

Commentary/Essay

**THE CRITICAL ROLE OF PHILOSOPHY
IN THE FUTURE OF THE PHILIPPINES¹**

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As we face an uncertain future for our country, philosophers – the so-called lovers of wisdom - are tasked to revisit our role in shaping our country's future and molding the consciousness of our people, especially the young. In this paper, I focus on the evolution of philosophy in the Philippines, what we have done as teachers and philosophers in and for the academe, and what else we need to do not only for the future of philosophy in our country but for the future of our country as well. In this last point, I stress that we need to contribute to shaping the critical consciousness of our people as our contribution to nation-building. That must be the future of philosophy in the Philippines and its critical role in the future of our beloved country.

Keywords: Critical consciousness, critical thinking, colonization, Filipino philosophy, philosophy in the Philippines.

INTRODUCTION

Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle were instrumental in shaping the culture and worldview not only of the Greeks but of the entire human civilization. Lao Tzu and Confucius shaped Chinese society, and their influence extended to the rest of Asia and the world. The Buddha initiated a philosophy and religion that is practiced by millions all over the world. The French philosophers of the 18th century inspired the common people with their revolutionary ideas and prepared them to fight against injustices. Even our heroes like Rizal inspired us with their ideas of freedom to fight against the colonizers. These and many others are examples of philosophers' relevance in molding our worldviews and society. It is not difficult to argue for the role of philosophy in shaping the mind and consciousness of people. Philosophical ideas inspire people to act, fight for their rights, uphold the truth and promote justice.

Our present milieu is marred by falsehoods and relativism. Fake news and trolls proliferate in social media; violence and injustice are just some of the societal concerns that must be constantly and thoughtfully addressed. However, as we address and

confront these issues, we must be critically minded, and this is where philosophy, as in the past, must play a significant role. In this paper, first, I focus on the evolution of philosophy in the Philippines as an academic discipline; I then discuss what we are doing as teachers and academicians, and scholars in and for the academe, and finally, I discuss what we need to do not only for the future of philosophy in our country but for the future of our country as well.

REVISITING THE PAST: THE EVOLUTION OF PHILOSOPHY AS AN ACADEMIC COURSE

Philosophy has gone a long way in our country. Perhaps, together with the coming of Christianity, is the germination of philosophy in the Philippines. Education, in general, and philosophy, in particular, cannot be separated from the development of Christianity in the country (See Jove S. Aguas 2019). Not that we never had a philosophical or intellectual encounter with traders and migrants from China, India, and nearby countries, but the Spanish colonizers brought philosophy as an academic discipline.

The first university to offer philosophy as a course is the University of Santo Tomas. Although it is claimed that the oldest school established in the Philippines is the Colegio de San Ildefonso, established in 1595 by the Spanish Jesuits. The University of San Carlos² claims to have originated from the Colegio de San Ildefonso. The University of Santo Tomas was established in 1611 by the third Archbishop of Manila, Miguel de Benevidez, a Dominican priest. It was run by the Dominicans and was first established as a seminary named Colegio de Nuestra Senora del Santisimo Rosario, offering philosophy and theology courses for the priesthood. Hence when it opened in 1611, philosophy was one of the significant courses it offered (See Josefina Lim Pe 1973, 88-89).

As a subject in the Liberal Arts curriculum, philosophy eventually became a specialized course giving birth in 1645 to a separate Faculty of Scholastic Philosophy. This faculty was initially intended for seminarians, but it also had many lay students. However, the Faculty of Scholastic Philosophy curricula were light: two years for a bachelor's degree, one additional year for a licentiate, and a fourth year for a doctoral degree with a successfully defended doctoral thesis. It was only in 1934 that the American colonial government recognized these programs. At present, all these four years are equivalent to a college degree in philosophy. In 1896 philosophy courses became part of the college called the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters. General philosophy for lay students and Scholastic Philosophy for seminarians were offered (Lim Pe 1973, 88-89). Being founded by the Spaniards, it was European in orientation and initiated the highly academic and Renaissance-inspired philosophy degree, which was heavy on the humanities; it offered all the traditional branches of philosophy like logic, metaphysics, psychology, epistemology, cosmology, ethics, and theodicy. In addition to these subjects, students must learn the classical languages of Greek and Latin (Emerita Quito 1983, 15).

