil and between what is legally just or unjust. The people's support of their government would ideally entail their protection from injustice. Abolish laws and everything would fall into confusion.

The law is the boundary between the government prerogative and the people's liberty. If the government prerogative prevails over the people's liberty, then tyranny reigns while if the people's liberty prevails over the government prerogative, then anarchy emerges. The required balance between liberty and authority should be achieved through the education and discipline of the citizenry, including those who are running the government.

Democracy means the representative type of republicanism where the people are considered sovereign. The people do not directly govern but delegate their power through their representatives. The state exists for the individual and the functions of government are to provide the people with livelihood and health, social justice, free education up to a certain level, and economic opportunity.

Human rights cannot be guaranteed unless the citizens first do their obligations towards the state by honestly paying their taxes, obeying the laws and regulations, sincerely performing the duties of professionals and public servants, and not tolerating the infringement of laws by others. Laurel believed that good governance is founded on righteousness and foreign relations must be based on full reciprocal rights and privileges between and among nations.

Laurel's main function as president of the Japanese-sponsored republic was to cushion the impact of hunger and Japanese atrocities on the Filipino people. He provided rolling kitchens to feed the people, and surreptitiously supported the guerilla struggles against the Japanese forces. When the Japanese Imperial Army told him to conscript Filipinos to fight the war against the Americans, Laurel politely refused. Agoncillo (1965, 378) cites an elderly man who said that Laurel did his job well as president of the republic. Not everyone should be in the mountains to fight as a guerilla. Someone should stay in government to minimize the hardships experienced by the people during the war.

POST-COLONIAL PERIOD

A number of Filipino thinkers after independence in 1946 believed that the Philippines had remained a colony—a neocolony—of the United States. We have Claro M. Recto, Jose Ma. Sison, Lorenzo Tañada, and Renato Constantino, among others. They called for an independent economic and foreign policy. They were the left and the left-leaning nationalists who

wanted the Filipinos to cut their umbilical cord, so to speak, from their colonial past, that is, get rid of their colonial hangover. For lack of space, I will only discuss the nationalist philosophy of Renato Constantino.

Renato Constantino: Nationalist

Constantino (1966, 1970, 1978, and 1979) argued that Filipino colonial experience has developed a *captive* consciousness in that it was shaped and tailored to the needs of the colonizers. It is a colonial consciousness—a consciousness of inferiority or an indiscriminating attitude to favor foreign products in all sorts of things (foreign academic degrees, imported consumer products, foreign designs, etc.) against local ones. An effect of this type of consciousness is crab mentality or the tendency—as crabs do in a basket—for those on top of the hierarchy to push those down below while those below to pull down those up above, and the net effect of this tendency is that there is a very slow progress to go up for all of them. What is needed is a counter-consciousness in terms of nationalism.

Nationalism is defined as an expression of reality that “we have a country of our own, which must be kept our own.” Its *economic expression* is industrialization with the desire to consciously “control the management of [its own] resources.” Aid and cooperation of its technologically more advanced sister-nations may be accepted, but it must insist on “full control of its economic destiny.” Its *political expression* is independence or the “freedom to plan and work out Filipino national goals without outside interference with the national interest in mind. And its *cultural expression* is the development of a culture rooted in Filipino heritage and, though admitting of foreign influences, “retains its distinct and separate identity.”

The neocolonial status is one where foreign corporations control the national economy while the government implements mendicant policies based on mistaken priorities that benefit not the majority of the people whose economic status of poverty remain untouched but the transnationals and the Filipino middle and upper classes. Instead of pursuing a well-planned industrialization [or superindustrialization] strategy, government priorities relied heavily on (i) export-oriented industries that primarily import their raw materials, (ii) export-oriented agricultural crops that eat up fifty-five percent of arable lands, (iii) the tourism industry which develops resorts and hotels that are mostly affordable only to foreign tourists and a few Filipinos, and (iv) the export of manpower.

