

The Roots and Offshoots of Bikol Philosophizing

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Abstract: The paper presents a constellation of works that have made a different ripple in doing philosophy in the Bikol region. The common feature of relocating the philosophical enterprise into the linguistic universe of Bikol among the works included is identified herein as the root of Bikol philosophizing while the arrangement according to their shared themes conveyed by the various concepts tackled is referred to as the offshoots of Bikol philosophizing. A panoramic view of the Bikol concepts developed is thus presented thematically rendering solidarity to the efforts of the authors who either worked directly or in proximity with the linguistic turn of philosophy to Bikol. The paper ends with some remarks on this practice of philosophy in Bikol in relation to the other initiatives in the country which offer a molecular view of (Filipino) philosophy in the regions.

Keywords: *Linguistic Turn, Bikol Philosophizing, Bikol Philosophical Anthropology, Bikol Ethics, Bikol Faith and Spirituality, Bikol Social and Political Concepts, Bikol Aesthetics*

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Introduction

In the last pages of *An Satuyang Tataramon: A Study of the Bikol Language*, we find the first ever encoded claim for “Bikol philosophy” by Wilmer Joseph Tria in his pioneering philosophical articulation of the Bikol term *Yaon* as a starting point for Bikol metaphysics.² It heralded the beginning of a project that will be shared, or contended with, by succeeding writers in the region. With that audacious pronouncement showcasing Bikol language in the performance of philosophy, Tria spearheaded a way of doing Philosophy esteemed as “Bikolano.”

In the year 2000 the first “Bikol Philosophy” conference was held as a joint project between the philosophy departments of Holy Rosary Minor Seminary and Ateneo de Naga University. “Bikol Philosophy” stood for two dominant significations of a shared perspective among its participants: one is the linguistic turn in doing philosophy in the academic institutions in the region which pertained to the employment of Bikol languages in philosophizing or the thematic, reflective analysis of Bikol terms deemed to open rich possibilities for philosophical discourses, and the other significance—already implied in the relocation of philosophizing to the native language—was a political statement or movement shared by its proponents for Bikol Federalism in response to the distributive injustice experienced by the region. This is evident in the proceedings of the Conference published in the journal *Hingowa*. Jose Maria Carpio for instance perceives that “the rise of a Bikolano Social Consciousness could provide leeway for poverty alleviation in the region.”³ Rainier Ibana of Ateneo de Manila in the same venue highlights the value of building the cultural identity of the region in the promotion of economic progress. As he puts it,

Our effort to redefine economic progress in terms of our Bikolano identity is our attempt to make the best out of our given situation and to eventually reassert our cultural identities in tandem with the standards of economic progress... We begin our quest for Bikol Philosophy, therefore, by means of a sympathetic interpretation of the ideas and linguistic utterances that emerge in daily life: *igwa, yaon, iyo, orag*.⁴

After two decades a partial inventory of published works inspired by these early beginnings could already be made. Generally, “Bikol philosophizing” refers to

² Jason William Lobel and Wilmer Joseph S. Tria, *An Satuyang Tataramon: A Study of the Bikol Language* (Lobel and Tria Partnership, Co., 2000), 371.

³ Jose Ma. Z. Carpio, “Katanosan and Kaibahan: Bikolano Social Consciousness,” *Hingowa The Holy Rosary Seminary Journal* 4/2 (2001), 84.

⁴ Rainier Ibana, “Towards a Bikolano Philosophical Research Program,” *Hingowa The Holy Rosary Seminary Journal* 4, no. 2 (2001), 61–62.

the linguistic turn in doing philosophy identified here as the *root* which rendered the initial modification of philosophy as Bikol in its original articulation by Tria. The survey is organized herein according to the shared themes of the Bikol concepts discussed by each author. These are identified as the *offshoots* of Bikol philosophizing because while not all authors did not directly state allegiance to the project of “Bikol Philosophy,” their employment of the linguistic and cultural resources of Bikol and the thematic or philosophical undertones of their works were considered as legitimate criteria for being pulled into its gravity and contributed to the flourishing of a rich fund of Bikol philosophical writings. As the editor of *Bikol Studies* puts it, these works in one way or another establish “a premise or promise of an identity”⁵ of thinking that is “Bikol.”

As a partial inventory however, this paper is delimited to the available published materials of authors who have in turn introduced concepts from the specific contexts of their respective linguistic communities in the region. The diversity of languages and culture within the region renders the possibility of a heterogenous understanding of Bikol terms although perhaps not unfamiliar among Bikolanos themselves in ordinary language use because of their awareness of this diversity and their capacity to speak different Bikol languages at the same time. Moreover, shifting from Tria’s wording of “Bikol Philosophy” to “Bikol philosophizing” turns the spotlight on the philosophical activity (being) performed by the authors and cautions from projecting their works as a homogenous representation of Bikol.

The first part discusses the methods introduced and employed by its proponents which lead to the emergence of Bikol philosophizing. It will also be shown here that the initiatives of its pioneers were not isolated from the wider philosophical movement of indigenization happening at the same time in the other parts of the country both in the national and other regional areas. The synchronicity of these methods shows this solidarity of Bikol philosophizing with other initiatives in the country. The succeeding parts contain precis of interconnected Bikol concepts that this author organized according to their shared themes in the respective domains of Bikol Philosophical Anthropology, Bikol Ethics, Bikol Faith and Spirituality, Bikol Social and Political Concepts, and Bikol Aesthetics. This thematic ordering allows for a panoramic view of major philosophical topics which Bikol philosophizing have touched on and the seminal Bikol concepts that have been introduced in the writings of the authors.

⁵ Federico Jose T. Lagdameo, “Constructing and Contesting What is ‘Bikol’” *Bikol Studies: Perspectives & Advocacies* 1/1 (2014), 1.

The concluding remarks articulate what these surveyed works have jointly contributed to the practice of philosophy in the region based on the unlocked potential of the use of indigenous language in writing and research, and its parallelism with the similar efforts taken by scholars in other regions. Overall, the paper presents the initiatives which have made a different ripple in doing philosophy in Bikol and could serve as reference for tracing the developments of philosophy in the country.

