
FROM IDENTITY ASSERTION TO A PARTICIPATIVE POLITICAL CULTURE: INDIGENIZING PHILOSOPHY IN THE BIKOL REGION OF THE PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT

The attempt to develop an indigenizing philosophy in the Bikol region of the Philippines can be seen as an attempt to aid the creation of a collective identity for the purpose of addressing local socio-political concerns. The task of philosophy is directed to the empowerment of people by allowing them to engage in philosophical thought in their native language and cultural context. Philosophy also becomes directed towards social critique and the goals of justice, recognition and emancipation. Using Axel Honneth's critical theory, indigenous philosophizing is here presented as internal critique of culture-specific values in order to develop a more engaged and participative political culture that can be carried out in academic institutions and operate as a social precondition of democracy.

Keywords: Indigeneity; Bikol Philosophy; Recognition; Axel Honneth

Introduction

This paper examines the project of indigenizing philosophy in the *Bikol* region of Southern Luzon, Philippines. The impulse to “indigenize philosophy” stems from a desire for a recovery of the indigenous linguistic and cultural resources as a basis for doing philosophy. It also promises avenues and means for their collective identity formation and addresses local socio-political concerns. This aim can be realized by employing Axel Honneth’s “theory of recognition.” According to this theoretical perspective, the process of indigenization will be presented as a task of reorienting the enterprise of philosophy with local social critique. This entails appropriating into indigenous philosophizing the aims of emancipation and justice.

The first part of the paper explains that “indigeneity” is an indeterminate concept but one that allows for its claimants to determine their own identity. Indigeneity is a social construct and political project which is exemplified by *Bikol* indigenous philosophizing. The second part demonstrates the concept of “recognition” as useful for developing an internal critique of indigenous values. This involves a twofold act of articulating normative orientations of a community and reevaluating their legitimacy in relation to the demands of the members of the community. The last part reaffirms the proponents’ initiative of performing indigenous philosophizing in educational institutions as the strategic avenue for performing internal critique of indigenous values and as an effective way of developing an engaged participative political culture.

Determining Identity via Indigeneity

In the *Bikol* region the introduction of the notion of “indigenous” into the discipline of philosophy started in the early 2000. The term “indigenous” here signified a “linguistic turn” to native languages for doing philosophical teaching and research. In a conference held in Ateneo de Naga University and Holy Rosary Minor Seminary, the label “*Bikol* Philosophy” was introduced by *Bikolano* scholars. The common feature of their approaches was a shared project of regional identity assertion

using *Bikol* language(s) to address the more material social concerns in the region. Jose Maria Carpio for instance suggested that “the rise of a *Bikolano* Social Consciousness could provide an approach for poverty alleviation in the region.”² Rainier Ibana in the same venue also contended that economic progress is simultaneous with the construction of the cultural edifice or ethnic identity against the monolithic homogenizing of economic globalization. He wrote:

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.³

It is Wilmer Joseph Tria however who introduced a full-blown methodology on how to proceed in developing indigenous philosophies. It is imperative, Tria claimed to: (1) employ the native language in writing and doing philosophy; (2) reflect on key connotative terms in the mother-tongue where immense wealth of meanings and values are waiting to be unearthed for discussion; (3) perform a careful critical reflection 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.⁴

Indigenous philosophy in Tria's view starts from the local context of experience. In this case the linguistic resource and the culturally specific values and practices would be referred to as indigenous, or *katutubo* – as that which “grows from a native land.”⁵ Showcasing his methodology, Tria wrote his trailblazing textbook in Philosophical Anthropology in one of the familiar languages in Camarines Sur province. It should be

clarified however that despite the rich connotative familiar *Bikol* terms utilized for reflection, Tria's indigenous *Bikol* philosophizing does not refer to a specific indigenous people of *Bikol*, "who have continuously lived as an organized community on a defined territory" as designated by the Indigenous People's Law of the Philippines⁶, nor does it refer to a regional *Bikolano* people bound by one language. Tria instead equates "indigenous" with "*Bikol*" restricting it to a linguistic identity and preventing it from a more regional relevance. It risks not representing other voices in the region whose differences are manifested by their linguistic diversity. Nonetheless, Tria is the first scholar in the region who recognizes the importance of indigenous philosophizing in his use of the *Bikol* language in the performance of philosophical discourse.

