Φιλοσοφια
Volume 27, 1: 2026

POSSIBLE SYMPTOMS OF A TRAUMATIZED PHILOSOPHY: A PRELIMINARY READING OF FILIPINO PHILOSOPHY AS AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL COMMUNITY

Mariefe B. Cruz
La Consolacion University Philippines
University of Santo Tomas, Philippines

Drawing from social epistemology, this paper examines how experiences of social injustice are historically intertwined with experiences of epistemic injustice at both individual and collective levels. In Philippine history, such injustices have left enduring marks on intellectual life and philosophical practice. Building on Feorillo A. Demeterio III's claim that Filipino philosophy may be read as a "traumatized philosophy," this paper offers a preliminary expansion of that insight by situating Filipino philosophy itself as an epistemological community. Adopting a historical-hermeneutic approach and a symptomatic mode of reading, it treats philosophizing as a historically situated practice shaped by colonial education, institutional formation, and political repression. Through the works of José Medina and Kelly Agra, it examines how social and epistemic injustices give rise to epistemic resistance and epistemic paralysis, and how these ambivalent responses have structured the development of Filipino philosophy. Rather than pathologizing the tradition, the paper reads recurring patterns– such as the persistence of neo-scholastic epistemic habits, the repression of critical philosophizing during Martial Law, and the enduring debates over philosophical legitimacy– as symptoms of unresolved historical and epistemic tensions within the community. The paper advances a diagnostic framework that clarifies how historical injustices continue to shape philosophical orientations and interactions and argues that Filipino philosophy may better reflect on what comes after– opening space for more deliberate, responsible, and generative forms of philosophical engagement within and beyond its own tradition.

Keywords: Epistemological Communities, Filipino Philosophy, Social Epistemology, Trauma

INTRODUCTION

Attempts to understand and analyze the history of Filipino Philosophy have long been undertaken by scholars who focused their primary philosophical leanings on

making sense and interpreting the progression of Filipino thought. Questions arise, such as "*How do we philosophize?", "How should we philosophize?", "What should we focus on?"* and *"Where should we start?"* emanate from such attempts. More importantly, before asking such questions about the Filipino's struggles to philosophize and engage in philosophical discussion, it may be better to ask a question of *why– Why do we philosophize? More particularly, why do we philosophize like this?*

Probing into these questions of *why* may lead us to a possible reading of Filipino Philosophy through a social epistemic lens, wherein the development, transformation, dissemination, and also the censorship of the knowledge constructed and acquired within its intellectual tradition may give us a glimpse into its motivations and a possible understanding of its (under)development. As such, this paper attempts to read the developments of Filipino philosophy and the philosophizing situated within it as an epistemological community. I start with a discussion on the characteristics of epistemological communities and how Filipino Philosophy, more than emanating from philosophical institutions, can be viewed as an epistemological community in itself, which both acquires and produces knowledge in adherence to its historical context, and at the same time may also be prone to censorship and epistemic deficits due to the same situatedness. Then, I attempt to present an overview of the claims and narratives on a "traumatized" Filipino Philosophy from philosophers who attempted to look into its historical development, as such, also looking at the possibility of Filipino Philosophy as a "traumatized" epistemological community. Lastly, I highlight the concept of Epistemic Resistance vis-à-vis that of Epistemic Paralysis and their possible impacts in molding an epistemological community. With this, I elucidate the ambivalence of such concepts and some corresponding examples of their manifestations in the history of Filipino Philosophy to further the argument of dubbing Filipino Philosophy as a "traumatized" epistemological community. Analyzing such "symptoms" of a "traumatized" philosophy may be both alarming and therapeutic at the same time, especially when viewed through a historical lens, but such attempts may serve as preliminary steps into scrutinizing what may come after, for Filipino Philosophy and its possible contributions to prevailing philosophical discourses.

This paper proposes to read Filipino Philosophy not merely as a collection of texts, thinkers, or institutional specializations, but as an epistemological community-- one constituted by shared discourses, recurring questions, persistent problematics, and patterned silences that have developed over time. To approach Filipino Philosophy in this way is to take seriously its collective dimension: how philosophical concerns emerge, circulate, are taken up or resisted, and at times precluded within a historically situated community of inquiry. The questions that Filipino Philosophers ask, the themes they return to, as well as those they hesitate to confront-- or sometimes (most of the time) find difficulty to articulate-- are not incidental. They are shaped by historical experiences of social and epistemic injustice, and may be read as responses, adaptations, or forms of resistance to these conditions.

Seen from this perspective, ongoing difficulties in directly addressing social identity, postcolonial identity, Western philosophical dominance, and legitimacy of local ways of knowing are not merely contemporary shortcomings or individual failures. Rather, they may be understood as symptoms of a longer intellectual history that continues to inform what can be said, what is cautiously approached, and what

remains difficult to pursue within Filipino philosophizing. By treating Filipino philosophy as an epistemological community, this paper seeks to examine the interplay between what is articulated and what remains unarticulated in its history, and to show how these dynamics are inseparable from the community's experience of epistemic trauma, resistance, and at times, constraint.