Constantino’s economic nationalist alternative is an ideology of economic liberation which is (a) mass-oriented and (b) anti-imperialist. He suggested a “bottom-up” economic approach (rather than a “trickle-down” approach), which will organically connect the people’s productivity and freedom from economic deprivation by investment in industrial growth to serve the growing needs of the population. This means the setting up of people’s cooperatives. The goal is a social and just distribution of the national product, and exports should play a subordinate role to the production

for local basic needs. Income from exports must be devoted to capital build-up. This economic alternative, for Constantino, must be buttressed with a nationalist education (consisting, among others, of advocating an internationalism based on a firm nationalism for the people to know what to culturally assimilate beneficially) and a nationalist ethics that includes a modified Sartrean injunction that when one makes a *nationalist choice*, he or she chooses not for himself or herself alone but for the entire nation as well.

TRANSCENDING THE COLONIAL HANGOVER

Although we cannot erase the colonial past, we can make it obsolete in our minds or make use of some aspects of it as we transcend the colonial hangover. For lack of space, I will discuss the ideas of only four Filipino philosophers who believed this can be done in certain areas, if not in all, of philosophy.

R. Esquivel Embuscado: Dissectionist

As an artist-philosopher (he is a painter), Embuscado (1975) rejected the view that authentic art is simply a continuation of past experience or learning to the present. He held that the task of an authentic artist is to cut the umbilical cord of the past, to make use of the present, and to project that present to the open future. He called his philosophy of art “dissectionism.” True art must not be past-present oriented, but present-future oriented.

The contents of dissectionism are the depressive social scenarios that we experience at present: outcast figures, monotonous life, old age, war and intrigues, poverty, social causes, discontents, and the like. According to Embuscado, they are intuited [as Henri Bergson (2011) maintained in his philosophy] from the unifold of undifferentiated hidden reality by human consciousness and creatively expressed in manifold dissectional ways into the future, through swirling motions, which later become available to the senses. The unifold is in perpetual motion or becoming, and this motion of the present is creatively projected into the future. The artist, in other words, perceives beyond the sense appearances and projects the intuited scenarios of hidden reality into the “region of the unknown” (the future).

Dissectionism is dynamic. It consists of multifarious lines that crisscross the canvass from all directions in beautiful movements. Ontologically, it is a rebellion against artistic permanency, that is to say, against stagnation and imitation (as in realism), mutilation of reality (as in cubism), fantasy (as in surrealism), uncreativity (as in repetitive commercial art), and the like. The true artist must rid art, if possible, of human or any semblance to objective reality. His task is not to capture a moment of reality and make it permanent in his or her work of art. Traditional styles dwell in the past and are perpetuated in the present by imitation or improvisation. Permanence in art depicts reality as stagnant, negates the freedom of movement, and stifles human possibilities to explore the unknown future. The new artist must start

something authentic; must create a novel mode of artistic expression in the present which must essentially be dynamically projective. It is important for the artist to create, not to imitate or repeat the past styles, but to explore the possibilities of the future.

For Embuscado, the infinite variations of two opposing forces—beauty and misery—excited him. This nervous excitement is not only the ultimate form of art to him, but a “continuous act of protest, the result of rebellion, the truth, and the contradictions one finds in the objective world.” There is beauty in misery, “beauty in melancholia.” The artist as rebel must constantly dissect this beauty projectively and dynamically. The “region of the unknown”—the future—is the artist’s “aesthetic destiny;” it gives him the “mysterious delights” to explore dissectionally.

Embuscado’s futurism in art is different from Alvin Toffler’s futurism (1970) in education. Toffler does not have an open future in that our image of the future, which is preconditioned by present technological developments, determines the curricular offerings at present in order to realize that futuristic image. Embuscado’s theory has similarities with Italian futurism (Boccioni et al. 1910; see also “Futurism,” n.d.), especially in painting, as in the rejection of the past and of imitation, but Embuscado does not dwell on glorifying the present but emphasizes the *projection* of the movements of present *hidden* reality towards the *open* future (see pictures below).



Nature from Behind. Ink on paper.
1973. 28.5 cm. x 36.5 cm.



Dissectional Figure. Oil on linen.
Year and size not indicated.



Tambakero. Oil on photograph.
Year and size not indicated



Truth and Beauty. Ink on paper
1974 23 cm. x 30.5 cm.