In 1859, another Catholic university was founded, the Ateneo de Manila University, run by the Jesuits. It followed the same curriculum with more or less the

requirements as that of the University of Santo Tomas but without Greek (Quito 1983, 18). In 1908 the non-sectarian state university, the University of the Philippines, was founded. It offered a philosophy curriculum different from the Renaissance model but based on the Anglo-American model, which leaned heavily on the pragmatic side and emphasized the Logico-Analytic and Linguistic traditions without the classical languages of Latin and Greek (Quito 1983, 23). In 1911 another Catholic university was established, the De La Salle University, but it only started offering formal philosophy degrees in 1975. However, its post-war curriculum in Commerce and Liberal Arts included the entire range of philosophy grounded on Thomism (Quito 1983, 26). Other colleges and universities that offer philosophy programs up to the graduate levels after the war are Silliman University, Berchmans College and San Carlos University in the Visayas, Adamson University, Far Eastern University, and Saint Louis University in Luzon.

Aside from these universities, philosophy was offered in the seminaries or formations houses for the priesthood scattered all over the country as a preparatory course for the priesthood. Ecclesiastical bachelor's degree in Philosophy similar to that of the University of Santo Tomas was offered in various seminaries, like the Holy Rosary Major Seminary in Bicol and the other Diocesan or Archdiocesan seminaries in the entire country. Other seminaries and formation houses offer master's degrees, like the San Jose Seminary, Christ the King Mission/Divine Word Seminary, Maryhurst Seminary, and Sacred Heart Novitiate.

Today, the seminaries and formation houses continue to carry and uphold philosophy as an academic degree course because it is a pre-requisite course for theology and, consequently, for the priesthood. Universities and colleges also offer philosophy degrees, from bachelor to the graduate level. Others offer philosophy subjects only as part of the curriculum of other courses, and they are now threatened of being substituted for other science, technical or business subjects. The majority of universities and colleges that offer philosophy as part of the curriculum are cutting the academic units which were originally intended for philosophy. In some cases, philosophy is subsumed or integrated into other subjects, like those in the social sciences or humanities. Thus, it is sometimes the case that philosophy becomes part of the other disciplines instead of being an independent discipline.

The prominent universities and colleges which were earlier mentioned continue to offer degrees in philosophy. Among these universities, different trends and interests or leanings emerged in Philosophy. At the University of Santo Tomas, philosophy, while traditionally based on Thomism, the curriculum is now more open to other schools of thought, both eastern and western. Ateneo de Manila University traditionally leans more on the phenomenological and existential traditions; the University of the Philippines continues the Logico-Analytic and Linguistic traditions. The rest, like De La Salle University, have a more eclectic approach to philosophy and are open to different schools of thought and traditions, both western and eastern.

With the full germination and growth of philosophy as an academic discipline, Filipinos engaged in research and publications. As early as 1774, there were already Filipino philosophical writings and publications. Rolando Gripaldo (2000), in his critical bibliography on Filipino philosophy, compiled the titles of different

publications of Filipinos on various themes and topics from 1774 up to 2002; these include books, articles, graduate research, and theses/dissertations, and reviews.

THE PRESENT: FORMATION OF PHILOSOPHICAL LINKAGES AND ASSOCIATIONS

In the early 1970s, teachers and professors of philosophy started linking and forming various associations. In 1972, a group of philosophy teachers from the University of Santo Tomas, headed by Dr. Alfredo Co, and other schools in the University Belt founded the Philosophy Circle of the Philippines (PCP). The PCP at present is composed mainly of students with few professors who serve as officers and set the direction for the Circle. In 1973, the Philosophical Association of the Philippines (PAP) was established to organize philosophy teachers from different parts of the country, initially from Manila. From several informal conversations with some of the first members of the PAP, like Prof. Amable Tuibeo of Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP), and the late Mr. Roger Obusan of UST, who used to sell old philosophy books during PAP conferences and seminars, I gathered that the first president of PAP was Dr. Ramon Reyes of Ateneo de Manila University, while Dr. Jorge Revilla of the University of the East served as its Executive Director. Its membership is open to anyone teaching philosophy, with or without a degree in Philosophy, and summer conferences are held to help teachers of philosophy develop their course syllabi, especially in the teaching of Logic, Ethics, and Philosophy of Man (Alfredo Co 1992). PAP is the first philosophy association in the Philippines to be a member of the *Federation Internationale des Societes de Philosophie* (FISP), becoming a member in 2013 during the World Congress of Philosophy in Athens. In 1979, some members of the PAP from the Visayas and Mindanao regions organized themselves and established the Philosophical Association of the Visayas and Mindanao (PHAVISMINDA).