Some Approaches in Bikol Philosophizing

The esteemed Professor Emeritus Alfredo Co of the University of Santo Tomas (UST) cites the advent of Bikol Philosophy albeit as part of his critique of his fellow philosophy luminaries' initiative of searching for a Filipino Philosophy. He writes:

I have outgrown the desire to search for an indigenous Filipino philosophy, notwithstanding that some have started their search for a Bicolano Philosophy, Bisayan philosophy, perhaps also for Ilocano philosophy. Teaching philosophy in Filipino is not the same as having Filipino philosophy, in the same manner that teaching philosophy in Bicolano or Bisaya or Ilocano is not the same as having a Bicolano philosophy, Bisaya philosophy, or an Ilocano philosophy.⁶

In these lines the idea of Bikol philosophy attached to the linguistic turn has also received its first critique and contestation. Co however does not discredit the efforts of the proponents in the respective regions but only calls attention to the wider scope of representation that the idea of any Filipino philosophy must have in the corpus of works of the people or in "the accomplishments of its people in the past 400 years."⁷ It is worth mentioning that Co himself spent his formative years in Bikol and had his early education in the cities of Iriga and Naga. If, instead of citizenship, the ability to speak the language is enough to lay claim, though partly, of one's identity, then Co who still speaks very fluently the Rinconada language of Iriga is a Bicolano at heart, along with his being Tagalog, Chinese, French, and English. Co might not have written philosophy in Bikol but have probably philosophized along the way as a Bicolano in terms of conventional habits of thought and actions that any person typically inherits from the culture in which he lives. In this vein a fellow Bicolano like this author could not ignore the possibility of characterizing

⁶ Alfredo Co, *Doing Philosophy in the Philippines and Other Essays Across the Philosophical Silk Road A Festschrift in Honor of Alfredo P. Co Vol. VI* (España, Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2009), 58.

⁷ Ibid.

Co's academic excellence as an example and performance of being *Uragon* in the context of its present signification among Bikolanos.⁸

Indeed, part of Tria's pioneering effort in Bikol is to use a Bikol language in philosophizing but the methodologies and ways of his writings as well as of other writers included in this inventory show a diversity of modalities which could be placed in parallelism with what Feorillo Demeterio has aptly installed as "discourses of Filipino philosophy."⁹ Tria was not unaware of the Filipinization movement of philosophy in the country as he would mention Leonardo Mercado and Roque Ferriols and actually write in a similar way with them that is, writing in Bikol language as Ferriols would do in Filipino and writing in English for wider readership like Mercado tracing connotative native terms that legitimize his claim for them as indigenously Bikol. The technique of using local languages for indigenization in the two-fold manner already explained by Florentino Timbreza as endogenous and exogenous¹⁰ is likewise discernible in the writings of Tria, Carpio, Remodo, and Loquias.

Tria however developed a full-blown method for "developing indigenous philosophies" whose step clearly begins from the employment of language towards the prospect of philosophical validation resembling a sort of phenomenological *eidetic* reduction. Doing indigenous philosophy for Tria means to: (1) employ the native language in writing and doing philosophy; (2) reflect on key connotative terms on the mother-tongue where immense wealth of meanings and values are waiting to be unearthed for discussion; (3) reflect carefully and critically of traditions, beliefs and practices, and historically accepted narratives beyond mere descriptive analysis and logical justifications of culture and values; (4) transcend linguistic constraints by way of thought production or word production; and (5) transcend the culturally-determined meanings by comparing them with their counterparts from other linguistic communities in the hope of accessing the universal human experience.¹¹

⁸ The Bikolano historian Danilo Geron traces the various signification of this term in the history of the region and states his judgement that currently *uragon* is used in reference to "prowess" or excellence. Danilo M. Geron, "Orag as Bikolano Virtue" *Hingowa: The Holy Rosary Seminary Journal*. 4/2 (March 2001), 117-122.

⁹ Feorillo P.A. Demeterio III, "Assessing the Developmental Potentials of Some Twelve Discourses of Filipino Philosophy," *Philippiniana Sacra* XLIX/147 (May-August 2014), 189-230.

¹⁰ Exogenous indigenization refers to the employment of mainstream and foreign ideas to elucidate native modes of thinking whereas endogenous indigenization refers to the use of native concepts to elucidate mainstream and foreign ideas (Translation mine). Florentino Timbreza, *Sariling Wika at Pilosopiyang Filipino* (Quezon City: C & E Publishing, Inc., 2008), 6.

¹¹ Wilmer Joseph S. Tria, "Developing Indigenous Philosophies," *Gibon: Ateneo de Naga University Journal* 6/1 (2006), 10-11.

Language is also the starting point of Adrian Remodo's proposal for doing Bikol philosophy. Linguistic analysis for him is both an interpretive and dialogical enterprise obviously suggesting a combination of Heideggerian and Gadamerian hermeneutics. For Remodo it is important first to *listen* to the Bikol language in the analyses of words, proverbs, and expressions in order to elucidate the concepts that are embodied in the tradition.¹² Then a dialogical process of comparing and contrasting these Bikol concepts with notions from other systems of thought could be performed. In this way one can avoid attempts of purism in constructing Bikol philosophy but at the same time widen the horizon where the distinctly Bikol or Filipino could emerge, as well as the possible critiques that could be offered to it. Thus, for Remodo, the indigene is no longer conceived as a cloistered self but "is out in the open, aware of its ideological past but is hopeful to self-determine its identity."¹³

But even prior to Remodo's articulation of this dialogical approach, a similar comparative philosophical analysis was already performed by Jove Aguas who is also a Bikolano scholar based in UST. In an evidently affirmative undertone Aguas expresses his alliance with Tria's project of the metaphysics of *yaon* but undertakes instead a cross-cultural and linguistic analysis of the Bikolano significance of *yaon* and the German concept of *dasein* by Heidegger.¹⁴ This allowed Aguas to expound the existentialist significance of "presence" in the concept of *yaon* and in tandem with Tria's view of *yaon* as "meaningful presence."

The distinguished Bikol and now internationally known historian Danilo Gerona revealed in an interview with Michael Roland Hernandez the approach he employed in his project of articulating the concept of *uragon*. Gerona performs historical genealogy and deconstruction "to bring out into the surface the submerged voices of the Filipino, the Bicolanos which have been overwhelmed by the more dominant voice of colonialism."¹⁵ As a historian equipped with its rigid method and discipline, it is paramount for Gerona to have one's claims be grounded on an empirical base. This is evident in his other work, included in this inventory, that describes the process of human development under the lens of social science.

¹² Adrian Remodo, "Pagkamoot sa Pagkasabot: A Bikol Philosophy," *BIKOLNON: Journal of Ateneo de Naga University* 7/1 (2019), 21.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁴ Jove Jim S. Aguas, "The DASEIN and YAON: Preliminary Reflections," *Hingowa: The Holy Rosary Seminary Journal* 4/2 (2001), 129-139.

¹⁵ Michael Roland Hernandez, "Discursing Philosophy and History: An Interview with Danilo Madrid Gerona," *Filocracia* 2/1 (February 2015), 19.

Another evident approach in doing Bikol Philosophy being taken at present is the translation of mainstream philosophical texts into Bikol. Though translation may be contested as a legitimate basis for claiming the philosophical nature of a work, and especially of its identity as “Bikol,” it is nonetheless a clearly Bikolano linguistic undertaking that offers future possibilities for writing and doing philosophy in the Bikol language. Moreover, translation has been one of the modes of writing by the luminaries of philosophy in the country such as Quito, Ferriols, and Timbreza. In the case of Bikol, Kristian Cordero’s translation of Plato’s *Apology*¹⁶ stands as the first concrete example of the latent possibilities for philosophy translation in the region. He has also translated Franz Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* whereas Tria has translated Kahlil Gibran’s *The Prophet* and Antoine de Saint-Exupery’s *The Little Prince*.

