

Reading Abulad's Reading of Kant: Postmodernism and the Possibility of a Filipino Philosophy

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Abstract

Building upon the inventory of Abulad's work by Bolaños, I explicate the link of the different periodization of Abulad's intellectual legacy. To do this, I first provide a reading of Abulad's peculiar reading of Kant, particularly his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Second, I show how this reading informs, in style and content, Abulad's theorization of postmodernism. Third, I explain how Abulad's Kantian-inspired postmodernism informs his contribution to the discourse on Filipino philosophy. In the end, this paper intends to achieve a reading of Abulad that weaves the seemingly fragmentary nature of his works together in order to show a singular thought and vision. This singularity is a demonstration of the possibility of a Filipino philosophy, which in the end has to be deconstructed without reserve.

Keywords: *Filipino, philosophy, via negativa, via positiva, postmodernism,*

On Abulad's Intellectual Legacy

Romualdo Abulad taught generations of students in philosophy in different universities and institutions in this country; some of whom now occupy teaching, research and administrative posts in different academic departments throughout the country. This fact should be sufficient enough to merit more investigations of the deep undercurrents that influence the philosophizing in the Philippines which bears his name, sworn or unsaid. However, Abulad, arguably, was not only a highly effective and influential

teacher to generations of students but also a scholar who left a vast written intellectual legacy in philosophical scholarship; a written legacy which, for Co, is the “most remarkable body of published articles on continental philosophy and postmodernism”¹ in the country, and which for Bolaños is the “most impressive and extensive” in the “literature of Filipino Philosophy.”²

However, the fragmentary nature of his work, which Bolaños describes as Abulad’s idiosyncratic claims,³ makes Abulad an elusive thinker, evading the capture of a singular thematic. Abulad’s shift from Nietzsche to Kant⁴ in his consideration of the most crucial proponent for postmodernism to his more infamous support of Duterte⁵ and his policies that received a scathing critique for being fallacious and impliedly unchristian⁶ are the twists and turns of what is deemed as his idiosyncrasy.

In this paper, I forward a proposal in viewing Abulad’s intellectual legacy. Despite the description of being idiosyncratic in manner, his turns and shifts orbit around a center of gravity. The mapping of this center of gravity, I claim, not only informs his intellectual legacy but is also an instance of an undivided life in philosophy.⁷ This is an instance that grounds his

¹ Alfredo Co, “Doing Philosophy in the Philippines: Fifty Years Ago and Fifty Years from Now”, in *Two Filipino Thomasian Philosophers on Postmodernism* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2004), 13.

² Paolo Bolaños, “Introduction to the Special Tribute Section: Abulad, Philosophy, and Intellectual Generosity”, in *Kritike: An Online Journal Of Philosophy*, 13: 2 (December 2019), 2.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Although Abulad, as early as 1998, already intimates the relation between Kant and postmodernism, the former being a pioneer of the latter, which he will rearticulate again in 2005; it was not until his Zeferino Gonzales Quadricentennial lecture, that he made the explicit claim of Kant as Father of Postmodernity. See Romualdo Abulad, “Kant and Postmodernism” in *Phavisminda Journal*, 2, (May 1998), 32-51; “Immanuel Kant as a Pioneer of Postmodernity,” in *The Thomasian Philosopher*, 26 (2005), 120-128; “Immanuel Kant as the Father of Postmodernity”, Zeferino Gonzales Quadricentennial Lecture Series, UST Martyr’s Hall. February 19, 2011.

⁵ See Romualdo Abulad. “Why President Duterte Could be Correct,” in *King’s Clarion* (June 2016-2017).

⁶ Raymund Festin, “Duterte, Kant, and Philosophy”, in *Phavisminda Journal*, 16 & 17 (May 2018), 16-96.

⁷ Taking from Hadot, I mean philosophical activity is a way of life that is undistinguished between leisure and work. Philosophy, in this sense, is not merely a

minimal consideration of Filipino philosophy. To explicate this proposal, I take from the recent work of Bolaños to provide the scaffold for a point of departure.

Bolaños' recent inventory periodizes the five-decade span of Abulad's intellectual legacy and abstracts three main themes throughout his scholarship: Kant and German philosophy, Postmodernism, and Filipino philosophy.⁸ With the benefit of this recent inventory, I will not belabor to repeat what Bolaños has already laid down; rather, I take his inventory and periodization as a point of departure for this paper. As a means to make sense of Abulad's legacy, I articulate the interstices of the three themes in Abulad with the end of reading him as having a singular thought. Whereas Bolaños made more explicit the diachronic movement of Abulad's mind through his works, I show the logical connection between these themes. I read Abulad's reading of Kant and show how his reading of Kant informs his later theorization of postmodernism. Abulad's Kantian informed postmodernism, I argue, demonstrates his own minimal definition of Filipino philosophy in two aspects: first, as a commentator on the discourse on the subject; and second, in the idiosyncratic, as Bolaños describes, aspect of his explication of postmodernism. That is, Abulad contributes to Filipino philosophy by first, a saying; and second as a showing what it is.