Aside from these three earlier established associations, there are several philosophical associations in the Philippines with different types of membership and activities. There is the Philippine Academy of Philosophical Research (PAPR), founded by Dr. Emerita S. Quito in 1983, with De La Salle University as its home base (Co, 1992). This group is exclusive to senior professors and a member of the FISP. In 1997, the Philippine National Philosophical Research Society (PNPRS) was primarily established by DLSU professors headed by Dr. Rolando M. Gripaldo. It is an association of philosophy professors, mainly from Manila schools. The PNPRS publishes the philosophical journal *Philosophia*. In 2003, the Philosophical Association of Northern Luzon (PANL), an association of philosophy professors from the northern part of the country, was established. There are many other regional philosophical organizations or societies all over the country. *Pagarubangan*, an association of philosophy teachers and students in the Cagayan region, was established in 2010. The Social Ethics Society, an organization of philosophy teachers, scholars, and graduate students in Mindanao, was established in 2010. *Isabuhay, Saliksikin, at Ibigin ang Pilosopiya* (ISIP) based in Bulacan was established in 2013. The Iloilo Philosophical Association (IPA) in Western Visayas was established in 2013. I am

sure some other philosophical associations and societies are thriving that are not included in this list.

Since 2010, there were already conversations to form a federation of philosophy associations in the Philippines. The late Dr. Rolando M. Gripaldo has brought up and passionately argued for its creation. Although it temporarily fizzled out, forming a federation of all philosophy associations in the Philippines was revived during the World Congress of Philosophy in Beijing in 2018. In the 2018 WCP, the PAP held its first session in the WCP. Some Filipino delegates in that WCP were inspired by the national federations of philosophy in other countries, like the APA of Australia. In their conversations, Dr. Jove Jim S. Aguas and Dr. Jeremiah Joaquin concretized the plans to form a federation of philosophy associations in the Philippines. They shared this vision with the other Filipino delegates, Dr. Juan Rafael Macaranas, Dr. Fleurdeliz Altez-Albela, Fr. Dennis Edralin, Dr. Virgilio Rivas, and Mr. Jason Jimenez. Somehow, the conversations during the WCP, the first session of PAP in the WCP, and its partnership with the Philosophy and Religion Society of Thailand served as a catalyst in realizing this vision.

The 2017 PAP National Conference, held on April 6-8, 2017, at Saint Louis University, Baguio City, somehow anticipated the creation of a federation or union. The PAP National Conference was held in cooperation with the Philosophical Association of Northern Luzon (PANL), Philosophical Association of Visayas and Mindanao (PHAVISMINDA), Pagarubangan--Region 2, Isabuhay, Saliksikin, at Ibigin ang Pilosopiya (ISIP), Iloilo Philosophical Association (IPA), and Social Ethics Society (SES).

In November 2018, during the PAP Conference on Feminism held at the Angeles University, an initial meeting of several philosophy associations and society representatives was held. The name USAPP, or Union of Societies and Associations of Philosophy in the Philippines, was suggested by Dr. Hazel Biana. The initial structure of the USAPP was formed, and the first USAPP Summit was set. In May 2019, the First Summit of USAPP was held in Dumaguete at Silliman University in conjunction with the National Conference of the PHAVISMINDA headed by Dr. Ruby Suazo. In 2021, in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, the incorporators of USAPP signed the Article of Incorporation of USAPP. Atty. Mark Gil Ramolete prepared and processed the USAPP SEC Registration and sent the document to be signed by the incorporators through courier services. This process was under the leadership of Dr. Danilo Alterado. With the establishment and incorporation of USAPP, we envisioned philosophy in the Philippines to be professionalized, internationalized, and inclusivized.