But how is it that Tria and the others who follow the thread of the linguistic turn can overlook the indeterminacy of indigeneity itself? In his review of the literature on indigenous rights recognition, Benjamin Gregg observes that "there is no broadly accepted understanding of the term indigeneity."⁷ But "in its indeterminacy, the term allows very different groups to claim indigeneity and to claim it in very different ways."⁸ He cites further that the "United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues describes as 'indigenous' approximately 370 million people in more than seventy countries"⁹ but does not have a single criterion for identifying them univocally as such. Indigeneity rather is a social construct which elevates it in a politically advantageous site for identity construction and determination. "For political purposes, indigeneity can be defined (politically), in terms of a contestation of competing values. The definers seek to realize one or the other set of values by defining a group as indigenous in a particular way."¹⁰ Indigeneity therefore is a project where self-ascription and self-construction fall together as "the foundation on which the group advances its project of gaining recognition and rights."¹¹ It is neither a return to origins nor an epistemological legitimation of its origination but an assertion of "particular value commitments."¹² The attempt to redefine "*Bikol*" as indigenous could likewise be perceived more as a political project advocated by its claimants initially propelled by their

consciousness of the potency of local linguistic and cultural resources.

A radical ascription of indigeneity to the concept of “*Bikol*” is performed by Kristian Cordero in his identification of “*Bikol*” as a separate ethnicity along with the marginalized *Agta* minority group inhabiting the region, rather than a category of being Filipino.¹³ So on the one hand he claims marginalization, but on the other hand he recognizes that his own ethnicity is not innocent of injustice done to the *Agta* in his own region. This is a bold statement that while the region seeks for justice from above, from the nation-state, reparation should actually start from below, from its own local ground, where acts of disrespect are committed to “others.”

Cordero’s faith in the capacity of *Bikol* language to articulate philosophy is earlier showcased in his *Bikol* translation of Plato’s *Apology*.¹⁴ It is in literature however where he figures more prominently and recreates indigenous values and practices into literary productions loaded with socio-political significance. His philosophical poetry, *Santigwar*; for example contains a subversive critique of (*Bikol*) society in literary form and a poet’s therapeutic counsel for his ailing society.¹⁵ *Santigwar*, which is literally a folk and indigenous practice of healing, is translated by Cordero into a metaphorical therapeutic measure to regain the society’s health through poetry. But his literary production of the “*Agta* girl who cut and fed her fingers”¹⁶ brings into consciousness the widely ignored, even normalized, acts of disrespect committed to minority groups in different regions.

The character is based on Juan Escandor’s article “The Vanishing Identity of the *Agta*” that accounts the story of Salvacion Buenaflo, who cut her fingers in front of her non-*Agta* classmates to show them the same color of blood she shares with them.¹⁷ In the following lines the displacement of identity is metaphorically tendered in the attribution of a name by another which the latter does in the same way to a pet, in order to command, tame, and impose oneself as its master:

*Digdi sa napadumanan, ako an bagong ataman.
Ako an sainding itum na gamgam.
Tulos akong tinawan nin bagong pangaran
tanganing matuod ako kan pang-apod sakuya.
Sarong gaha, sarong pagbulos: Aryan.*

Here, where I was brought, I am the new pet.
They treat me here as their black bird.
At once they gave me a new name
for me to be accustomed to their label.
A nickname, a new clothing: *Aryan* (Translation mine).¹⁸

The above excerpt represents the *Agta* indigenous peoples' struggle for identity intermeshed with concrete experiences of discrimination, social exclusion and denigration, stereotyping, poverty, and lack of social opportunities. In Cordero's equation of *Bikol* with the *Agta*, or, in his own words – "imagining *Bikol* as an indigene," a fresh perspective on how to frame the indigenization of philosophy emerges; that is, as a clamor for recognition. This is the same endpoint of Cordero's analysis:

One can ask whether Buenaflor's act was a gesture of defiance, if not of utter subversion against malignant hierarchies and structures that characterize *Bikol* society. We can ask how we ought to see this act of hurting oneself and challenging the other to do the same in order to prove that we have the same genealogy.¹⁹

Cordero here was not referring to the same blood origin but to the common "search and claim for a collective identity."²⁰ In the case of the indigenization of Philosophy in *Bikol*, social and political concerns were attached to the issue of identity formation which was thematically issued forth as a collective project by its claimants issuing out from the linguistic resources in the region.