This survey of approaches and methodologies shows that Bikol Philosophizing is no longer restricted to a single mode in the sense of Tria’s initial methodological suggestion and philosophical claims. Bikol Philosophizing may now refer to an ever-growing, dynamic identity of efforts, reflections, and works which is no longer limited to the linguistic turn, yet still bear traces of its point of departure. The flourishing of Bikol philosophizing however could have not commenced had it not for Tria’s pioneering works and efforts to make them “functional.”¹⁷ One of his prospects and means for this project is to employ indigenous connotative terms in teaching philosophy which he single-handedly brought into fruition for academic use in the area philosophical anthropology.

Bikol Philosophical Anthropology

The proximity of *Yaon* to the perennial philosophical issue of “being” situates its philosophical priority as well as its chronological significance in the genesis of Bikol philosophizing. As Tria puts it, existence in the world is a “presence-towards-the-good-life.” It is readily observable that he aligns his reflection to the long tradition of western philosophy in his adoption of “being” or “existence” in the articulation of *yaon*. The metaphysical and existential blend of thinking is unmistakably audible in Tria’s first two articles.¹⁸ Several years later a philosophical anthropology in Bikol tongue that launched from these early beginnings was bravely published which

¹⁶ Kristian Cordero, “Apologia ni Sokrates,” *Pagpukaw: An Invitation to Philosophize* 3 (2003), 59-86.

¹⁷ This is a term that Tria would introduce and enshrine in the mission statement of the Philosophy department of Ateneo de Naga University when he assumed its chairmanship.

¹⁸ Wilmer Joseph S. Tria, “*Yaon: Starting Point of Bikol Metaphysics*,” *Hingowa: The Holy Rosary Seminary Journal* 4/2 (March 2001): 67-75; Wilmer Joseph S. Tria, “*YAON: Meaningful Being and Being Meaningful*,” *Hingowa: The Holy Rosary Seminary Journal* 7/1 (October 2002), 113-127.

made Bikolano students realize for the first time the potency of their home language in doing philosophy. Tria's *Ako asin an Kapwa Ko Sarong Pilosopiya nin Tawo* is a breakthrough and remains up to this date a rich source of Bikolano connotative terms for use in both teaching philosophy in Bikol language and research in indigenous Bikol ideas. Tria asserts that "philosophy is an indigenous enterprise, yet its value reaches a universal scope."¹⁹ What he meant by "indigenous enterprise" refers primarily to the usage of the languages of the region. The connotative terms in the language embody thought and meanings that reflect cultural distinction. However, in order to be philosophical, reflection or thinking must transcend the cultural base and encompass themes that bear universal values. Tria's paper "Marriage of *Yaon* and *Boot*: Constructing a Bikol Philosophy of Good Life and Being Human" is a substantial summa of his ideas where he interlaces the four Bikol concepts of *Yaon*, *Boot*, *Rahay*, and *Katungdan*.

The initial philosophical act is the awareness of human existence, of being *yaon*. *Yaon* primarily means presence, but a presence not confined at a particular place and time or the here-and-now for it also means openness to possibilities; It includes the past and the future as well as the 'here' and the 'there' dimensions. Lastly, this being possesses a responsible presence like in the Bikolano expression: '*Yaon ako sa likod mo*' which literally means 'I am right behind you' or figuratively 'You have my full support.' This, for Tria, is an expression of responsibility. Furthermore, *pagka* is an affix which means 'the state of.' Thus, *pagkayaon* would mean 'the state of being' or 'the state of presence.' *Pagpaka* is a more complex prefix which means 'the effort of being' or 'the task of being.' Now, to say *pagpakayaon* would mean 'the duty of presence.' It is therefore the call to be responsible and the call to expand one's being and develop its endless possibilities. "*Magpakayaon ka* would mean live life to the fullest."²⁰

The Bikol word for responsibility is *katungdan*. Surprisingly, the root word of *katungdan* is '*tungod*' which means 'in front.' Etymologically, the word means 'that which lies in front of someone.' For Tria responsibility is responding to the call of the present moment, not of the immediate past or future. It is acting upon whatever lies in front of the person at that very given moment. *Katungdan* requires the person to focus on the job that lies in front of the person. It also requires freedom of choice. It

¹⁹ Wilmer Joseph S. Tria, *Ako asin an Kapwa Ko, Sarong Pilosopiya nin Tawo* (Naga Pilipinas: Ateneo de Naga University Press, 2009), 18.

²⁰ Wilmer Joseph S. Tria, "Marriage of *Yaon* and *Boot*: Constructing a Bikol Philosophy of Good Life and Being Human" in *8th International Congress for Intercultural Philosophy* (Seoul Korea: Ewha Woman's University, 2009), 149-151.

must be the result of the decision made by the interiority of being (*Boot*). Therefore, whatever is the outcome of a decision becomes an essential part of responsibility. One must be able to make a *paninimbagan* for it, from the root *simbag* which means “answer” or ‘respond.’²¹

According to Tria the Bikol word *boot* refers to the interiority of being. It may stand for intelligence and emotion, decision, and conscience. *Boot* synthesizes intelligence and virtue, wisdom, and passion. When the prefix *ma*, that indicates abundance, is added to it *maboot* becomes a person with an abounding interiority, of intelligence and virtue, of wisdom and passion. The *boot* is that which makes man human and the person who cultivates his interior life cultivates his humanity. It is from the cultivated *boot* where ‘*pagkasabot*’ (understanding), ‘*pagkaboot*’ (compassion) and ‘*pagkamoot*’ (love) spring from. Clarity of thought, guided passion, enlightened emotions, and righteous behavior are manifestations of a *maboot*.²²

The term *Marhay* on the other hand means good. For Tria it is not exclusively ethical, it is also functional, or pragmatic based on its root *rahay*. Applied to things *rahay* or *karahayan* would mean ‘the state of being in good running condition.’ Shifted to human beings, *marhay na tawo* is a good person. The cultivation of the *boot* includes rectification or the *pagpakarhay kan boot*. Its objective is to restore order in the *boot* so that the *yaon* performs well again and its judgment becomes sound and healthy once more. Otherwise, *boot* would remain to be dysfunctional and the person’s *pagkayaon* becomes non-performative and therefore meaningless.²³

These four interlaced concepts embody in Bikol terms a perspective of what it means to be a human person. Showcasing his method in doing indigenous philosophy, the terms were connotatively analyzed according to their signification in Bikol language. But the familiarity of these concepts in common experience and its translatability into another language fulfill already what Tria has hoped for them to achieve—its philosophical character whilst being indigenously Bikol.