This paper adopts a historical-hermeneutic approach in examining the development of Filipino philosophy, treating philosophizing as a historically situated practice rather than a purely abstract or doctrinal enterprise. Philosophical texts, debates, and intellectual orientations are read in relation to the concrete social, political, and institutional conditions under which they emerged, including the enduring effects of colonialism and authoritarian rule on philosophical education and discourse in the Philippines.

Within this historical-hermeneutic framework, the paper employs a symptomatic mode of reading, informed by critical social epistemology, particularly the works of José Medina and Kelly Agra, and by Feorillo Petronillo A. Demeterio III's genealogical analyses of Filipino philosophy. The possibility of reading Filipino philosophy as a "traumatized philosophy" was first explicitly named by Demeterio in his genealogical account of late twentieth-century Filipino philosophy. In "Thought and Socio-Politics: An Account of the Late Twentieth Century Filipino Philosophy" (2003), Demeterio identifies how the repression of socially engaged and critical philosophizing– particularly during the Martial Law period– produced lasting effects on the orientation, scope, and confidence of Filipino philosophical inquiry (Demeterio 2003, 601-61). More importantly, Demeterio does not treat this trauma as a closed diagnosis. Rather, he poses it as an open challenge: an invitation to further examine how historical injustices, political repression, and institutional constraints have shaped Filipino philosophy's epistemic condition, and how the effects of these experiences persist beyond their immediate historical contexts. It is this challenge that the present paper takes up, by offering a preliminary and symptomatic reading of Filipino philosophy as a traumatized epistemological community, as a symptomatic reading attends not only to explicit philosophical claims but also to recurring patterns of silence, repetition, blockage, and defensiveness that signal unresolved historical and epistemic tensions within a philosophical tradition.

In this sense, the concept of *"trauma"* is not invoked as a psychological diagnosis but as a critical-analytic and diagnostic metaphor. It names the historically produced disruptions in epistemic agency, critical engagement, and knowledge production that arise from sustained experiences of social and epistemic injustice. By reading Filipino philosophy symptomatically, this paper aims not to pathologize the tradition but to clarify how a sample of historical injustices has shaped its dominant orientations, internal debates, and recurring epistemic difficulties.

FILIPINO PHILOSOPHY AS AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL COMMUNITY

According to Lynn Hankinson Nelson (1993), epistemological communities can be identified in terms of shared knowledge, standards, and practices (148). There are many communities—sometimes overlapping, sometimes with a diverse kind of

subcommunities—that develop and share knowledge and standards, both on a macro and micro scale. As such, the study of epistemological communities would determine that it is not merely individuals who acquire and construct knowledge, but rather examines the process of knowing through a more collectivized lens. Thus, situating the 'community' as the primary epistemological agent (Nelson 1993, 123). When situating the community as the primary epistemological agent, we see that "my knowing" isn't necessarily just "my knowing" but rather derives from "our knowing," or the knowledge acquired, created, and situated within a certain epistemological community.

Context and historical situatedness play vital roles in forming and informing these communities, as well as in adopting and rejecting certain viewpoints, theories, and beliefs over time. Nelson adds:

> Studies of how knowledge is generated will begin from the histories, social relations, and practices of communities: from the contexts and activities in and through which ontologies are developed, standards of evidence and methodologies are adopted, theories are constructed, and others are abandoned or excluded (Nelson 1993, 126).

It can be seen here how the process of generating knowledge is not merely situated within a vacuum. It is informed by the flow of history, by the social relations that are found within a certain community, and by the practices that develop from such relations. In this process, knowledge is not merely knowledge for the sake of stating 'facts', but rather knowledge that is historically and socially informed, stemming from a certain community of knowers. As such, "our knowing" is not just "our knowing" in a given space and time, but rather "our knowing" informed by both its and our historical and societal context.

The primary functions of these epistemological communities may be categorized into two: acquiring and constructing. In the process of acquiring knowledge, knowledge that is built in a certain community may be seen as communal, interconnected, interdependent, and relative to larger blocks of things known and projects undertaken (Nelson 1993, 141). The knowledge that one acquires is always in relation to the knowledge situated within a community, and such knowledge is not merely found only within a community, but also in itself interconnected and interdependent with larger bodies of knowledge and other epistemological communities as well. Epistemological communities are not stand-alone collectives, but rather they may be seen as diverse and overlapping—a knower is not merely a part of a single epistemological community, she comes from multiple contexts and narratives, and thus is a member of a number of such communities, which are all diverse in nature, and also unstable as well. So, from this, the knowledge that is acquired is acquired intersectionally. In constructing knowledge, knowledge is also limited to the extent of a given context. If knowledge is acquired intersectionally, then how it is constructed can also be seen as something intersectional. The knowledge we build both shapes our experience as individuals into coherent and recoverable accounts and determines what we will count as evidence (Nelson 1993, 141). As much as we are informed by the knowledge situated within our certain communities, the

knowledge generated from such also informs the communities where we belong. The knowledge we construct affects how we interpret certain experiences and phenomena that we face, and it also informs how we accept or reject evidence, theories, and facts presented to us as collective knowers. In the most basic sense, these communities that we are a part of shape how we acquire and construct knowledge, how we contribute to the communal sphere of epistemological communities.