Indeed, we are witnessing a strong and steady vitality of philosophy in the Philippines today. Despite the decreasing number of academic units for philosophy subjects that threaten philosophy as a course and the profession of philosophy teachers, and some economic reasons like poor remuneration for teachers, the status of philosophy in the Philippines, I believe, looks optimistic. Some well-established universities and colleges offer philosophy as a degree course. The number of these is slowly increasing; there is a steady output of philosophical writings and research, a good number of which is published in academic journals and books, both national and

international. The challenge in publishing our research outputs is to be able to publish in highly reputable academic journals; some institutions value indexed journals, although, to me, that is not necessary. However, while a number of Filipino philosophers or scholars are modestly publishing in local and international journals, they are not publishing in top international journals (See Jeremiah Joaquin 2022). Still, it is a challenge to publish in top internationally indexed journals, not only for the financial incentives attached but also for professional growth and development.

A steady publication of quality and well-research books is very evident. The challenge is to continue this trend and encourage young philosophers or philosophy students to follow it and establish their names. Various philosophical associations hold conferences and seminars and keep the torch of philosophical discussions and dialogues alive. A rich variety of schools of thought and traditions are being taught in different schools, and philosophy teachers and students are constantly updated on recent developments in philosophical studies. More Filipinos are not just attending conferences abroad but are also reading papers either as presenters or main speakers.

There are growing numbers of journals and publications from the Philippines; some of these are published by the member associations and societies of USAPP. These include *SURI: Journal of the Philosophical Association of the Philippines*, published by the PAP; *Philosophia: International Journal of Philosophy*, an internationally indexed journal published by the PNPRS; the *PHAVISMINDA Journal*, published by PHAVISMINDA; *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy*, published by the Social Ethics Society. Other journals are published by philosophy departments of HEIs, like the *Kritike: Online Journal of Philosophy*, published by the Philosophy Department of UST; *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies* and *The Philippine Social Sciences Review*, published by the University of the Philippines-Diliman College of Social Sciences and Philosophy; the *Mabini Review*, published by the Institute for Culture and Language Studies of PUP. *Karunungan* is published by the Philippine Academy of Philosophical Research.

Many scholars are going abroad to continue their graduate studies, and a good number of scholars prefer to finish their graduate studies in the Philippines. We have already expressed our intention to bring the World Congress of Philosophy here in the Philippines in the future; I think that is one project to pursue to make Filipino philosophy and philosophers front and center on the global stage of philosophy.

However, there are more things to do. Although philosophy is vibrant in the academic scene, it is barely noticed in the social and political arena. Philosophy is not as active as other disciplines, like the social and political sciences, anthropology, and psychology, in shaping people's opinions and thinking. During the last elections, when opinions are sought from professionals, we hardly hear the views and insights of philosophers when in fact, in other countries, the thoughts and voices of philosophers are deemed very critical and relevant to their discourse. The political and social analysts, the anthropologists, and the psychologists are the ones who dominate the national scene in terms of shaping the social and political opinions of people. There is a need for Filipino philosophers to step out of the academic halls and into the arena of public opinion. For philosophy to be relevant, it must have a strong voice in shaping our national or collective consciousness. Moreover, this must be done through the

collaborative efforts of all individuals and groups that have been touched or inspired by philosophy.

Nevertheless, this does not come without challenges. In 2022 we culminated the celebration of 500 years of Christianity in the Philippines. This year, 2023, we will also mark the 50th foundation of the PAP. Ironically, 2022 was the 50th year of the declaration of Martial Law in our country and the return to power of the family of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos. A cursory look at the political landscape of our country, considering the composition of the three branches of the government – executive, legislative, and judiciary, reveals that they are populated by members of political dynasties, convicted plunderers, corrupt politicians, and self-interested individuals and appointees of the above. Our political future does not look bright. The spread of fake news, disinformation, misinformation, and the distortion of our history only paints a bleak picture of our current situation. Unfortunately, they are also indictments of the supposed guardians of morality, values, goodness, and truth – the Church, the education sector, the academicians – philosophers, historians, theologians, etc. What have these supposed guardians done in the past? Have they not fulfilled their roles as guardians of values, truth, and goodness? Our deplorable situation now is an indictment of us, lovers of wisdom, for we have our own share in the failure to spread the truth and goodness and fight against falsehoods and evil. Perhaps, we have been successful in the academic realm. Still, the measure of success of any profession is in its ability to contribute to shaping the moral and critical consciousness of the people and in nation-building.

The question, of course, is, how? Before we answer this question, let us first look at our colonial past. Perhaps, a brief foray into our past will give us insights into how we can help shape critical consciousness.