The concept of *rahay* it should be noted have also figured in the works of other authors who commonly categorize their pieces in the domain of ethics. In one paper a cognate concept has been identified to be inevitably linked to the former thereby making possible the enunciation of an ethics of *rahay* and *gurang* to be expounded in the next part.

²¹ Ibid., 155-156.

²² Ibid., 152-153.

²³ Ibid., 153-155.

The Bikol Ethics of *Rahay* and *Gurang*

Rahay indeed is a Bikol term most suited for discourse in ethics. In Rodel Cajot's research, empirical evidence shows that *rahay* and *raot* as spoken among Bikolanos offer a rich linguistic potential for developing Bikol ethics. In his speculation, "the pre-Christian [sic] Bikolano must have been guided by familial or tribal conventions that would have clearly delineated what was acceptable behavior, thus *marahay*, and what was unacceptable, thus *maraot*. And out of this grew a sort of Bikolano ethics."²⁴ While this pronouncement obviously still needs to be historically reinforced, the present usages of the terms imply the notions of norms and conventions which are themes usually dealt with in ethics.

In the survey conducted among Bikolanos, sixty percent of the respondents consider *rahay* as maintaining relationship with others and with the community, twenty-five percent treats it as maintaining a harmonious relationship with God and fifteen percent considers it as harmony with nature which means contentment, financial stability, health and fitness and absence of problems. Under the first category seventy-nine percent of the respondents equated *marahay* to natural human virtues such as respect especially to the elderly, kindness, industry, purity of heart, helpfulness, generosity, patience, truthfulness, sensitivity to the needs of others, civic mindedness and many others; while twenty-one percent made reference to law and obligation. Cajot concludes that the basic orientation of the Bikolano ethics of *marahay* focuses on harmony with others. Interpersonal relationships are held by Bikolanos as sacred and valuable as life itself and govern their behavior and way of thinking.²⁵

Another research on *rahay* that confirms the ethical connotation of the word is a short article by Roseberry Ceas. Through examples of linguistic analyses of the two terms in everyday usage, Ceas demonstrates that *rahay* has a pragmatic significance. It connotes something in a good working and functional condition. As a verb, *irahayon*, means restoring order, repairing, or fixing something to make it operational again. Applied to human relations, *rahay* describes a good character and relationship. *Raot* on the other hand signify the opposite: disadvantage, liability, disarray, disorder, and brokenness.²⁶

²⁴ Rodel M. Cajot, "The Bikolano Ethics of Marahay and Maraot," *Hingowa: The Holy Rosary Seminary Journal* 4/2 (2001), 78.

²⁵ Ibid., 81.

²⁶ Roseberry Lovely D. Ceas, "Bikol's Concept of Good: A Linguistic Exploration of 'Rahay' and 'Raot,'" *Pagpukaw: An Invitation to Philosophize* 5 (2009), 67-72.

Cajot and Ceas focused on the contemporary usages of *rahay* yet, if one delves further into the linguistic artifacts of the region, *rahay* is already found to be a widely used term by natives that signify “goodness” as recorded in Bikol’s oldest dictionary by Marcos de Lisboa.²⁷ “*Marhay*” then and now can be used to refer to a good person or in other words, an ethical person—a *marahay na tawo*. However, the kind of character that enables one to act in a way that is constructive of a good human relationship is not built overnight but only after a long and tortuous experience of being and learning how to live well with others. It is in fact a lifetime and endless undertaking to live a life of integrity in the society. Hence character coincides with the process of maturity expressed in Bikol as *paggurang*.

Gúrang means old, aged, and mature. If used as an adjective to describe a fruit, it means that the fruit is already mature enough to ripen. To say *magúrang* stresses the actuality of *gúrang* in an entity as emphasized by the prefix *ma*. Interestingly the Bikol term for parent is also *magurang*. It all makes sense biologically because the capacity for actuality of reproduction is present in a mature body. But more importantly, the term is loaded with ethical expectations from a person who is supposed to act rightly “according to his age.” While bodies mature naturally through time, maturity of human character is also something which the individual carries out gradually until he manifests the virtue of independence, in terms of being responsible for his own actions and knowing the right behavior in different circumstances.²⁸ It is not surprising that the reproach of irresponsibility is loaded in the description of someone having no *ginurangan* (*daing ginurangan*).

But while *gúrang* signifies maturity it also signals deterioration and tragedy. The mature person is somebody who knows that human life is limited and moving towards death as its ultimate destiny. Everything he went through life and his learnings become part of his narrative. In every household, the parents would usually rectify their children accompanied with lessons from the past, their learnings, mistakes, or simple past reminiscences. The *gúrang* is a storyteller, somebody who is listened to. He is a consultant in matters pertaining to human life because of his experience and skill (*kanuodan*) in putting things in their proper and useful perspective. The *gúrang* invokes the same person of *Kadunong* in Bikol literature, the bard of the Bikol myth *Ibalong*. As the *gúrang*, *Kadunong* is both the man of learning and wisdom; the one

²⁷ Marcos Lisboa, *Vocabulario De La Lengua Bicol* (Manila: Establicimiento Tipografico Del Colegio De Santo Tomas, 1865), 303.

²⁸ Victor John M. Loquias, “From Locality to Narrativity: Translation and the Indigenization of Education,” *Journal of English Studies and Comparative Literature* 17 (March 2017), 182-183.

who has gained familiarity of the world, society, and human experience.²⁹ And finally, as someone literally at the threshold of the ultimate possibility, the *gúrang* might even be, in actuality, the one who is most authentically open to transcendence. In other words, the ethical and the spiritual may be said, or supposed, to converge in the person of the *gurang*. The next part presents how the linguistic turn not only situates philosophical reflection to the base of culture but likewise grants a more concrete and socially significant context for transcendence.

Faith and Spirituality in Bikol Context

In an attempt to disclose the more practical and humanistic dimensions of faith this author examined the linguistic utterance in Bikol that relates belief to everyday experience. The result was an article that invests on the interplay of “*Buhay nin Pagtubod asin an Sadyosan na Buhay*” or the life of faith and the godly life. Building on a linguistic analysis of the word *pagtubod*, the idea of truth and belief are interlaced with obedience. Truth must be that which commands obedience. This relation between truth, belief and obedience was not difficult to build because they can all be identified in the connotation of *pagtubod*.

As faith, there are two elements voiced out in the enunciation of *pagtubod*: “first is truth which basically makes belief possible and second, is the very condition in the subject which is acceptance of the truth.”³⁰ In other words the objective and subjective are joined in *pagtubod*.

As obedience, *pagtubod* likewise implies two things: first is authority and the other is the acquiescence to authority. Hence “*Pagtubod sa Diyos*” or faith in God is described as an act where Truth itself (is the authority which) commands obedience.³¹ To say however that truth is “that which commands” already implies that faith cannot be blind but is in fact rooted in understanding.³² The term used is *pagkasabot* which signifies wisdom which in Bikol culture is usually attributed to maturity or to being *gúrang*. If the term is further dissected, *pagkasabot* is broken down to *pagkayaon-sa-boot kan katotoohan* or “the presence of truth in oneself” which serves as a compass for one’s actions and enables him “to stand by them” or *paninindugan* from the root word *tindog* “stand.”