The epistemological communities are unstable, however. As much as acquiring and generating knowledge are informed by current trends and historical milieus, the construction and deconstruction of epistemological communities are also dynamic. They evolve, disband, realign, and cohere as interests and undertakings evolve and are abandoned, as new experiences, standards, and knowledges become possible (Nelson 1993, 148). As such, although held together by shared beliefs and knowledge, epistemological communities are continuously transforming and adapting as new phenomena come to light and as new contexts are developed. But, as much as these communities produce and acquire based on contexts, they may also be prone to censorship and epistemic deficits due to the same contexts.

Medina, in his book *The Epistemology of Resistance,* would argue that such epistemic deficits are the result of social injustices. He goes on to say:

> …as a result of social injustices, people are prone to have important epistemic deficits that have ramifications in multiple aspects of their life. In particular, people tend to lack knowledge of themselves and of others around them, and such a lack of personal and interpersonal knowledge affects their capacity to impart knowledge to others and to receive knowledge from others—their capacity to hear and be heard correctly (Medina 2013, 28).

We may see here how the experience of social injustices plays a key role not only in the way individuals live out their lives, but also in molding both how they think and how they do not think. Such an analysis may also be applied to the collective, to communities of thought as well.

Kelly Agra (2020), in her article on epistemic injustice, paralysis, and resistance, would situate philosophy as an institution that is part of an epistemic system. She would argue that, inasmuch as a philosophical institution is part of a larger epistemic structure, it is not spared from the pressure that economic and political structures exert on that structure (23-24). With this, philosophical institutions may also be seen as epistemological communities as well, which are affected by the structures (and other communities) that co-exist with them in a certain society.

In this sense, I would like to expand Agra's claims on philosophical institutions to that of philosophical traditions as well, more particularly, that of Filipino philosophy and philosophizing. In a broader sense, to read the developments of Filipino philosophy and the philosophizing situated within it as an epistemological community that both acquires and produces knowledge in adherence to its situatedness, and at the same time may also be prone to censorship and epistemic deficits due to the same situatedness.

ON "TRAUMA" AS AN EPISTEMIC AND HISTORICAL CATEGORY

When this paper speaks of Filipino philosophy as "traumatized," it does not refer to trauma in a clinical or psychological sense, nor does it attribute a unified psychic state to individual Filipino philosophers. Rather, "trauma" is employed as a historical and epistemic category that captures the cumulative effects of social injustice, colonial domination, and political repression on the conditions of philosophical inquiry in the Philippines.

Understood in this way, trauma refers to the structural disruption of an epistemological community's capacity to critically inquire, contest, and develop its own philosophical orientations. Colonial education systems, the privileging of foreign intellectual traditions, the concentration of philosophical training within specific institutions, and the repression of critical discourse during periods such as Martial Law have not merely shaped the content of Filipino philosophy; they have also affected how philosophy is practiced, what questions are deemed legitimate, and which forms of critique are encouraged or discouraged.

Read symptomatically, these historical conditions manifest in recurring epistemic patterns– such as epistemic paralysis, defensive resistance to unfamiliar modes of inquiry, and persistent debates over the legitimacy and possibility of Filipino philosophy itself. These phenomena are not treated here as individual failures or intellectual shortcomings, but as symptoms of unresolved historical tensions within Filipino philosophy as an epistemological community. To describe Filipino philosophy as "traumatized" is thus to offer a diagnostic claim: that its contemporary struggles cannot be fully understood apart from the historical injustices that have shaped its epistemic formation and continue to inform its present orientations.

CLAIMS & NARRATIVES ON A 'TRAUMATIZED' FILIPINO PHILOSOPHY

Stemming from Medina's claim that epistemic deficits are a result of societal injustices, knowledge production and acquisition (and the hindering of it) may also come from the aftermath of such injustices. In the context of Philippine History, we may see numerous examples and discussions on these injustices situated within various aspects of Philippine society. As these different aspects of Philippine society are intertwined with each other, the development of philosophical thought in the Philippines is also included in this entanglement.