OUR ROLE FOR THE FUTURE: LEARNING FROM OUR COLONIAL PAST AND SHAPING OUR CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Part of our identity as a people is our collective consciousness, how we view things and reality, how we appreciate our world and ourselves, our conditions, our past, and our present life. The Filipino identity and consciousness are influenced by the Filipinos' collective experiences, both in the present condition and the past. The present condition and the past influences help shape our identity and consciousness.

When we look back at our past, we see a long period of colonial rule, a long process of colonization first by the Spaniards, then by the Americans, and then briefly by the Japanese. It was a long and arduous period of colonization, so the experiences during the pre-colonial period are overshadowed by the experiences during the colonial period, to the extent that what was considered genuinely Filipino or ethnically Filipino was replaced by foreign elements. The result is a mix of ethnic Filipino elements and foreign elements. That is what we are and who we are; we are a breed of our ethnic culture and the culture of our colonizers. However, there is a lingering question. Who is the real or the genuine Filipino? What is the genuine Filipino identity? Is the genuine Filipino identity that which is untainted by colonial influences or that which has been modified and transformed because of colonial influences?

I see two contrasting positions: One is what I would call the "purist" position, which views the Filipino identity as untainted by colonial influences; our identity is ethnically Filipino, meaning the identity prior to colonization. This identity embodies the culture, the thinking, the ways, and the ideas of our ancestors prior to the coming of the colonizing powers. Hence the genuine Filipino consciousness should be cleansed of any baggage of colonial thinking. On the other hand, there is what I would call the "compromise" or moderate position, which views the Filipino identity as a heterogeneous combination of both ethnic and foreign elements. The Filipino identity is a mix of the culture of our ancestors prior to the coming of the colonizers and the culture inculcated in us or adopted by us from the colonizers.

The purist wanted to recapture and reestablish the pre-colonial identity in this post-colonial period. The purist considers our colonial past as not the expression or manifestation of what is genuinely Filipino. Hence, the result of the breeding of the ethnic and colonial is not genuinely Filipino. For the purist, the genuine Filipino identity is the pre-colonial identity, and it hopes that in this post-colonial period, we can regain our pre-colonial identity, which is the real identity of the Filipino. The problem which this position is that it has resulted in some sort of identity crisis. We seem to be at a loss as to who we really are because all we see are colonial influences. We seem not to see the genuine Filipino identity anymore. So now we continue to reestablish our Filipino identity, which is free from any colonial color. I do not see anything wrong with affirming our identity, but when we try to overdo the task, there must be something wrong. This, in my view, is symptomatic not only of an identity crisis but of insecurity. In this case, excessive self-affirmation and self-identity have become manifestations of deep-seated insecurity and identity crisis.

The compromise position considers all these influences as part of our identity's continuous transformation and modification. We have not lost our identity. It has been transformed by our past experiences, most significantly by our colonial past. Whether we like it or not, whether we accept it or not, our identity is partly the product of a long process of colonization. We are what we are because of our past, and that includes our colonial past. We cannot simply ignore or take it for granted or erase from our memory our colonial past. We cannot sanitize our identity of colonial influences; we have to accept that as part of the constant transformation of our collective identity.

We may find it difficult to appreciate our colonial past, especially when we see all the foreign colors obstructing our view. We may still feel the stigma of colonization and be hesitant to accept the colonial influences as part of our identity, but we just have to accept that that is part of who we are and try to learn from our past experiences. We cannot sanitize our past by excluding our colonial influences from our consciousness. To remove our colonial influences from our identity is to deny our historicity as a people. Our identity has simply undergone a painful transformation and modification. Self-identity is never a completed project; it undergoes constant transformation, and our colonial past is part of that transformation. We need to connect our identities from the pre-colonial period to the colonial and post-colonial periods, for they form important parts of our collective past that mold our present collective identity.