²⁹ Ibid., 183.

³⁰ Victor John M. Loquias, “*An Buhay nin Pagtubod asin Sadyosan na Buhay*,” *Pagpukaw: An Invitation to Philosophize 5* (2009), 44.

³¹ Ibid., 45.

³² Ibid.

Thus faith, which is rooted in *pagkasabot*, is inseparable from responsibility because one must stand by the truth that one accepts and obeys. The problem of truth that is linked to responsibility can no longer be simply a matter for intellectual justification but more of the quality of life that one must have as a believer. Here then “*sadyosan na buhay*” appears as a model for a life wherein faith and responsibility are sealed together. *Sadyosan* in ordinary language especially in the Rinconada areas implies honesty and justice. *Magsadyosan* means to wholeheartedly tell the truth. In social and interpersonal transactions, it also means to give what is due to the other honestly.³³ Because of the connotations of truth and justice in the term *sadyosan*, which evidently bears *Dyos* or God, *pagsadyosan* becomes a concrete manifestation of a godly life which is at the same time an ethical life.

The emancipatory dimension of faith is eloquently described by Tria in a critical essay where he recasts the idea of Spirituality with responsibility. He first examines the social dimension of justice (*katanosan*), knowledge (*kaaraman*), and spirituality. Then he proposes how third world countries could be alleviated from poverty using Philippine society as a model. “As a practice” Tria contends, “justice is a virtue, a disposition of the heart, not only to listen to the sufferings of the poor, but to empower them with concrete tools for human development.”³⁴ A shift of gravity from the self to the other is noticeably present as Tria further describes that it entails a “risk and sacrifice” and “dedication to help the poor so they may break free from the oppression of an unjust society.”³⁵ “The practice of social virtue is essentially activism, a full engagement with society in order to prevent unjust structures to prevail.”³⁶ At this point Tria connects social transformation and genuine empowerment of the poor with *kaaraman* or knowledge that is basically catered to by education.

Education of the public is esteemed as the solution to the ever-widening gap between the poor and the elite if it is carried out in a three-fold finality: First, “the public should learn how to reflect and contemplate, to evaluate and make authentic decisions.”³⁷ Second, “is to teach the people how to see the other as other.” And third is “to teach the meaning and importance of our *pagkayaon* (being, presence).”³⁸ Tria emphasizes that education is a communal effort which begins from the family to the other agencies of society. Thus, “social justice is knowledge in practice.”³⁹

³³ Ibid., 48.

³⁴ Wilmer Joseph S. Tria, “Justice Knowledge and Spirituality: Exploring a Third World Agenda,” *Bikol Studies: Perspectives & Advocacies* 1/1 (2014), 91.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 92.

³⁷ Ibid., 94.

³⁸ Ibid., 95.

³⁹ Ibid., 97.

Spirituality then comes in as an alternative to religion which “thrives in power.”⁴⁰ In this part, Tria performs an immanent critique of religion which today gets entangled with state power and thus becomes a complicit bastion of injustice. Social justice henceforth could be carried out by persons who draw power (*kapangyarihan*) from the spirit, persons whom Tria equates with the *maboot*.⁴¹ For Tria “the *maboot* is not the kind who is willing to be exploited but the person who cultivates a rich interior life”⁴² and responsibly engages in the affairs of life. “S/he is the educator, the awakened philosopher, the radical critic.”⁴³ S/he could practically be anybody who has a genuine heart for the other. Spirituality, as it must be practiced by the *maboot* is no longer a personal and non-temporal endeavor but a commitment to social justice starting within one’s immediate community extending to the global community. The third world agenda therefore is the promotion of social justice, education of the people, and the formation of prophets.⁴⁴ The prophet as evidently described by Tria becomes the conceptual persona of responsibility whose power emanates from transcendence—transcendence from egoism. A greater appreciation of Tria’s employment of prophet as an ideal may perhaps be gained by reading his Bikol translation of Kahlil Gibran’s *The Prophet*.

Faith and spirituality have been reconfigured thus to be engrained in an earth-bound task to respond to the demands ensuing from the human society where the purely private conception of religiosity is problematized, and authenticity of belief is warranted by the fidelity of the believer to truth and service to the exigencies emanating from the social reality. The next part treats separately the intellectual engagements with the social and political in Bikol terms.

Seminal Social and Political Concepts in Bikol Terms

The reflection on social reality experienced by Bikolanos and a critique of local politics are commonly performed by the three authors included in this part. Although they begin from an indigenous context, in the sense of local experience, the issues nonetheless reflect facets of wider concerns about the Philippine society in general. Political dynasties and its connection to the perennial problem of poverty

⁴⁰ Ibid., 98.

⁴¹ Tria’s interpretation of the *maboot* could also be accessed in his other works but his way of presentation in this paper strongly suggests that it may be read as a response against Danilo Gerona’s deconstruction of the term (*maboot*) discussed also in this paper. With Tria’s identification of power with *maboot* which he did not do in his other works, it is readily apparent that he is trying to salvage the notion of power, which Gerona attached instead to the *oragon*, and re-appropriates it to the *maboot*.

⁴² Tria, “Justice,” 99.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 100-101.

for example is a national issue yet rooted rhizomatically in the political landscapes of Philippine regions. The potentiality of language is unlocked as it is utilized as a hermeneutical device for diagnosis of local socio-political pathologies then as a site of articulation for possible prognoses.

Danilo Gerona's works is worth commencing this part. His early musings that attempt to aid philosophical thinking with the empirical base of social science is written in an article, almost untouched by research, where he examines the triadic structure of man's process of social development in the concepts of *tao*, *pagkatao*, and *pagpapakatao*. "The concept of *tao* constitutes the foundation of all human sciences."⁴⁵ But as being no more than a concept, the *tao* only refers to the generic character of human existence. "It is the *pagkatao* that provides the *tao* with his empirical features," or his "definite mode of historic and cultural existence."⁴⁶ This must not be construed nonetheless as a static mode of existence because it undergoes relentless change through *pagpapakatao*, which Gerona binds with *kalayaan* (freedom), or man's transcendental act of becoming. Gerona's early Marxist philosophical leanings is evident in this materialist perspective of human development while on the way towards his full throttle career as historian. If this triadic structure still holds in Gerona's mode of writing history, then ensuring the future of man entails no less than ensuring the future of our past via historiography.