Looking back at attempts to write a comprehensive history of Filipino Philosophy and at problematizing such attempts, we see how Filipino philosophers would preoccupy themselves with discussions of various stages of philosophizing in the country's history, particularly the injustices experienced at each stage. It would be seen in their narratives how such injustices (in)directly affected the way Filipinos attempted to think, to philosophize, as well as the contents and preoccupations of such

attempts. Their preoccupations would usually revolve around three dominant themes: first is that of a history of Philosophy in the Philippines that has yet to be written, second is the discussion on the groundlessness of Filipino culture and identity, and third, which may be dubbed as the root of the Filipino's (and our philosophizing's) discontent, the effects of colonization and the disembodied consciousness that comes with it.

Leo Cullum, in his article, "Notes for a History of Philosophy in the Philippines" (1959), would discuss how there are resemblances that may be found in how the history of philosophy developed in Latin America, Spain, and the Philippines, but unlike Latin America, the Philippines still retained their close ties with Spain even after gaining independence, whereas Latin America looked to France for their intellectual leadership (454). Attempts have been made by philosophers to tackle its periodization, and the dominant themes that may be highlighted from every period, such as the versions of Abulad (1988, 1-13), Nakpil-Zialcita (1983), Co (2009, 28-46), and Demeterio (2013, 186-215). But until recently, a systematic history of philosophy in the Philippines has yet to be written.

Looking back at how historicity is vital in shaping the knowledge acquisition and production of communities, the lack of a comprehensively written history also affected how philosophers, and Filipinos in general, viewed culture and identity. Abulad, in *Options for a Filipino Philosophy* (1984), would claim that the Philippines is still in search of its identity due to its complicated history (17) and would further go on to claim that the Philippines has nothing yet to be proud of to call its own (Abulad 1986, 40). Although one can view this as a challenge to prove Abulad otherwise, the groundlessness of Filipino culture and identity may prove to be a double-edged sword. On one hand, the generation of philosophers where Abulad is situated would view it as an opportunity for the budding Filipino philosophy to be open to possibilities and not restricted in terms of fixed themes— that being root-less, or having no stable ground to settle on opens up FP to multiple possibilities, and multiple opportunities for Filipino philosophers to mold it from scratch—but on the other hand, it may also be seen as a lack of roots, of something to ground ourselves on. This may be seen by the upward trend of philosophers attempting to create expositions and appropriations of Filipino cultural values, situating themselves more as ethnographers and anthropologists (Demeterio 2003, 45-73). We may garner from the previous discussion on epistemological communities how history, culture, and identity play significant roles in molding the kind of knowledge that may be produced, acquired, censored, and hindered in a given community. All these discussions on the problematics of Philippine history and culture, and also of how it has affected the development of Filipino philosophy, may all boil down to a single point: that of the trauma brought about by colonization and of its echoing repercussions in Philippine history, and how such trauma proved to be a significant factor in the disembodied consciousness of the Filipino and its philosophical tradition.

In her essay *The Project of Feminist Epistemology: Perspectives from a Nonwestern Feminist* (1989), Narayan discusses the ambivalent notion of epistemic advantage when it comes to oppressed groups that are inhabiting a multiplicity of contexts. An example of this would be colonization—the dominated groups need to adjust to the culture and language of a dominant group (256-272). In this powerplay,

the dominated (oppressed) groups can be seen to have "epistemic advantage" as they are seen to be straddling two different worlds (and in connection, two different cultures, languages, practices, identities, etc.) There is an epistemic advantage to it in the guise of accessibility and immersion, although this positionality can be cause for dissonance in the individual or may be seen as a rift, or in the extremes, a feeling of rootlessness or groundlessness in terms of identity and context.

Colonization in itself plays one of the most vital roles in forming and developing the kind of philosophizing that Filipinos have today. Due to centuries of colonization, being oppressed by one colonizer after the other, Filipinos have developed a national inferiority complex and have come to be like puppies running after their owners (Mercado 2005, 11-26), presumably being unable to think for themselves and being highly dependent on foreign standards of thinking. In Filipino philosophy, this may be manifested in the analysis of Demeterio (2014) of the discourse on the "exposition of foreign theories" as the top discourse of leading Filipino philosophers in the country, stating that 46% of these scholars produce this kind of discourse, as this was the earliest and most common form of philosophical research and publication that such philosophers engaged in (194). We may observe how traces of the colonial mindset present themselves in the analysis of the leading academic discourses of our own Filipino philosophers, and with it the realization that the dominant consciousness that prevails is one that views our own thoughts and ideas as inferior to those of foreign ones.

Based on these discussions on the historical, colonial, and cultural contexts of Filipino philosophy, we may be able to determine how, when read as an epistemological community, this philosophical tradition has undergone numerous societal injustices during its attempted advancements through time. And the trauma brought about by such injustices may lead to important epistemic deficits in Filipino philosophy's progression, which such manifestations can be further understood by means of looking into the possible epistemic symptoms of a "traumatized" philosophy and the corresponding examples of their ambivalent manifestations in the history of Filipino Philosophy.