Because of our colonial past, we Filipinos are often burdened with the baggage of colonial thinking, which to some extent, has been translated into total dependence

and uncritical acceptance of colonial ideas and prescriptions. We have the tendency to favor foreign ideas and things over local ones. We love foreign culture, and we like to eat foreign foods, wear foreign clothing, use foreign tools, read foreign books, listen to foreign music, watch foreign movies and shows, and appreciate foreign arts and even kinds of literature. We have also adopted foreign ideas and even philosophy. If there is one thing about our colonial past that we must discard, it is our colonial way of thinking, our colonial consciousness. We need to get rid of our system, our thoughtless conformism, and our almost blind adherence to foreign ideas and prescriptions. If we want to overcome the stigma of colonization, we need to develop critical Filipino consciousness, and hopefully, with the emergence of a new Filipino consciousness, we can draw something positive from our colonial past and discard the negative one. The emergence of new consciousness will depend on us educators, particularly philosophers. This is where philosophy can help in molding a critical consciousness and thinking. We can do this on two fronts: by continuing the critical function of philosophy and by developing critical thinking and consciousness.

The Critical Function of Philosophy

At its core, philosophy attempts to explain reality and provides fundamental explanations to the essential issues about life, society, culture, religion, and other human concerns. It is also instrumental in shaping the culture and worldview of people; it has a significant role in defining problems and providing solutions. Furthermore, it has a critical role in society because, at its very core, philosophy asks questions, hard questions. The questions that philosophy asks always convey a message, and the message could have political, social, or cultural meaning or significance. By asking critical questions, philosophy can instigate, it can provoke, can criticize. Thus, philosophers must use our discipline to instigate and question beliefs, policies, programs, and even theories. We must analyze and examine arguments to determine whether they are reasonable and supported by evidence and proof. We need to take a critical stand on political, cultural, social, and religious matters, and even life itself.

Criticism could be bi-directional; it could be directed internally and externally. External criticism is when philosophy causes one to critique prevailing situations or events. Internal criticism is when philosophy causes the individual to look into himself and make some sort of self-examination. Hence, while philosophy can engage in external criticism, it must more often engage in internal criticism. However, this critical function of philosophy will be fruitless if only philosophers will practice this function. This must also be passed on to the people; they must also be able to develop critical thinking and consciousness.

Developing Critical Thinking and Consciousness

Developing critical thinking and consciousness cannot be separated from our colonial past. There is a need to develop in Filipino a critical consciousness, the kind of consciousness that will enable him or her to accept and learn from the past and guide him in appreciating and understanding the present and prepare him for the future. In

this regard, I relate consciousness to thinking, for while consciousness seems passive in the sense that it does not motivate us to act, thinking is more active since it compels us to act. Thinking is a purposive aspect of consciousness. Thinking is both the ability and the process that allows us to generate ideas, thoughts, theories, principles, and rules and compel us to action. So, how can we develop critical thinking and consciousness? In the next section, I discuss what I consider the elements of critical thinking.³

Broadening the Understanding of Filipinos Critical thinking involves understanding, which means having a grasp of things, reality, issues at hand, and the subject matter. This understanding may include three elements: understanding the context, opposing views, and the whole range of issues about a subject matter (Jove S. Aguas 2020, 287). Philosophy can help in enlarging or broadening the understanding of the Filipino, especially the masses. Too often, our people's perspective is too narrow to understand the complex issues and matters that affect their lives. Sometimes they fail to understand the different views about a particular issue or subject matter. Ordinary Filipinos often fail to understand the wider context of the issues at hand. All they care about is the particular and limited context of their views. If only we could help them broaden their own perspectives, they could develop the critical thinking needed in decision-making. Instead of complaining that the people cannot understand, we might as well help them develop a broader perspective and critical understanding of the issues that affect their lives.

A broader understanding includes knowing the opposite view, the opinion, and ideas of others, the contrary idea. Philosophy can help Filipinos to realize that there are always two sides of one and the same coin, and there are always opposing views on every subject matter, in every issue or topic in any discussion. A broader perspective will allow them to know the opposing views, and once they understand the opposing views, they are in a better position to compare, respond, to analyze rightly or correctly. A broader perspective also entails understanding the whole subject matter and the wide-ranging issues. This will enable Filipinos to comprehensively understand the whole range of ideas, opinions, and views involved in the issue or the subject matter. Filipinos will not be swayed or influenced by fake news and distortions if they have a broader understanding.

Encouraging Filipinos to Think for Themselves Philosophy can encourage Filipinos to think for themselves. While many Filipinos are literate, most of us can read and write; the problem is that many of us hardly think for ourselves. We tend to believe right away when we hear something on the radio, see something on television, or read something in books, especially by foreign authors. In an era of fake news and historical distortion, many often fall victim to misinformation and disinformation.