Cirilo Bautista: Poetical Theorist

Bautista is a poet-philosopher who believed we can make use of some aspects of our colonial past while transcending it by fashioning the present and the future. In writing poetry, e.g., we can use the language of the former colonial master, i.e., English, in becoming ourselves—modern Filipinos. He wrote about the birth, nature, travails, and demise of any poem.

He (1998) maintained that every particular poem has an ideal poem in the poet's mind ready to be expressed as such—a particular poem. He called this ideal poem the Rubber Tower—apparently because of its soft, bouncy, and pliant character—that looms high in the poet's consciousness ready to be transformed into a specific piece of poetry. For Bautista, the Rubber Tower is an organic flesh and the particular poem is “flesh made Word.” The Rubber Tower is nourished by the people's historical experience and, as such, its end product, the particular poem, is always culture-bound.

The poem was originally made for the ears; it had an aural beginning. It was only much later that it was made for the eyes with the invention of writing. The printing press mummified the poem in a piece of paper; it transformed the poem to a “word painting” or a “piece of sculpture.” The institution of silent reading, which St. Ambrose started during the Middle Ages, banished the ears from participating in the understanding of the poem. On some occasions, oral reading is performed to reclaim the ears' prerogative to the poem.

The poem can depict reality faithfully or disguisedly through its layers of mask. The Verb, the poem's blood, is the first layer of the mask that sets the poem's intellectual direction. The Adjective, the second layer, gives us the magic of the poem; it provides us with multifarious landscapes and fills our brains with kaleidoscopic colors. It is the “layer of sunrise and sunset, of

constant music.” The Adverb is “an Adjective with legs.” It keeps the sunrise and sunset in motion; it is the *avant garde* in the forefront of the poem’s search for meaning. It is active, always in the march. The third layer is the Noun, which is the “fulcrum of the poem’s turning.” Exuding its imperial character, the Noun is carried on its back by the Verb and the Adjective. It makes the poem a history and history a poem. Historical personages like Rizal and Bonifacio would have just been memories, but their poems, through the imperial Nouns as substances therein, are not only a part of history but contains the people’s historical experiences.

The poem can assume many forms: it can be warlike, liberator, religious, propagandistic (or an opium of the people), historical, political, ethical, etc. The meaning of the poem is threefold: (i) the poet’s intended meaning; (ii) the reader’s hermeneutical meaning; and (iii) the meaning the poem has assumed over time in its “peregrination in the world of letters.” The poet’s intended meaning is the meaning of the present moment and context when the poet fashions the particular poem from the ideal Rubber Tower. It is essentially the maker’s individual meaning. The reader’s hermeneutical meaning carries the poem to the wider communal consciousness of the people where its communal rituals reflect collective history and the plan for collective grandeur. The poem acquires the communal milieu that determines the criteria of respectability and good public taste. The reader’s meaning is basically a communal meaning. The two meanings—individual and communal—are independent but if they do coincide it is only by accident. In this coincidence, the times of the maker and the reader become congruous, and the poem becomes timeless. It is the poem of the individual (the poet) and the community (the readers) of different times and places. It becomes “everybody’s poem” that transcends cultural and temporal bracketing. In some instances, however, the single poem assumes different meanings to different people of different cultural backgrounds and becomes a “freelance linguistic entity in life’s battlefield.”

The third meaning indicates the poem has its own meaning which originates from itself, not the maker or reader. It is an objectified collective meaning which transcends the past and becomes universally relevant. When this happens it becomes a real poem—a sovereign poem. It becomes the analogue poem. It becomes the analogue of society. Rizal’s *Mi ultimo adios*, for example, has the objectified meaning of “the Filipino anguish for a just life.” Although it has this third meaning, it can also have the subjective meanings of different readers.

Understanding the poem takes the vantage point of the reader. As soon as the poet finishes the poem, he no longer owns it; it becomes a public property and will have a life of its own. Its meaning transcends its beginning. History can be read as a poem in the same way that a poem can be read as history. A poem can be politically belligerent, especially when it opposes tyranny, in the same way as it can be an object of political terrorism as when the tyrant equates it with sedition—vilifies, represses, or persecutes it.