THE POSSIBLE SYMPTOMS OF A TRAUMATIZED PHILOSOPHY

In this sense, I highlight the concept of Epistemic Resistance vis-à-vis that of Epistemic Paralysis and their possible impacts in molding an epistemological community. With this, I elucidate the ambivalence of such concepts and some corresponding examples of their manifestations in the history of Filipino Philosophy to further the argument of dubbing Filipino Philosophy as a "traumatized" epistemological community.

On Epistemic Resistance

Medina views resistance in a two-fold manner: that of exerting oneself so as to counteract or defeat; and that of withstanding the force or effect of something (Medina 2013, 48). In epistemology, according to Medina, there are positive and negative epistemic resistances, and these two sides of resistance can either contribute to the

further spread of epistemic oppression or be used to fight it. On the negative side, resistance can be seen as fostering a stubbornness that is hard to shake and a difficulty in being convinced to believe and open oneself to a variety of ideas. This stubbornness tends to be a major obstacle in an individual's attempt to expand their ability to know and share knowledge (Medina 2013, 50). On the positive side, resistance can also be seen as something helpful in an individual's attempt to unmask and expose personal biases—both one's own and those of others—especially biases that are attuned towards questionable trends and practices. With this positive view of resistance, it can be concluded that it is also an important mechanism for fighting epistemic injustices and the obstacles they entail that persist in social reality. Here we see how the notion of resistance can be seen as both a dragging and an emancipatory tool for the individual, and possibly, for the collective as well.

From this dualistic lens, it can be seen that resistance is not just a passive phenomenon but that it also entails a certain amount of responsibility to individuals who practice it. This agrees with Medina's claim that resistance is not just something that happens to us, but rather it is in fact a fundamental thing that we do (or fail to do) and for which we have the imperative to recognize the responsibility attached to it (Medina 2013, 16).

On Epistemic Paralysis

Contextualizing it in the Philippine setting, in resisting to shy away from what is deemed to be safe and familiar, of what is easier to question, there is an apparent 'distrust' in our way of knowing, in how we philosophize. This kind of resistance may manifest itself in terms of epistemic paralysis, or what Kelly Agra would define as "the loss of the ability to know or think in a certain way because of the disconnection between what is received as the 'correct' way of knowing or thinking and what one has organically practiced, developed, and/or experienced (Agra 2020, 34)." Epistemic paralysis in this sense may either be partial or total, depending on the experience of the subject or the collective. We may garner here how epistemic paralysis may occur when one experiences a disparity in what one has gotten used to doing or thinking as opposed to the accepted way of knowing in their given contexts.

In the history of Filipino philosophy, we may observe some manifestations of this dualistic interpretation of epistemic resistance—that of both its stubborn and emancipatory practice— when our philosophers are placed in dilemmas inconsistent to their "usual" way of knowing, and how things are "usually" done when it comes to their respective philosophical institutions, and their way of philosophizing in general.

One well-known example of this would be the shift of philosophizing in the country from the dominance of Aristotelian-Thomistic thought to a wider horizon of philosophical ideas.

In attempts to write on the history of philosophy in the Philippines, it can be seen that there is a prevailing "Neo-Scholasticism" that coincides with the ideas brought back to the Philippines upon the return of Emerita Quito and the other "first generation" of Filipino philosophers fresh from their studies abroad. Emmanuel de Leon (2019) labeled this stage of philosophy in the Philippines as "post-scholasticism" (187), as in accordance to Cullum's research, the Philippines never really transcended

the post-scholastic era then, as there were several centuries of scholasticism that prevailed in the country before entering its post-scholasticism era, but in Latin America and Spain, after their philosophical thought's preoccupation with scholasticism, they shifted to modern philosophy where they were introduced to other popular philosophers in the West such as the likes of Descartes and Condillac (Cullum 1959, 448-460). It may be garnered from this how the existence of philosophy in each country is also affected by the course of its history. In reading Filipino Philosophy as an epistemological community, we catch a glimpse here of how the dominant modes of thinking and of philosophizing were already embedded in the consciousness of Filipino scholars back then. Because of the prevailing consciousness that is inclined to a singular form of discourse, philosophical thought in the country found it difficult to depart and eventually branch out from its initial Aristotelian-Thomistic leanings, thus cultivating a kind of epistemic resistance that rests in preserving its dogmatic slumber.

Discussions of Filipino philosophy's early development frequently point to this dominance of Aristotelian-Thomistic or neo-scholastic thought, particularly during the Spanish and early American colonial periods. As Cullum's mid-twentieth-century account makes clear, this dominance should be understood not simply as a philosophical preference but as the result of concrete historical and institutional conditions, most notably the concentration of philosophy education within Catholic seminaries and ecclesiastical institutions (Cullum 1959, 448-460).