Critical thinking means thinking for oneself; it means using one's own power or ability to think about the issues and subjects by oneself, making one's personal assessment and evaluation of the issues at hand and the surrounding information (Aguas 2020, 288). We have to be like Socrates, who admonished the Greeks to think for themselves. We need to encourage Filipinos not to simply allow others to think for them or to simply follow what others think and comply with the wishes of other people

without the benefit of a personal reflection. We sometimes complain about Filipinos not being able to reflect upon the significance of their actions and decisions, especially during elections. I think it is about time that we encourage them to be critical about the things that are dictated to them.

Motivating Filipinos to Think Proactively One aspect of critical thinking is purposive thinking, which uses our intelligence, knowledge, and abilities to deal with different situations, issues, and subject matters (Aguas 2020, 288). As philosophers, we can encourage our people to engage in valuable and meaningful endeavors and tasks instead of remaining passive and indifferent. We can take the initiative in making decisions on our own instead of waiting passively to be told of what to do or think; we can encourage them to commit themselves to the endeavors or tasks at hand instead of giving up when difficulties arise and taking responsibility for the consequences of their actions and decisions.

Filipinos are said to be intelligent, but the problem is that they are sometimes too lazy to implement their ideas. Our legislators have practically made many laws, and our government officials have many proposals and plans on how to improve our condition, but the problem is that we cannot implement them. We do much thinking but lesser actions. We speculate too much; we lack practice. We can encourage Filipinos to achieve goals, make decisions and analyze issues, and make a conscious effort to meet challenges and solve problems.

Helping Filipinos Open their Mind and Consider Different Perspectives In philosophy, open-mindedness is a fundamental requirement. One does not have a monopoly on ideas, much less on good ideas. We can learn good ideas and thoughts from others, from other sources, and from new experiences and encounters with others (Aguas 2020, 289). Some people tend to cling to their ideas and beliefs tenaciously that they can no longer see, learn and accept new ideas. We can help people be open to new views, interpretations, and concepts. This does not mean accepting the new ideas or concepts presented to us outright. It simply means we welcome them as another interpretation or view, a probable source of new knowledge.

The openness of mind leads us to another element of critical thinking: considering different avenues to the truth, possibilities, and perspectives. As philosophers, we can show them the different paths toward the truth to new perspectives and views. We can help them open new windows through which they can see new things, probably the same things, but in a new perspective and light.

Encouraging Filipinos to Question and Challenge Old Beliefs There is a negative notion of the act of questioning; questioning is sometimes interpreted as outright opposition or a radical opposition. Questioning becomes a means to contradict a different view without any basis or reason. This is the destructive type of questioning. However, there is also constructive questioning, where one is simply asking for clarification, a reconfirmation of an idea or interpretation previously put forward or believed in. It means going back to the real issue or the original interpretation and clarifying whether such interpretations, ideas, or beliefs are right and

correct (Aguas 2020, 289). We can encourage people to practice constructive questioning, especially of old beliefs and ideas that no longer benefit society and their lives. Moreover, if such an idea, belief, principle, or theory is no longer meaningful and beneficial, the philosopher must lead in opposing it, challenging it to its correctness, truth, value, and significance. As philosophers, we can help them develop questioning ability so that they will not just accept everything that is presented to them and blindly conform to the dictates of others.

While we become aware of the many changing facets and aspects of our lives, we need to develop a critical awareness of our ever-changing world. Not everything that we encounter and see in other cultures or societies will be to our advantage or benefit. We Filipinos need to evaluate and question the impact and consequences of those things, concepts, and practices we encounter in other societies and cultures. While we try to preserve and store our cultural practices for posterity and for linkage with our past, we need to avoid those that can harm our identities and incorporate those things that can enhance our identities without compromising our dignity.

Hopefully, we can help develop critical thinking first among our students and then the general public. This kind of proactive, purposeful, clear, organized, and self-initiated thinking will result in a proper understanding of important issues. This kind of thinking will help them conceive and formulate clear ideas and make true and accurate judgments and decisions. The kind of thinking that will help them arrive at valid arguments and justifiable conclusions. This thinking based on sound reason will enable them to achieve their goals and purposes. It will help form a critical consciousness that will lead to freedom and liberation from ignorance, blind adherence, and thoughtless conformism. As lovers of wisdom, I believe this is our task today, helping Filipinos develop this critical consciousness.