The retrieval of "*Orag*" as Bikolano Virtue is another pioneering work by Gerona. *Orag(on)* up to this day, is a popular word that is identified with Bikolanos but Gerona's analysis of the word reveals various nuances that glimpse on historical aspects of colonialism in the region. In the colonialist discourse, *orag* is conceived and identified with dishonesty, lustfulness, and baseness. The word suffered condemnation in religious texts as it signified sex, immorality, and sinfulness. Nonetheless this was the colonial deconstruction of the significance of the word for the natives. *Orag* was originally attributed to the *maguinoos* class who were accepted by the natives to possess political, supernatural powers and sexual prowess acquired through acts of bravery which grant them enormous will power or *boot* thus, *maboot*. Eventually the Spanish friars translated *maboot* which was modeled on the template of a *maguinoos* that resembled a kind and obedient Christian. The *oragon* was transformed into the outwardly *maguinoos* (*maboot*) gentleman. At present, though *oragon* still bears semantic traces of the masculine, it is generically used to convey the quality or acts of greatness, achievement, and the best in the Bikolano.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Danilo Gerona, "Toward a Humanistic Philosophy of Social Science," *Pagpukaw: An Invitation to Philosophize* 1/1 (Nov 2002), 16.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 18.

⁴⁷ Gerona, "Orag," 117-122.

The law practitioner Jose Maria Carpio performs a sustained articulation of regional political predicaments and possible regional solutions. In his early work, Carpio uncovers and develops the socio-political implication of *katanosan* (right, straight) and *kaibahan* (otherness). *Katanosan* is a Bikol word that describes the very integrity of the human person.⁴⁸ It totally includes everything that allows man to assume a human character: his rights, self-reliance, and independence to pursue happiness. *Kaibahan* on the other hand is a Bikol term where the meanings of otherness and togetherness hinge thereby capturing the social reality of differences and demand for cohesiveness. He employs these terms as the indigenous expressions and the conceptual funnels through which the universal claims of human rights, norms, principles, and rules may flow from the international community towards Bikol consciousness. The colonial history of Bikol he claims has arrested the capacity of Bikolanos for self-reliance which has taken a new form of repression through the nationalist project that paralyzes the resources of Bikol both material and immaterial. A cultural renaissance and a reclamation of the region as one independent political body, he projects, would pave the way for a global change that jumpstarts on an indigenous land cultivated by self-cultivated, self-reliant individuals. Thus, Carpio also lays out the project of a “Republic of Bikol” as the “first step and rallying point for peoplehood.”⁴⁹

Thirteen years later, this vision for Bikol is maintained and fills the introductory lines of Carpio’s other article.⁵⁰ This time, he provides a statistical account of poverty in the region and its connection to political dynasties. He provides a detailed definition of political dynasty, a description of its dynamics and its massive effects to the people. Then, he outlines the legal bases for the right to development in response to poverty and political dynasties. According to him “the human rights approach to development remains to be the most cogent.”⁵¹ His notion of *katanosan* is apparently still at work although only more implicit this time.

A further insightful scrutiny of political dynasties articulated in Bikol language is performed by Remodo who unveils the root of the oligarchic political culture in Bikol as embedded in the Bikolanos’ adherence to the exclusivist principle of *sadiring tawo*. The term *sadiri* in Bikol could either mean self or possession while *tawo* refers to a person. When joined, *sadiring-tawo* designates proximity to the self

⁴⁸ Carpio, “Katanosan.”

⁴⁹ Ibid., 98.

⁵⁰ Jose Maria Z. Carpio, “Bikol Politics: Poverty, Political Dynasties, and Right to Development,” *Bikol Studies: Perspectives and Advocacies* 1/1 (2014), 63-78.

⁵¹ Ibid., 76.

specifically in terms of blood relation. Hence, “the family name is the genesis of *sadiring-tawo*.”⁵²

Within the ambit of *sadiring-tawo* the ambivalence of recognition and non-recognition stands as a possibility. While a *sadiring-tawo* could be the first line of assistance for immediate concerns, compulsion lies in wait as a string attached in the form of *utang na buot* (debt of gratitude). Failure to reciprocate such help rendered is ground for expulsion from the blood circle and reduction to being an *ibang-tawo* (literally “other-person”). The label *ibang-tawo* implies the gravity of *sadiring-tawo* and its tendency to exclude otherness (of kin relation) from its circle. The *sadiring-tawo* mentality is also the one behind the perpetuation of the socio-political divide of *dakulang tawo* and *sadit na tawo*. The terms *dakula* and *sadit* literally refers to the opposite sizes of big and small. But Remodo captures well the socio-political context of these terms in the lexicon, as they are used by Bikolanos, in reference to the opposition between the privileged and the less privileged. “*Dakulang tawo* is the family of the wealthy, the powerful, the landowner, and the educated; the *sadit na tawo* is the voiceless, the property-less, the descendant of the *tumatawo* of the landlords”⁵³ and therefore, an Other (*ibang-tawo*).

The *dakulang tawo* may have either inherited political power or someone who has gained political momentum in his own right. But in either case, the *magkakasadiring-tawo* (kin) stands behind as the support group that either etched or maintains the *dakulang tawo* in power. Thus, in the political field, the *sadiring tawo* has become a culturally ingrained norm for political preference as shown by Remodo’s rich textual reinforcement from sociological literature. True enough, political power in various parts of the region is passed on from generation to generation either to the same big family names in politics or to their *kasadiring-tawo*. Hence, due to its hegemonic sway, “*sadiring tawo politics*,” Remodo concludes, “is oligarchic politics.”⁵⁴

Remodo nonetheless attempts to salvage the positive features of *pakikidumamay* (sympathy) and *pagmamakulog* (empathy) shared among *magkakasadiring-tawo* as an ethical ground for a possible reorientation of the *sadiring tawo* towards a more inclusive and national context in view of the common good. This entails, according to him, a going beyond the particularism of the familial, personal, and kinship towards a wider social coverage, taking the *kaibahan* or differences of

⁵² Adrian V. Remodo, “*Sadiring-Tawo: From Familial to Oligarchic Politics*.” *Bikol Studies: Perspectives and Advocacies* 1/1 (2014), 6.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

persons into consideration.⁵⁵ At this point, Remodo justifies this possibility through the ethics of *pakikisumaro* (solidarity) which he developed in an earlier work⁵⁶ where he analyzes three levels of human relationship or *pakikipagkapwa*. The first is *pakikipabagay* which is a mode of relation based on, and does not go beyond, features shared among persons that condition conformity and sameness. This is a relation built alone on the *kaigwahan* or “having” of persons.⁵⁷ The second is *pakikiiba* which already enters the dimension of *pagkayaon* or “being” in the act of recognizing the otherness or differences of the other. *Pakikiiba* or companionship is insightfully captured by the shifting significance of *iba* as “other” and *ka-iba* as “companion” which is not difficult to merge in a Bikolano ear.⁵⁸ The deepest and highest mode of relation nonetheless is *pakikisumaro* or solidarity characterized by: (1) *mahuyong pagdangog* or a certain quality of listening which lets the other in his difference(s) become recognized by the self, (2) *paghimate sa kapwa* or sympathy, (3) *pagmakulog* or empathy, and (4) *pagkamuot* or love.⁵⁹ The numerical significance of “one” or *saro* in *pakikisumaro* implies the metaphysical attribute of unity, but furthermore the prefix “*pakiki*” crystallizes solidarity as an act and as an intersubjective task for social cohesion.