Historically, Neo-Scholasticism served as the primary philosophical language through which Filipino scholars were trained to think, argue, and teach philosophy. This historical inheritance shaped not only the content of philosophical instruction but also the epistemic habits of the emerging philosophical community– habits concerning authority, legitimacy, and the boundaries of acceptable inquiry (Quito 1983). In this sense, the issue is not whether Neo-Scholasticism remains dominant in contemporary Filipino philosophy, but how its long institutional entrenchment produced enduring epistemic dispositions that proved difficult to unsettle (de Leon 2019).

From a symptomatic perspective, this inheritance may be read as an early site of epistemic resistance that was initially stabilizing but later became constraining. The reliance on a singular, authoritative mode of philosophizing fostered intellectual continuity and coherence, yet it also limited the community's capacity to readily engage with alternative philosophical traditions as these became available (Demeterio 2003, 45-73). What emerges here is not a simple narrative of stagnation, but a historically intelligible pattern in which epistemic security gradually hardened into epistemic defensiveness– a pattern whose effects would surface more sharply in later periods of philosophical transition (Agra 2020, 28-44).

Another manifestation of this epistemic resistance can be seen in the fate of Critical Filipino Philosophy and the rough journey it has undergone. Due to being colonized, the habit of obedience and submission was embedded in the consciousness of Filipinos. Until the present time, we may see the prevalence of said consciousness, like how Filipinos may be characterized by their preference of indirectly addressing issues and problems and submitting in order to keep the peace. This practice may also be a result of what was pointed out earlier as a lack of confidence in one's own ability to know, understand, and share one's own take on issues, trends, and topics for conversation. We may garner how this internal distrust also manifests itself in the

(under)development of Filipino philosophizing during the early '60s to the late '70s, more specifically, that of its critical aspect.

Although censorship and the spread of pro-government propaganda were strong during the Martial Law era, intellectual scholarship still bloomed. Dubbed as "The Long 70s" by the historian Resil Mojares, he saw how the academic landscape of the Philippines flourished, especially in such disciplines inclined to heed the call of "nationalism" and "development" during that time (Mojares 2017, 145). Mojares adds:

> The paradox of this period is that, beyond its political stereotyping as "the dark years of the dictatorship", it is in fact one of the most intellectually intense periods in Philippine history…[t]he martial law period and its aftermath were productive for scholarship as well. How scholarship was implicated in an authoritarian regime cannot be reduced to a simple binary. The Marcos government bannered the themes of "nationalism" and "development"…[t]here was space for independent work that did not directly threaten the state… [and] the times primed the intertwined interests in the local, the popular, and the indigenous (Mojares 2017, 145-146).

In doing philosophy in the Philippines, two distinct discourses rose during these times: firstly, the attempt of philosophy to contribute to the call of nationalism at that time, or better known as Filipino philosophizing that focused on unearthing and interpreting the Filipino identity and worldview, and secondly, that of the rise of Critical Filipino Philosophy, or philosophy that critically engaged with society. But such attempts to develop the critical aspect of Filipino philosophizing were nipped in the bud. Looking back at the history of the development of Filipino philosophical thought, it can be seen that it was only around the '60s to the 70's wherein such philosophizing became critical and engaged with society and reality, as most of its preoccupation since the country was colonized by Spain was of Aristotelian-Thomistic thought *ex cathedra* and logic (Co 2009). Demeterio would discuss this phenomenon further by saying that:

> [F]ilipino Philosophy only started to venture into the realm of politics, society, history, and economics, and praxeology in general, during the emergence of its critical mode. When this youthful experimentation was cruelly repressed, the trauma delivered affected the overall characteristic of Filipino philosophy and inaugurated its present-day characteristic disengagement with the Philippine reality (Demeterio 2003, 60-61).

We see here how, during the late 70s, especially with the proclamation of Martial Law, while the call towards nationalism and identity strengthened as the preoccupation of our philosophers, its critical aspect suffered, due to the culture of silence (and being silenced) that prevailed. With the social injustices that Philippine society encountered during that time, going back to Medina's claim, we may see here how the Filipinos were, in fact, prone to suffer important epistemic deficits, not only

in *what* they are thinking, but also in *how* they are thinking, as may be seen from the prevalent philosophical discourses during the late 70s. At the same time, this phenomenon may also be seen as a means to pause. Although critical Filipino philosophy weakened during that time, the Filipino philosophers soon realized that there is a need to broaden the scope of their philosophizing, especially in the aspect of how philosophy may engage with social realities (Quito 1986, 1-11; Quito 2002, 38-45; Quito 2014, 4-19).

And lastly, in the most general sense, this same epistemic distrust, brought about by a stubborn resistance, may also manifest itself in the unending debates surrounding the legitimacy of Filipino philosophy, including its contents, methods, and existence. Agra would go on to explain this phenomenon in the context of epistemic communities as follows:

> "…within the context of an epistemic community, this distrust also created divisions among epistemic agents by building suspicion towards one another's epistemic agency. This is, for instance, the case when Filipino philosophy scholars undervalue their fellow Filipino philosophy scholars and overvalue Western philosophy scholars not on the basis of scholarship but as an effect of an internalized philosophical position that privileges the Western, white, and male identity in the judgement of philosophical prowess (Agra 2009, 36)."