Some Concrete Actions

However, the question is always the how. Should we limit ourselves within the classroom? Allow me to present some suggestions. Aside from engaging in the public discourse, we need to be more active in crafting educational materials, particularly in rendering our expertise in writing textbooks in philosophy. This project has been controversial lately because of erroneous claims and misleading examples in some of the philosophy textbooks approved by the DepEd. We must lobby to offer philosophy, especially critical thinking courses in basic education. A critical thinking course at both the primary and secondary levels that covers the formative years of young students will help develop their critical thinking and reasoning skills. These endeavors will be easier if we concretize the professionalization and institutionalization of philosophy.

Another avenue would be partnering with other groups or institutions. Perhaps, we could partner with the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) in crafting a Catholic Political Philosophy. USAPP cannot miss out on any opportunity to be part of crafting a Catholic political philosophy that could be a part of the future of philosophy in the Philippines. In the last General Meeting of the USAPP Board of Trustees, partnership with institutions like the CBCP was integrated into our Strategic Road Map. There are still many other ways by which we can contribute to our country's

development and the future of philosophy in the Philippines. I leave that to the members of USAPP and other similarly-minded individuals or groups.

CONCLUSION

Martin Heidegger (1962) said that the past, the present, and the future are "ecstases of time;" time is the unity of these three dimensions. The present is not some endless series of now points that we watch flowing by. We can take "the moment of vision," where we take the present as the right or opportune moment. The present is something that we can seize hold of and resolutely make our own. Thus, we take what we are doing right now as an opportunity to develop further philosophy and embrace its critical role in the future of our country. When it comes to the future, we do not wait; we anticipate. We are not confined to the present; we project toward the future, especially the future of our country. In anticipation, in projecting toward the future, what comes out is our past, our personal and cultural baggage. However, it does not mean that we are somehow condemned to our past. On the contrary, we can make a decision to take over the fact of who we are in a free act. We decide whether our colonial past is indeed a burden or it is an opportunity to create our future based on it.

The future of philosophy in the Philippines cannot be separated from our past, and it cannot be separated from the future of our country. We have a critical role to play in nation-building. The future of philosophy in the Philippines cannot be divorced from Filipinos' moral and critical consciousness. If we are to be relevant, we need to contribute to shaping such consciousness; philosophy must contribute to nation-building. I believe this must be the future of philosophy in the Philippines and its critical role in the future of our beloved country.

NOTES

1. This paper was first presented during the Philosophical Association of the Philippines – Philosophical Association of Northern Luzon National Conference 2022, held on October 12-14, 2022, at San Luis Del Mar Resort, Bauang, La Union

2. There is a question, however, whether San Carlos University can trace its roots to Colegio de San Ildefonso, established by the Jesuits in 1595 (See Aloysius Lopez Cartagenas 2011). In 1769, the Colegio de San Ildefonso was closed due to the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Philippines. The earliest roots of the University of San Carlos in Cebu is not the Jesuit Colegio de San Ildefonso of 1595 but the *Seminario de San Carlos*, which began under the Vincentian Fathers to admit lay students in 1867 (Cartagenas 2011, 33-40). The *Seminario de San Carlos* was established by King Charles III's decree dated October 29, 1779, which granted the request of the bishop of Cebu, Mateo Joaquin Rubio de Arevalo, to establish a diocesan seminary to be called *Real Seminario de San Carlos*. However, it was not until August 23, 1783, when the royal decree was executed, and the administration of the seminary was given to the Diocesan Clergy of Cebu (Cartagenas 2011, 41). It was later named *Colegio-Seminario de San Carlos* in 1867 when it started to accept students who were

not studying for the priesthood as "externs" and as placed under the management of the Vincentian Fathers (Cartagenas 2011, 49-51). The *Colegio-Seminario de San Carlos* became two completely separate institutions in 1924 when Pope Pius XI decreed in 1922 that seminaries should solely serve the purpose of the priesthood. The *Colegio de San Carlos* was transferred to the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) in 1935. In 1948 it was elevated to a university called the University of San Carlos (Cartagenas 2011, 56).

3. I have developed these Elements of Critical Thinking as part of my lectures in the Critical Thinking course and applied them to different situations and aspects of life (See Aguas 2020).

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