The impetus for this project is to address social injustices more locally using the intellectual and cultural resources at hand. In other

words, this is a showcasing of one's confidence in being able to contribute progress for the local society – an act of asserting and determining one's identity within the society where one belongs. Consequently, framing the indigenization of philosophy by a theoretical matrix of recognition implies certain methodological and teleological requirements on how to do philosophy and a functional orientation for which it is to serve. I contend that doing indigenous philosophy through the theoretical framework of recognition allows one to appreciate the internal critique of values in the society. Tria's methodology on the one hand involves the utilization of the native language in articulating indigenous values as well as of subjecting it to critical reflection. On the other hand it relies on a hermeneutic of universal experience which Tria hopes to use to legitimize indigenous thought as philosophical instead of a narrow socio-political orientation. Internal critique on the topic is attuned to the prospect of social emancipation through philosophical analysis and articulation of socio-political pathologies that facilitate reflexive action and participative political will formation.

Philosophy as Internal Critique of Indigenous Values

The notion of indigeneity as a project liberates us from the misunderstanding of identity as something fixed or produced blindly by social and historical forces. Identity in an indigenous context is a way of articulating the more immediate site for the self-determination of persons within the society and conversely the construction of the society by the persons constituted within it. Axel Honneth the eminent third generation Frankfurt School critical theorist, explains this identity formation of persons as a process of recognition.²¹ In other words, recognition is an ontological condition for the becoming of personal identity and this becomes especially apparent when it is withheld, as it manifests in various forms of struggle.

This struggle characterizes the everyday life of individuals in the society and may be generally schematized in three levels which inseparably contribute together to a healthy personality. The first is the

more singularly confined form of recognition to intimate relations where one first gains a basic self-confidence in being affirmed, cared for and loved. The second is the wider recognition from the society granted to an individual when his rights, which he shares equally with his fellowman, are respected, and safeguarded through the legislation and execution of laws. And the third is the recognition accorded to an individual as part of a social group that esteems his capability to partake of its development and flourishing in solidarity.

Indigeneity could be described as the relative site of the experience of social recognition. This is in accord with Gottfried Schweiger's reading that "the normative benchmark of the recognition approach is the universal value of undistorted self-realization, which can only be realized in contingent historical, social or otherwise relative forms."²² While mutual recognition is ontologically required of everyone to become persons, there isn't a uniform mode of socialization for all as evidenced by the differences of norms and values in different societies. Cultural differences would be the manifestation of the diversity of struggles for recognition in varying societies. Hence love, respect and esteem could have varying modifications or expressions in different societies which would also be the case with its respective deprivations. It is for this reason that there are multicultural identities as well as a multiplicity of forms of deficits in self-determinations which must also be addressed in their respective contexts.

This relative aspect of recognition redefines the role that philosophy should take and shows how it can operate most efficiently: philosophy must assume the function of critique of society. According to Honneth, the normative foundation of social critique issues from the disrespect which results from withheld recognition and that eventually metastasizes into social pathologies. The use of the clinical term "pathology" that originally refers to illnesses metaphorically signifies the "misdevelopments"²³ or social aberrations that philosophy as social critique aims to disclose. This complements the specific work that social critique does, which could also be described by the medical term "diagnosis" or the "precise detection and definition of an illness afflicting the human organism"²⁴ in order to apply

measures for regaining health. Hence the articulation of various forms of disrespect becomes the fundamental task of social critique within specific social contexts to determine where social therapeutic measures are needed.

For Honneth, “since what counts as a developmental goal or as normality is always culturally defined, it is only by hermeneutic reference to a society’s self-understanding that social functions or their disorders can be determined.”²⁵ This self-understanding is encoded or institutionalized in the society’s norms and values which provide practical orientations for the behavior and actions of its members. “Social forms of organization are seen as successful, ideal or ‘healthy’ if they allow individuals undistorted self-realization”²⁶ but, pathological on the contrary if individuals are hampered from achieving their utmost potential individually and socially. The articulation of indigenous values is tantamount to an articulation of social normality which “consists in culturally independent conditions that allow a society’s members to experience undistorted self-realization.”²⁷ The imperative of “identifying the existing normative structures that inform and reproduce societal forms of interaction” before critique, as R.T. Pada rightly perceives, is important in “avoiding free-floating interpretations of normative values.”²⁸ The social criticism of the indigenous forms of misrecognition would then be based on the “empirical description of what a given culture regards as a disorder.”²⁹ This kind of social critique is what Honneth calls an internal critique of the society:

It would be necessary to show that certain normative ideas and principles are already institutionalized, which means that they are not only accepted but that they are somewhat already informing our practices. But at the same time, we are not fully explaining the normative content of what we are doing. I would call this internal critique.³⁰

In Schweiger’s appraisal of this method, “rather than seeking such universal values and ahistorical truth, it serves as a critical mirror for a society and shows that it fails its own standards and goals.”³¹ It is for this

same reason that the indigenization of *Bikol* philosophy is associated with language, loss of identity, socio-economic issues such as poverty, and unjust distribution of resources by the central government because, recognition is not merely concerned about an individual identity but about all cognitive practices, and the absence thereof, that involve the concrete social, economic and political life of individuals.