We may see here how, instead of moving forward and actually doing philosophy, there is still that distinct characteristic of Filipino philosophy scholars to first question the very existence and legitimacy of where they *are* coming from, and where they *should* be coming from. This, I think, is one of the most significant manifestations of looking at Filipino philosophy as a traumatized epistemological community—that the pinnacle of our philosophers' distrust in *what* and *how* they know makes them question even the authenticity of their own selves and their abilities to think and to philosophize.

This thought culminates in one of the most persistent manifestations of epistemic trauma within Filipino philosophy: the recurring debates surrounding its legitimacy— debates that question not only the content and methods of Filipino philosophizing but its very existence as philosophy. These debates are not merely abstract theoretical disagreements; read symptomatically, they function as sites where deeper epistemic distrust within the philosophical community becomes visible.

Historically, questions concerning the legitimacy of Filipino philosophy emerged alongside attempts to articulate philosophy in relation to Philippine social realities. Early efforts to philosophize in vernacular languages, to engage indigenous concepts, or to situate philosophy within nationalist and postcolonial frameworks were frequently met with skepticism regarding their philosophical rigor (Quito 1983). Such skepticism was not always unfounded; critical exchange is a constitutive feature of philosophical practice. However, what distinguishes these legitimacy debates is the degree to which critique often

targeted not specific arguments, but the epistemic standing of Filipino philosophy itself– whether it could count as philosophy at all.

From the perspective of epistemic communities, this pattern reflects more than healthy disagreement. As Medina argues, epistemic injustice can take the form of distrust directed toward one's own epistemic agency or that of closely situated peers, especially under conditions shaped by long histories of domination (Medina 2013, 15-35). Within Filipino philosophy, this distrust has frequently manifested as a tendency to overvalue Western philosophical traditions as the implicit standard of legitimacy while subjecting Filipino philosophical work to heightened scrutiny. The result is an asymmetrical epistemic economy in which Filipino philosophers are required to repeatedly justify their philosophical status before substantive engagement can occur.

Agra's analysis of epistemic paralysis within epistemic communities further clarifies this phenomenon. She argues that internalized epistemic hierarchies can fracture epistemic communities by generating suspicion among epistemic agents, thereby undermining conditions for collective inquiry (Agra 2020, 28-44). In the context of Filipino philosophy, this fracture becomes evident when philosophers marginalize approaches that fall outside dominant institutional, linguistic, or methodological norms—such as feminist philosophy, philosophy written in Filipino languages, or philosophizing emerging from regional or non-elite academic contexts. Rather than being treated as interlocutors within a shared philosophical project, such approaches are often positioned as preliminarily deficient or philosophically suspect.

These dynamics also blur the line between healthy critique and traumatizing epistemic exchange. Healthy critique presupposes a baseline recognition of one's interlocutors as legitimate epistemic agents, even amid disagreement. Traumatizing exchange, by contrast, calls this legitimacy into question, compelling philosophers to defend their right to philosophize before they can meaningfully participate in philosophical discourse. Over time, repeated exposure to such exchanges cultivates epistemic defensiveness and contributes to the persistence of legitimacy debates as a dominant preoccupation of Filipino philosophy.

Read in this light, the recurring question "Is there Filipino philosophy?" functions less as an open philosophical inquiry and more as a symptom of unresolved epistemic injury. Rather than serving as a generative starting point, the question often arrests philosophical movement by redirecting intellectual energy toward self-justification. This pattern helps explain why Filipino philosophy repeatedly circles back to issues of identity, definition, and legitimacy, even as institutional and scholarly conditions for philosophical production have expanded in the twenty-first century.

To characterize Filipino philosophy as a traumatized epistemological community, then, is not to deny its critical vitality or ongoing resistance. Rather, it is to name the enduring epistemic condition in which distrust– shaped by colonial hierarchies, authoritarian repression, and internalized standards of legitimacy– continues to structure philosophical interaction. The task of philosophical healing, in this context, does not lie in abandoning critique, but in

reconfiguring the conditions under which critique occurs: from suspicion toward epistemic solidarity, from defensive gatekeeping toward plural and dialogical philosophizing.

CONCLUSION

This paper offers a preliminary, symptomatic reading of Filipino philosophy as a traumatized epistemological community. From its colonial beginnings to its encounters with more contemporary forms of social and epistemic injustice, Filipino philosophy may be understood as having developed under conditions that not only constrained philosophical production but also shaped enduring epistemic dispositions within the philosophical community itself. Read historically, these conditions help explain why certain forms of epistemic resistance– initially adaptive and stabilizing– have at times hardened into self-sabotaging tendencies that frustrate philosophical movement rather than enable it.