The death of the poem occurs in two ways: (1) when it is a manifestation of the immaturity of the poet's imagination: it is a weak poem which cannot govern its own passion, cannot sustain its political momentum, lacks a strong identity, perverts its historical sense, and the like; and (2) when it is a bad poem: it cannot compare with other texts, cannot validate its poetic claim, fails in its "tactical preparation," and cannot adequately articulate itself. Bautista argued that the poet fails to defend the poem to protect himself, but he might have other talents such as a good "singing voice," etc.

Claro R. Ceniza: Metaphysician

Ceniza tried to reconcile the Parmenidean denial and the Heraclitean affirmation of the reality of change. His philosophical views simply forget the colonial past and proceed with contemporary realities. He rendered obsolete that past and its hangover. Something like this view we find in the Bible: "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland" (Isa. 43:18-19). In attempting to reconcile Parmenides and Heraclitus, Ceniza indeed is making a way in the desert.

Ceniza (2001) began by showing that we can derive the existence of contingent objects from the postulates of Parmenides that what is rational is real and what is real is rational (or what can be thought or spoken is possible and vice versa, and what is possible is and vice versa) and its negative corollary that what is nonrational is nonreal and what is nonreal is nonrational (or what cannot be thought or spoken is not possible and vice versa, and what cannot be thought or spoken is not and vice versa). In themselves, individually, the postulates and their respective corollaries do not contradict each other, but when applied to contingent phenomena, they involve a contradiction. For instance, it is a contradiction that "it is possible for things to be and for them not to be" at the same time. It is contradictory for me to have a million dollars in the bank and not to have them in the same bank. Being contradictories, it is apparent that contingent phenomena do not exist. But Ceniza argued their nonexistence does not mean they are completely obliterated, because we experience seemingly contingent objects like chairs, tables, trees, and the like. Conceptually, contingent phenomena as contradictories do not exist, but experientially, they do. How is that possible?

Ceniza first clarified the meaning of existence. "To exist" is "to stand out." Contingent entities do not stand out; they *subsist*. If an object is not green, it does not mean it has no color, but the color green does not stand out or does not exist in the object. Red and green result in yellow but they are there subsistent in yellow. The colors of the rainbow are subsistent in white—the plenum or neutral state—which is the "balanced sum of all colors of the rainbow." Numbers subsist in zero, the plenum (or sum total) of all positive and negative integers, as silence is the plenum of all noises. The other meaning of the phrase "to exist," according to Ceniza, is "to make a

difference” in the sense of affecting something or its surroundings. In a sense, the Parmenidean Being or universe is a plenum of which contingent entities subsist, and they exist or stand out only from the perspective of experiencing finite subjects or persons. Existence is, therefore, *experiential*, that is, either phenomenologically or empirically.

From the Parmenidean plenum, contingent entities exist or stand out because they are caused. There must be a “reason, cause or explanation for the things we experience.” If the ground is wet, it must have been caused by (1) rain, (2) flooding, (3) broken underground water pipe, (4) sprinkled water, or (v) waste water thrown on the ground. In (1), the wetness would cover a wide area including the roofs of houses; in (2) the wetness will be wide but will not include elevated grounds and roofs of houses; in (3) “the wetness would cover a relatively small area, with a center where the break in the pipe is located;” in (4) the area covered by wetness will even be smaller; and in (5) the covered area will be much smaller and the water might even be dirty. By examining the *affected surroundings*, we can determine the cause of the wetness.

Ceniza discussed a number of other issues such as the nature of the universe, the possibility of a Final Cause, the nature of the person, and the like, but for lack of space I will just enjoin the readers to read his book. In the final analysis, Ceniza’s reconciliation of the reality of the Being (“The One”) of Parmenides and the multiplicity of contingent changing entities of Heraclitus hinge on the notions of subsistence and existence which are both *experiential* (experienced by the subject phenomenologically or empirically).

Rolando M. Gripaldo: Circumstantialist

Like Ceniza, Gripaldo (2011) attempted “to make...streams in the wasteland” by letting the colonial past subsist and by letting the present and the future stand out—to make a difference.