An internal critique of indigenous values would therefore have greater normative bite when it is directed at the values arising from the institutionalized spheres of recognition. In Honneth's latter work, these refer to the institutions of personal relationships, market economy and political will formation.³² The spheres of recognition of love, rights, and solidarity necessary for the development of a healthy personal identity are revised here by Honneth into social institutions of freedom. As institutions of freedom, they provide basic avenues for self-realization which therefore make them at the institutions of justice. For "what is just is that which protects, fosters or realizes the autonomy of all members of society."³³ Basically, justice consists in the ability to participate in those institutions where one could develop socially as a person. In personal relationships, one secures emotional needs essential for the initial formation and sustenance of individual ego identity. In the market economy, rights are promoted by law to provide equal opportunities for material sustenance and just compensation for one's labor. And in politics, empowerment is accorded to individuals when they are esteemed as being capable of participating in social building through political deliberation and will-formation. Together they form the fabric of social justice which, in Honneth's ideal, is the organic fulfilment of a "democratic ethical life."

The "misdevelopments" of normative values in each sphere however lead to social injustices: those which hamper the formation of personal relationships or wound-up relationships of love like cases of physical or psychological torture and discrimination; unjust compensation to labor in disregard of the principle of achievement and the reduction of work to the pure scale of capital; humiliation, social exclusion and denigration. All these instances necessitate the internal critique and re-evaluation of

the respective institutions. Philosophizing as analysis of society is then given a normative orientation—it is geared towards the establishment of justice, of emancipation from denigration and various social pathologies. It performs this task by “judging individual questions of legitimacy”³⁴ in the institutions of justice. For justice “consists not in the determination of what is due based on an externally imposed principle detached from the given social reality but rather on the determination of the legitimacy of values in the given institutions of recognition.”³⁵

Cordero’s representation of the indigene in the person of the marginalized *Agta* demonstrates the social function of philosophy that should be carried out indigenously to make philosophy locally relevant. Injustices are often locally situated and this is one reason why they keep on thriving at higher levels. They are not uprooted from the ground, but are ignored. One is not cognizant of his own acts of rendering others “invisible” in his own locality. “Invisibility” is Honneth’s metaphorical tool of describing the intentional act of not ascribing “worth” to others as being able “to lead their lives in rational self-determination.”³⁶ Recognition depends on certain public expressions where individuals reciprocally manifest their affirmation of each other’s persons but, in invisibility, these media of affirmation are denied with the consciousness of both parties. Escandor’s title of his article “The Vanishing Identity of the *Agta*” accurately describes the plight of the marginalized communities located in various parts of the region. While they do not really disappear physically from sight, instead, their “difference” is effaced to take on a “new clothing” of the dominant rationality of “the same.”

An illuminating sample of internal critique of *Bikol* society is performed by Adrian Remodo in his research on the value of *sadiring-tawo* (kindred). He locates the basis of the normativity of this value in the family then shows the problematic character it assumes when it gets entangled with the other social institutions.³⁷

The Case of *Sadiring Tawo* Politics

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 specifically in terms of blood relation. Hence, “the family name is the genesis of *sadiring-tawo*.”³⁸ 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 *ibang-tawo* usually receives the violence of the *sadiring-tawo*’s tendency to exclude otherness (of kin relation) from its circle. The *sadiring-tawo* mentality is also the one behind the perpetuation of the *dakulang tawo* and *sadit na tawo* socioeconomic and political divide. The terms *dakula* and *sadit* literally refer to the opposite sizes of big and small. But Remodo captures well the political context of these terms in the lexicon, as they are used by *Bikolanos*, to state 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”³⁹ and therefore, the “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 members) stand behind as the support group that either etches 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. 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.”⁴⁰