To analyze the symptoms of a traumatized philosophy is, admittedly, both alarming and potentially therapeutic. It is alarming insofar as such analysis confronts us with the recognition that the remnants of injustice–social, political, and epistemic– do not simply dissipate with historical transition. Trauma does not heal overnight, and the stubborn resistance that emerges from it can just as easily reproduce frustration, defensiveness, and paralysis as it can inspire pathways forward. The persistence of legitimacy debates, epistemic distrust, and internal marginalization within Filipino philosophy suggests that unresolved historical injuries continue to structure contemporary philosophical interaction.

Yet this same analytic gesture may also be understood as therapeutic–not in a clinical or sentimental sense, but in a philosophical one. By attempting to make sense of what Filipino philosophy has undergone, and by bringing to light how these experiences have shaped the ways in which ideas are constructed, deconstructed, circulated, repressed, and developed, this preliminary reading opens a space for reflection on what might come next. Naming trauma and its symptoms does not resolve them, but it does render them intelligible, and in doing so creates the possibility of a more deliberate epistemic response rather than unconscious repetition.

In this light, epistemic resistance need not be understood solely as an obstacle to philosophical development. That same stubbornness which has, at times, manifested as defensiveness or paralysis may also be read otherwise– as a refusal to give up despite a distressing past, a frustrating present, and the overwhelming demands placed upon a philosophical community still negotiating its conditions of possibility. The question, then, is not whether Filipino philosophy should abandon this stubbornness, but how it might be reoriented away from self-sabotage and toward more generative forms of philosophical engagement.

This paper does not claim to provide an exhaustive account of Filipino philosophy's traumas or symptoms. The sites examined here– colonial institutional inheritance, the repression of critical philosophizing under Martial Law, and the persistence of legitimacy debates– are offered as illustrative rather than definitive. As a preliminary reading, the aim has been diagnostic rather than prescriptive: to clarify

the epistemic conditions that shape philosophical practice so that future work might address them more deliberately.

A final reminder follows from this diagnosis: Filipino philosophers may not be responsible for the traumas that have shaped their epistemic inheritance, nor for the historical injustices that helped produce them, but they do remain responsible for how these inheritances are taken up, negotiated, and transformed. The task ahead is neither simple nor guaranteed, but it is unavoidable. To move forward as a philosophical community requires sustained reflection on how Filipino philosophy might continue to resist injustice without reproducing the epistemic wounds from which that resistance emerged, and to name these injustices is the first step in forging pathways towards possible healing.

REFERENCES

Abulad, Romualdo E. 1984. "Options for a Filipino Philosophy." *Karunungan* 1: 17 – 31.

Agra, Kelly Louise Rexzy. 2020. "Epistemic Injustice, Epistemic Paralysis, and Epistemic Resistance: A (Feminist) Liberatory Approach to Epistemology." *Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy* 14 (1): 28-44.

Co, Alfredo P. 2009. "Doing Philosophy in the Philippines: Fifty Years Ago, Fifty Years from Now." In *Across the Philosophical Silk Road: A Festschrift in Honor of Alfredo P. C*o, Vol. VI, 49–62. Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House.

_____. 2009. "In the Beginning… A Petit Personal Historical Narrative of the Beginning of Philosophy in the Philippines." In *Doing Philosophy in the Philippines and Other Essays*, 28-46. Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House.

Cullum, Leo A. 1959. "Notes for a History of Philosophy in the Philippines." *Philippine Studies* 7, (4): 448-460.

Demeterio, Feorillo Petronillo A., III. "Thought and Socio-Politics: An Account of the Late Twentieth Century Filipino Philosophy." HINGOWA: The Holy Rosary Seminary Journal 8, no. 2 (2003): 45-73.

_____.2013. "Status and Directions for 'Filipino Philosophy' in Zialcita, Timbreza, Quito, Abulad, Mabaquiao, Gripaldo, and Co*." Φιλοσοφία: International Journal of Philosophy* 14, (2): 186-215.

de Leon, Emmanuel. 2019. *Mga Tomasino sa Pilosopiyang Filipino*. Lungsod ng Maynila: Aklat ng Bayan.

Medina, José. 2013. *The Epistemology of Resistance*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Mojares, Resil B. 2017. *Interrogations in Philippine Cultural History*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.

Narayan, Uma. 1989. "The Project of Feminist Epistemology: Perspectives from a Nonwestern Feminist." In *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*. Edited by Alison M. Jaggar and Susan R. Bordo. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Nelson, Lynn Hankinson. 1993. "Epistemological Communities." In *Feminist Epistemologies*. Edited by Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter. New York: Routledge.

Quito, Emerita S. 1983. *The State of Philosophy in the Philippines*. Manila: De La Salle University Research Center.

_____. 1986. "Pulong-Isip: Meeting of Filipino Minds." *Karunungan* 3: 1-11.

_____. 2014. "The Role of the Philosopher as Social Thinker and Critic, Revisited." *Suri* 2 (2): 4-19.