Gripaldo distinguished two senses of the word “circumstance” in relation to the choosing situation. The first sense is the *situation totalized*. It is this sense where the choosing agent feels the total situation compels him or her to choose one option rather than the others: “Under the *circumstance*, I have no choice but to leave you.” The second sense merely means a *situational condition* among many such situational conditions that lead to a person’s choice. Here the choosing agent feels free to choose A rather than B or C: “Under the *circumstances*, I will choose A.”

Situations are of many kinds—situations of death, marriage, murder, choice, anger, etc. and they are fluid: overlapping, interpenetrating, transitory, momentary, and if they endure it is only for a little while, not forever. They may recur later, but they are always succeeded by other situations. Their borders are difficult to delineate in objective reality, but they can be abstracted in thought and their boundaries delineated for analysis. Gripaldo zeroes in on the choosing situation, for he was interested in clarifying the notion of “free choice.” In what sense is a choice free? His

thesis is that while the chooser is free in the sense that he or she is not compelled by an authority or by someone to make a choice, the situation of which he or she is an integral part determines his or her choice. Gripaldo describes his book, *Circumstantialism*, as an essay on situational determinism.

Choices are always done in situations, which are of two broad types: rational and nonrational. Rational choices involve deliberation and decision. Nonrational choices are done without deliberation as in habitual choices, flippant choices like tossing a coin or picking just any card from a deck of cards, mistaken choices, unconscious choices, and choices done on the basis of a simple preference. While Gripaldo extensively discussed nonrational choices, he set them aside as pseudo-choices. Genuine choices must meet T. F. Daveney's (1961) five conditions. First, there must be *genuine* alternatives. One cannot be said to have chosen if he or she takes the one and only chocolate in the box. Second, the chooser must be *aware* of these alternatives. One cannot also be said to have chosen if he or she believes that, assuming he or she takes it, there is only one chocolate in the box when in fact there are many and of different kinds. Third, he must believe these alternatives are *attainable* or *doable*. One cannot choose to buy a house or a particular car if he or she knows it is not for sale. Fourth, he must have a *prior aim, purpose, or want* for choosing. We have two scenarios: (a) If I want to arrive at my destination quickly, then my choice of transport will be guided by that want; and (b) If offered a job in a foreign land out of nowhere, then—though I may have no initial purpose in accepting the offer—the purpose will actually become discernible when I go into the deliberative act. I may want a higher salary and the offer has it. Fifth, the alternative chosen must be that which suits him or her best: (a) If we choose an option which we desire or which is in line with our goal, the choice suits us, and also the situation, best. (b) If the situation calls for us to do an act which appears necessary but which we do not want to do, but have to, then the choice suits the situation best, though not necessarily us. One may, e.g., shoot a wounded friend in war: "I did not really want to shoot him but he requested me to do it and I knew the enemies would torture him to death just the same, so I had to shoot him." (This is the first sense of circumstance—situation totalized—and should not concern us.)

When the chooser is confronted with alternatives in the choosing act, he or she usually performs three stages. The first stage, Stage1, is his or her recognition of alternatives, which can be more than two. The alternatives may be abstract like "love or friendship," concrete like "apples or bananas," or a mixture like "pineapple or love." The second stage, Stage2, involves his or her deliberation and decision. The chooser begins to deliberate as to which alternative suits him or her best. He or she weighs the merits and demerits, advantages and disadvantages, pluses and minuses of each alternative, and makes the decision. At the tail end of the acts of deliberating and deciding is the chosen alternative. A person may say, "To buy this banana is my decision; it is also my choice." After the second stage, the act of choosing is

consummated although a rerun may still be possible. The last stage, Stage3, involves the chooser's acting out of his or her decision/choice. It is the taking, buying, etc., of the chosen alternative. The act of choosing is here *fully consummated*.