This insightful scrutiny of *sadiring-tawo* as a familial value that turns exclusivist when it encroaches on the economic and political

domains leads to the pathological political culture which has become common in the region. This is evidenced by corruption, poverty, and marginalization of capable persons to engage in politics. And though the scope of Remodo's study is situated in the local experience of *Bikolanos*, it nonetheless reflects Philippine society in general. Political dynasties often perpetuate the problem of poverty and extend a rhizomatic presence into the political landscapes of all Philippine regions. One can cite this as an empirical evidence of Fernando Nakpil Zialcita's macro analysis of the Philippine society's inability to develop political structures broader than kin relations⁴¹ or, as a local basis for Lukas Kaelin's analysis of Philippine society's having a strong family but weak state.⁴²

Remodo nonetheless attempts to redeem 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 view of the common good. This entails, according to him, a "decentralization of *sadiring-tawo* politics."⁴³ This involves going beyond the particularism of the familial, personal and kinship towards a wider social perspective which takes the *kaibahan* (differences) of persons into consideration. Remodo's however may be asking too much; *Sadiring tawo* may just really be limited to smaller institutions of personal relations that on a larger scale, it would not address the problems of equality in the domain of rights and opportunities in the realm of politics. Expanding *sadiring-tawo* principle does not free it from its normativity within the level of personal relationships. It "misdevelops" and counteracts the demands of equality and solidarity. Perhaps the alternative "*kapwa-tawo*" principle for politics which is not only indigenously familiar in *Bikol* could be explored for the articulation of those values due to the normative and universally inclusive signification of the term *kapwa* to all human beings.⁴⁴

Indigenous philosophizing as internal critique is a way of localizing the consciousness-raising effect of diagnosing social pathologies into the more immediate society of the people. This localizes the therapeutic measures as well that could be initiated and applied towards emancipation

and social change. In other words, philosophizing must be able to affect collective praxis in the local level, the possibility of which is easier to imagine, when a political culture characterized by engagement and participation is visible in a society, something that however is already vanishing from our view.

Developing a Participative Political Culture

The project of indigenous philosophizing in *Bikol* has redirected teaching and research in philosophy towards a more socially engaged undertaking. Appropriating Honneth's future prospect for a theory of justice anchored in social analysis, indigenous philosophy aims at developing a "political culture."⁴⁵ This means preparing the way for the participation of individual members of the society into "the creation of recognitional relationships based on trust and solidarity, as well as shared attention to all morally sensitive spheres of action that touch on the freedom of individuals."⁴⁶ And for this reorientation of indigenous philosophizing, the school persists as the strategic place for its practice.

The formative ambiance of the academic setting provides the conducive avenue for awakening critical thinking and enhancing the minds of individuals to be cognizant of pressing social concerns. Social justice which is described as the goal of philosophical thinking requires individuals who are capable of self-diagnosis of their society. As Renante Pilapil articulates succinctly, "one cannot have a normative idea of what a just society is without already having some empirical observation about what is wrong with society. Conversely, to be able to make descriptive observations about what is wrong with society presupposes already having an idea of what justice is."⁴⁷ This makes the articulation of forms of injustices substantial for philosophical praxis. According to Honneth "the experience of disrespect is always accompanied by affective sensations that are, in principle, capable of revealing to individuals the fact that certain forms of recognition are being withheld from them."⁴⁸ What counts as pathological is when these affective sensations are repressed and hindered from being articulated. Hence, individual, and collective

action for emancipation is basically crippled because subjects are not capable of responding to disrespect and injustices. They become apathetic and docile. An internal critique of indigenous values intends to perform this task of bringing to the surface affective sensations that can become motivational impetus for resistance.

One highlight of the linguistic turn which was showcased in Tria's works is the empowerment of *Bikol* language by using it as a medium for philosophical reflection. This increases the confidence in the potentialities of the home language. But it has also been shown, as in the work of Remodo, how the home language could also embody a culture of injustice which has a strong influence on one's social behavior because it has been deeply embedded in one's thought and practice. What is clear in both cases is the further localization of the articulation of values and social critique using one's own linguistic resources. This is a fundamental step in facilitating positive social change for, as Honneth believes, collective (political) action materializes only when struggles for recognition find a "shared semantics"⁴⁹ for articulation. The linguistic turn may be perceived as a further localization of the preparation for the social conditions of justice and emancipation.