These replete Bikol terms that capture social reality not only provided the linguistic resource to conceptualize human experience in the proximity of experience among Bikolanos but also served as materials for a productive thread of discourses among scholars in the other disciplines specifically in aesthetics and literary criticism.

Bikol Aesthetics and Literary Criticism

There is a rich resource of insights among the Bikolano thinkers in the neighboring disciplines of aesthetics and literary criticism that further substantiate the continuously widening coverage of Bikol philosophizing. Gerona’s genealogy of *Orag* provided the Bikolana scholar Paz Verdades Santos a platform for Bikol Aesthetics.⁶⁰ Santos clarifies that by aesthetics, she is referring to the problem of identifying what is beautiful not as it inheres in the object but as that which pleases

⁵⁵ Ibid., 21.

⁵⁶ Adrian Remodo, “An Dalan nin Pakikisumaro,” *Pagpukaw: An Invitation to Philosophize* 5 (2009), 57-66.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 60-61.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 61-62.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 63-66.

⁶⁰ Paz Verdades Santos, “*Orag* as Bikol Aesthetic (A Theorizing in Progress),” *Pilipinas: A Journal of Philippine Studies*, 42 (March 2004): 76-94.

the observer in a specific culture and time.⁶¹ In her analysis of Bikol literary works, Santos identifies *orag(on)* with literary works which are double or multiple-voiced. “The beauty of the texts lies in the cleverness and wit in choice and sustaining of an original and unique trope, in parody and subversion, and in one-upmanship over authority.”⁶² Furthermore, in as much as the writers of these texts were all males, Santos also identifies an *oragon* writer with masculine and patriarchal tendencies in their poetics of the Bikol region, language, and psyche. In Santos’ paper, beauty (*gayon*) and masculinity (*orag*) which are rarely joined especially when uttered in Bikol language, are exposed to dwell together in the performance of language in literature.

Adrian Remodo’s “*Paghuba sa Magayon*,”⁶³ however seminal, is a good resource for an attempt to synthesize the antithetical and sexual binary opposition of *Orag* and *Gayon* towards an ethics that is wedded to aesthetics. He unveils the idea of power hidden in the semantic cosmos of beauty as well as the beauty that inheres in a great life. *Oragon* which signifies excellence is at the same time a modification of a life with certain measures that make it not only worth living but pleasurable as well to behold or in other words, a beautiful life. Thus, *an oragon na buhay sarong buhay na magayon* (“a good life is a beautiful life”) and vice versa.

Bravery is another meaning of *Orag* that Santos specially used to describe the now famous poet, writer, and Bikol film maker Kristian Cordero. Though mainly in the province of literature, his works are pregnant with philosophical insights waiting for analysis and unveiling. Cordero’s *Santigwar*⁶⁴ would be the most philosophical among his poetry as it contains a subversive critique of (Bikol) society in literary form and a poet’s therapeutic suggestions for his ailing society. *Santigwar* which is an indigenous and folk way of healing is translated by Cordero into a metaphorical therapeutic measure to regain the health of the society through poetry. Related to this work is an essay where he develops his insights on the role of metaphor and memory in social critique and his exhortation to fellow writers.⁶⁵ Only a brave *oragon* or, in Cordero’s term and title for another work, a *pusuanon*,⁶⁶ could carry the critical

⁶¹ Ibid., 79.

⁶² Ibid., 76.

⁶³ Adrian Remodo, “Paghuba sa Magayon,” *Pagpukaw: An Invitation to Philosophize* 3 (2007), 25-32.

⁶⁴ Kristian S. Cordero, *SANTIGWAR: Mga Rawitdawit sa Bikol asin Filipino* (Naga City: Goldprint Publishing House, 2006).

⁶⁵ Kristian S. Cordero, “Metapora asin Memorya sa Santigwar: Hurop-Huop asin Diskurso,” *Pagpukaw: An Invitation to Philosophize* 4 (2008), 21-34.

⁶⁶ Kristian S. Cordero, *Pusuanon Mga Bersong Bikol* (Naga: Goldprint Publishing House, 2007).

role of a writer. As Tito Valiente aptly describes in a review, the writer in Cordero embodies the “subversive” character.⁶⁷

Cordero’s gaze as a literary critic packed with discourses on the politics of regional and cultural identity can be read in an article where he muses “a possibility of reading in which the concept of the ‘Bikol’ as an ethnicity relates not to the ‘Filipino,’ but to the *Agta*.”⁶⁸ *Agta* refers to the indigenous people in the region, usually marked by the physical features of dark skin and curled hair, subjected to marginalization and discrimination by fellow Bikolanos themselves. Cordero then shows, in his reading of contemporary Bikol writings, a parallelism between the clamor for identity of the *agta* and “Bikol’s search and claim for a collective identity with a point of origin.”⁶⁹

The potency of language to transcend its indigenous context and encompass a wider interregional value for reflection is showcased in Raniela Barbaza’s “*Ang Bayan Bilang Kapwa: Katwiran at Batas sa Hinilawod*” (*Bayan as Kapwa: Reason and Law in Hinilawod*). Barbaza employs the word “*karibukan*,” the Bikol term for noise (*kaingayan* in Tagalog) and turmoil (*kaguluhan*), as starting point for her reflection on the Hiligaynon epic *Hinilawod*. *Karibukan* “brings us to an understanding of the Filipino notion of the human being as a speaker.”⁷⁰ The “human being in *Hinilawod* is a speaker” and “due to this universal human possession of language,” Barbaza further contends, “brings the human being to that space and being which Tagalog language calls *kapwa*.”⁷¹ The *kapwa* in her reading becomes an embodiment of both reason and the political.

The capacity of writing in drawing the outlines of both geography and identity is another insight developed by Barbaza in her critical analysis of *Orosipon*—the Bikol word for story—among the early Bikol writers of the region during the period of American colonialism and Tagalog nationalism.⁷² Building on the fluidity of *orosipon*, from the root word *osip* or “tell” which already suggests irreducibility to a single subject telling the story and a multiplicity of possible narration or structuration of the story itself, Barbaza identifies a crack in the molar discourse—an interruption,

⁶⁷ Tito Genova Valiente, “Canticos: How a Poet Subverts Memory, even Politics,” *Bikol Studies: Perspectives and Advocacies* 1/1 (2014), 103-110.