Situational conditions are the data or pieces of information that serve as the inputs of the act of choosing. These are the circumstances of the choosing situation, and the choosing agent derives them from four sources: Source1, the person's present external environment—provides alternatives as perceived: physical or mental objects or both; in the case of mental or abstract objects, the spatio-temporal environment is still necessary since the person who makes the choice is situated in a space-time setting. Source2, the person's past—memory as the repository: includes habits, attitudes, and capacities. Those relevant in choosing are generally remembered; those “unconscious” desires or wants, when they do not appear in conscious memory, are irrelevant or will not feature in the act of choosing. Source3, the person's future—refers to a projection of the choice to the future: merits/demerits, advantages/disadvantages, usefulness/uselessness, and the like. Source4, the person's present physical and mental condition—healthy or not either mentally, physically, or both. All these sources are situated in a particular space-time scenario. They are all present in a particular choosing situation even if some are ignored or just taken for granted. For example, if one is healthy, the choice to go to Singapore or not will not include Source4, since the physical condition is taken for granted. But when one is sick for days, the decision will include the physical condition and the decision may be negative.

Gripaldo argued that the voluntary freedom one feels when one confronts the alternatives (Stage1) is carried over to the acts of deliberating and deciding (Stage2). And it is here in the second stage that the chooser begins to discern the best choice for him/her under the situation. When he or she finally decides on choice A, the other choices are simply blotted out. In other words, in so far as the four sources of situational conditions are concerned, the best choice for the chooser is latent or hidden in the choosing situation and it goes to the surface only during the act of deliberation. In a manner of speaking, the chooser's best choice⁸ has already been determined by the situation, and the chooser—on the basis of the four sources—has simply discerned (or has ascertained) it in the process of deliberation. Gripaldo concluded that in rational choices the person could not have chosen otherwise. The situational conditions—some or all of which the chooser may avow—are his or her reasons for selecting the choice. In Stage3, the chooser acts out the choice in a manner where he or she is led to an option, after deliberation, where he or she could not have chosen otherwise. In this regard, Gripaldo maintained that in Circumstantialism or in a genuine choosing act, freedom and determinism are compatible.⁹

CONCLUSION

The Filipino philosophies discussed in this paper¹⁰ are basically Western in orientation. Such a historical trajectory is brought about necessarily by the people's colonial experience (Christian religion, English language, Western philosophical ideas) and carried over to contemporary times. Recent Filipino philosophizing is characterized with a break from the colonial past—or, at least, by the act of ignoring that past—and a preoccupation with particular philosophical problems, but it is still a Western brand of philosophizing.

There are current activities by Filipino teachers of philosophy and philosophers, which focus on some reflections on certain topics in Eastern and Filipino cultural ideas, but they have not yet reached the status of philosophical maturity. We are interested, for example, in a Filipino's own philosophy of culture rather than on his or her descriptions of perceivable philosophical perspectives presupposed or imbedded in communal Filipino culture, i.e., tribe or nation (see Mercado 2005 and Villanueva Jr. 2006).

NOTES

1. Third revised version of the paper originally presented in an International Philosophy Conference in Athens, Greece on 6 June 2006 under the sponsorship of Athens Institute of Education and Research.

2. For Gripaldo's curriculum vitae, please click the link <http://www.pnprs.org/Philosophia%20Editor.pdf>.

3. Karl Christian Friedrich Krause (Bonoan 1994, 13) tried to orient Spanish life to European rationalism.

4. Rafael Palma's (1996) political agenda is more probable to me than Leon Ma. Guerrero's (1974) literary agenda.

5. William Scott (1994, 129) identifies autocratic and democratic *barangays*. In the context of Jacinto's argument, Jacinto certainly referred to democratic barangays.

6. An estimate puts it at 4,234 American soldiers dead with 2,818 wounded and 20,000 Filipino soldiers dead with 200,000 to 500,000 civilian casualties. See "The history guy" (2006).

7. Quezon also objected to the economic provision, which would not properly prepare the country for independence, but this was shelved for future negotiations after independence.

8. If we choose the second best choice, there must be an additional intervening situational condition that tips the balance of decision in favor of the second best choice, and elevates that choice to the position of the first best choice in that given situation.

9. Gripaldo (1998-99) discusses some implications of this philosophy in terms of responsibility, remorse, punishment, etc. in "Circumstantialist ethics."

10. For lengthy discussions on individual Filipino philosophers, see Gripaldo (Part I, Secs. 1-2, 2009b and 2009c).

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