The notion of justice gleaned from Honneth's theory of recognition appropriated herein as the goal of indigenous philosophizing requires "establishing and maintaining enabling social conditions for the formation of intact personal identity for all members of society."⁵⁰ This means that not only should the institutions of justice be made available to individuals but that they should be constantly reviewed and internally criticized. Honneth consistently suggests in his essay on education that the critical diagnosis of society is one way of preparing students for democratic participation. "The crucial contribution," he says, "that school education can make to the regeneration of democracy lies not in teaching individual rules of right action but in a communicative practice that fosters moral initiative and the ability to take up the perspective of others."⁵¹

In an earlier essay, Honneth showed that the activity of social diagnosis should be democratic and involve the participation of everyone in identifying problems.⁵² The point is not to find fault then impute blame but to come up with intelligent solutions for emergent problems. Democracy is the “condition for increasing the rationality of solutions to social problems”⁵³ out of the given equal opportunity for articulating one’s concerns and ideas. This implies that democracy does not only refer to the exercise of political rights but to the participation in, and the legitimation of, the institutions of justice.

“Democracy” does not merely signify free and equal participation in political will-formation; understood as an entire way of life, it means that individuals can participate equally at every central point in the mediation between the individual and society, such that each functionally differentiated sphere reflects the general structure of democratic participation.⁵⁴

For Honneth, “education and the school system are considered to be a social precondition of democracy.”⁵⁵ In other words, the school persists as the fertile ground for developing an engaged, critical, and participative political culture which indigenous philosophizing aims to do because it is the venue where the skill to critically evaluate the various spheres of freedom and interaction may be continually honed. In the Bikol experience it is in the academic institutions where indigenization emerged and could hopefully continue to aspire for the fruition of its aspirations.

Conclusion

What the indigenization of philosophy in *Bikol* has displayed is the confidence in being able to address concrete socio-political situations using one’s linguistic and cultural resources in thinking and to be recognized for this capability. What else does this show but a localization of the philosophical enterprise (as social critique) to where it is most needed and where it could function most efficiently, with justice

and emancipation as its end. Though an intensification of the mode of philosophizing described herein is needed, educational institutions persist as the conducive training ground for its practice, except when it declares exemption from criticism. Collective social diagnosis prepares individuals for the practice of democratic participation. The emphasis has always been on the macro level, but the development of democratic political action in the micro level of the indigenous is still wanting. The Bikol experience of indigenous philosophizing is an example of how the critical potential of philosophy could be charged and made to function more locally in one's immediate society.

This initiative taken by the scholars in the region can also be realigned to what Ferry Hidayat has rightly recognized as the emergence of regional and minor traditions of Asian philosophy.⁵⁶ Incidentally Hidayat also terms such movement as a “struggle for recognition (of Southeast Asian and regional philosophy).” He has furthermore identified the fact that even “the tradition of *Asian Philosophy* has also ignored the minor traditions.”⁵⁷ In the Philippines, Bikol indigenous philosophizing is an even more minor practice of doing philosophy in the country that seeks to materialize philosophy's critical potential in the region but is largely invisible because of its few practitioners and preference of most scholars for mainstream philosophy. But indeed, local philosophers, as Hidayat admonishes, “do not have to wait until Western academia's recognition approves or until their elitist fellow countrymen's acknowledgement comes.”⁵⁸ The exigency of emancipation from socio-political pathologies malignant in one's local society demands only that philosophy practitioners should utilize their analytical acumen in response to the more situated needs arising from their society. In terms of recognition, such efforts may not attain equality with the major traditions in philosophy, but what counts in the present is the service that philosophy should render to the society through its practitioners.

ENDNOTES

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⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 825.

¹¹ Ibid., 826.

¹² Ibid., 827.

¹³ Kristian S. Cordero, Imagining the Indigene: A Reading on the Agta in Bikol Writings. *Bikol Studies: Perspectives and Advocacies* 1(1), (2014): 26-47.

¹⁴ Kristian S. Cordero, Apologia ni Sokrates. *Pagpukaw: An Invitation to Philosophize* 3 (2003): 59-86.

¹⁵ Kristian S. Cordero. *SANTIGWAR Mga Rawitdawit sa Bikol asin Filipino* (Naga City: Goldprint Publishing, 2006).

¹⁶ Kristian S. Cordero *Canticos Apat na Boses* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2013), 1.

¹⁷ As cited in Kristian S. Cordero, Imagining the Indigene: A Reading on the Agta in Bikol Writings. *Bikol Studies: Perspectives and Advocacies* 1(1), (2014): 26-47.

¹⁸ Cordero, *Canticos Apat na Boses*, 23.

¹⁹ Cordero, Imagining the Indigene: A Reading on the Agta in Bikol Writings, 27.

²⁰ Ibid., 29.

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