⁶⁸ Kristian S. Cordero, “Imagining the Indigene: A Reading on the *Agta* in Bikol Writings,” *Bikol Studies: Perspectives and Advocacies* 1/1 (2014), 32.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁷⁰ Raniela E. Barbaza, “*Ang Bayan Bilang Kapwa: Katwiran at Batas sa Hinilawod*” *Malay* 26/1 (2013), 1.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 1-3.

⁷² Raniela E. Barbaza, “*Orosipon kan Bikolnon: Interrupting the Nation*” *Kritika Kultura* 14 (2010): 142-162.

as it were—of the nation. In the iterability of the *orosipon* the writers were able to conjure up ipseities of the region: “the *orosipon* takes up space by giving the Bikolnon a body. The *orosipon* makes the Bikolnon visible: the Bikol geographic body in the details of the setting”⁷³ and in the characters of the story. The Bikol self however was never fixed but always a becoming made possible by absence, represented by the absence of a character in the narrative, where the not-self or not-Bikol comes in—“the movements of insertions by the epistemic and spatial configurations of American capital and the Philippine nation-state.”⁷⁴ Like the writers that she analyzes, Barbaza herself renders Bikol visible and sheds light to what national discourses have often relegated to the margins.

Still pertinent to *Orosipon*, Jesus Cyril Conde who did his research on the oral narrative literature of indigenous peoples in the region describes the narrators of stories as *Kadunungs* or spokespersons of their indigenous experiences.⁷⁵ *Kadunung*, which also means “very wise” was originally the bard who chanted the Bikol folk epic *Ibalong*.⁷⁶ If the myth told by a narrator cannot be unrelated to the life story of the narrator himself then Conde’s metaphorical application of *Kadunung* to the indigenous peoples as narrators of *Usipuns*⁷⁷ only follows the idea that only a person knowledgeable of his lifeworld is capable of re/telling their story. In another work, Conde’s findings of a hybrid form of Christianity among the indigenous peoples were primarily based on his field research on their *usipuns*.⁷⁸ Whereas Barbaza analyzes *orosipon* as an interruption of the nation, Conde shows *usipuns* as a problematization of Religion. The view of Christianity’s predominance is challenged as the narratives show that the powers from “below”—of plants, animals, and unseen spirits—that surround the daily lives of the indigenes actually overpower those from “above”—in the Christian ideology—in terms of influence and conduct in their daily lives.

Concluding Remarks

The various Bikol concepts developed in a span of two decades included in this inventory are practical actualizations of what have only appeared hitherto as

⁷³ Ibid., 158.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 159.

⁷⁵ Jesus Cyril Conde, *Voices of Silence* (Naga City, Philippines: Ateneo de Naga University Press, 2009), 55-72.

⁷⁶ Merito B. Espinas, *Ibalong: The Bikol Folk Epic Fragment* (Espana, Manila: UST Publishing House, 1996), 23.

⁷⁷ Conde spells this differently from Barbaza.

⁷⁸ Jesus Cyril Conde, “Hybrid Christianity in the Oral Literature and Ethno-botany of the Agtas of Mount Asog in the Bikol Region of the Philippines” *FILOCRACIA* 1/1 (February 2014), 133-155.

possibilities. One is the writing and teaching of philosophy in the ordinary language. Philosophy gained Bikol undertones through the various philosophical themes articulated in the language, and Bikol words in turn gained philosophical undertones through various thematizations. In the capacity of the terms to embody concepts of general significance, the translation of philosophical texts into Bikol is also glimpsed upon as an alternative worth pursuing. And while some authors have found the voice to associate Bikol identity with the construction of Bikol philosophy or in writing Bikol thought, others were simply engaged with the articulation of ideas, values, socio-political experiences in need of transformation, and visions of a life that could be collectively pursued.

The practice of thinking in a more culture-specific context is showcased by the surveyed works bonded by the linguistic turn to Bikol and identified at the beginning as the root of Bikol philosophizing. As has been shown, its proponents were not primarily motivated by the intention of building thought systems but the utilization of the linguistic resource to think and empower people in the locality to pursue concrete aims for economic, cultural, and socio-political alleviation. Bikol philosophizing therefore could also be described as an agentive move to localize philosophy into the immediacy of human experience, to render philosophizing more functional as Tria would insist, by using the language and cultural resources owned by one's immediate society.

Seen in this manner, the works that have been produced out of this initiative could be synchronized with those that have sporadically emerged from other regions as a shared effort of bringing philosophy closer to the people who, in the archipelagic context of the Philippines, are characterized by diversity. While Co, as cited above, have contested the identitarian claim for a regional philosophy in the use of its language, the works of the authors included here have nonetheless been quite fruitful in terms of philosophically developing the normative significance of various concepts in Bikol terms. They need not be subsumed into a single and definitive epistemological category of Bikolness save from their conventional and current codification in the Bikol lexicon and its proximity to the experience of Bikolanos.

In relation to parallel initiatives outside the region, it is in this similar context that Danilo Alterado⁷⁹ and Aurelio Agcaoili⁸⁰ frame what they claim as Ilokano Philosophy in their works while some philosophy practitioners in the south express

⁷⁹ Danilo S. Alterado, "Maiyannatup A Panagripirip: Towards an Ikolano Indigenous Doing of Philosophy" *Philosophia* 20/1 (2019), 97-110.

⁸⁰ Aurelio S. Agcaoili, "Sanut, Wayawaya, and the Naimbag a Biag in Ilokano Philosophy" *Budhi: A Journal of Ideas and Culture* XXIII/1 (2019), 87-102.

allegiance to the idea of localizing philosophy captured adequately by Ruby Suazo's "philosophizing in context" although meant by him as "doing philosophy or using any framework in philosophy that will address a specific problem that we have in our context or place or in our country."⁸¹ Amosa Velez⁸² wrote philosophy in the Cebuano language and Jane Gallamaso contested the idea of Filipino philosophy confined to the utility of Tagalog language. As Gallamaso writes, "Filipino philosophy should mean not only Tagalog philosophy. But could also be Visayan philosophy, although written in the English language. That would still be Filipino philosophy because the realities that are dealt with are Filipino realities, like Filipino values, which are distinctly from Visayas or Mindanao."⁸³

Analogous to Barbaza's critical analysis of *orosipons* as narratives which rendered visibility to the region, the presence of the works surveyed in this paper likewise renders visibility to an alternative mode of philosophizing which offers a molecular view of (Filipino) philosophy in the region and could serve as reference for tracing the developments of philosophy in the country.^{PS}

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⁸¹ Jan Gresil S. Kahambing and Feorillo Petronillo A. Demeterio, "Doing Philosophy in Central and Southern Philippines: Interviews with PHAVISMINDA Presidents Velez, Gallamaso, and Suazo," *PHAVISMINDA Journal* 16 & 17 (May 2018), 183.

⁸² Amosa Velez, "Mga Yangongo Sa Usa Ka Bata," *PHAVISMINDA Journal* 4 (2005), 1-8.

⁸³ Kahambing and Demeterio, "Doing," 174.

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