Although not exhaustive and the steps merely incremental, if not piecemeal,⁹ as Gripaldo oftentimes describes the works of other Filipino scholars in philosophy, I have set myself the task of provisionally making sense of Abulad's written legacy in order to formulate what constitutes, I believe, as Abulad's singular thought. To the many students of Abulad, what I am going to articulate here is something definitely not new. Thus, at the onset, I claim nothing original. But perhaps, it is in the re-articulation of the same text that is now Abulad that I can, perhaps, make his thought more

discourse but an activity in itself. See Pierre Hadot, "Philosophy as a Way of Life", in *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson (London: Blackwell, 1995), 255-276.

⁸ See Bolaños, "Introduction To the Special Tribute Section".

⁹ Rolando M. Gripaldo, *The Making of a Filipino Philosopher and Other Essays* (Mandaluyong City: National Book Store, 2009), 70.

explicit, as he oftentimes quote Hegel to his students: “the force of mind is only as great as its expression”¹⁰, especially at this point when, as Hegel again writes, “The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk.”¹¹

A Brief Account of Abulad’s Educational Background

Romualdo Abulad is considered as the foremost scholar of Kant in our country.¹² Certain quarters may disagree for whatever reasons, but this attribution to Abulad, which has many varied anecdotal and written sources, is not without basis. I give two reasons. One, there has been no Filipino scholar who has devoted his theses from undergraduate to post-doctoral on Kant, except Abulad. He finished his bachelor’s degree in philosophy from the University of Santo Tomas (UST), with an undergraduate thesis on Kant. After around seven years in the Master’s program, he wrote a thesis on the status of metaphysics in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* at the Ateneo de Manila University.¹³ He pursued his doctorate in philosophy in UST with a comparative study between Kant and Sri Shankaracharya, particularly on

¹⁰ GWF Hegel. *Phenomenology of the Mind*. trans. J.B Baillie (New York: Harper and Row, 1910), 74.

¹¹ GWF Hegel, *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. T.M Knox, intro. Stephen Houlgate (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 16.

¹² For instance, Bolaños assumes Abulad’s status as the “premier Kantian scholar in the country.” Bolaños writes: “It could be argued that, apart from being recognized as the premier Kantian scholar in the country, on account of his numerous writings on Kant, Abulad earned the reputation as the philosopher of postmodernism after the publication of the essay “What is Postmodernism?” which proved influential among the younger generation of aspiring Filipino philosophers.” Bolaños, “Introduction to the Special Tribute Section”, 4. In the abstract of an interview with Abulad, Emmanuel de Leon begins: “In this interview, the readers get the chance to listen to one of the most significant Thomasian philosophers, and undoubtedly, the most prominent Kantian scholar of our country.” Emmanuel De Leon, “An Interview with Romualdo Abulad, SVD,” *Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy*, 10: 1 (June 2016), 1.

¹³ Abulad studied under the late Dr. Ramon Reyes, who was a scholar on the Hegelian philosopher Eric Weil, and taught Kant and Hegel in Ateneo de Manila University. Abulad later on finished his master’s thesis under the supervision of Fr. Roque Ferriols, S.J. See Romualdo Abulad, *The Status of Metaphysics in Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason* (Master’s Thesis, Ateneo de Manila University, 1975).

their notions of the self, for his dissertation.¹⁴ Not yet satisfied, Abulad decided to go to Germany with the main reason of reading Kant in German in order to verify his understanding of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.¹⁵ In 1979, barely a year after finishing his Ph.D. he was awarded a prestigious fellowship by the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung. As a Humboldt fellow, he stayed in the University of Hamburg, and then in the University of Freiburg. His fellowship culminated with his work, "Criticism and Eternal Peace: Kant's Critique of Pure Reason as the Method of Scientific Metaphysics."¹⁶ What this report on Abulad's educational development shows is that he has been an ardent student of Kant's philosophy - reading, writing and researching- from undergraduate to his post-doctoral fellowship, in major universities of philosophy in the country and abroad, particularly Germany. This should be a testament of Abulad's intellectual background in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant.

Following Bolaños' inventory, the second reason why Abulad remains to be the foremost scholar on Kant in the country is the sheer amount of scholarly work he has published on Kant, a feat which is still unrivaled in its quantity.¹⁷

Whether or not Abulad is the foremost scholar on Kant in the Philippines, there is no doubt that his philosophical persuasion is deeply from and for Kant. But the question is, how does Abulad read Kant? One glaring fact that cannot be unnoticed by any of his students is the scholarly attention

¹⁴ Romualdo Abulad, *Links Between East and West in the Philosophies of Shankara and Kant* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Santo Tomas, 1978).

¹⁵ Romualdo Abulad, "Immanuel Kant and Postmodernism: Constructing Roots for a Filipino Philosophy", Philosophical Association of the Philippines, 26 October 2012. Legacy Lecture. He also shared this in an interview with de Leon. De Leon, "An Interview with Romualdo Abulad, SVD," 11.

¹⁶ Romualdo Abulad, *Criticism and Eternal Peace: Kant's Critique of Pure Reason as the Method of Scientific Metaphysics* (Unpublished, University of Hamburg, 1980).

¹⁷ Bolaños' inventory shows an extensive list of Abulad's publication on Kant. Bolaños, "Introduction to the Special Tribute Section." Although published in 2000, an earlier inventory of Filipino scholarship in philosophy by Rolando Gripaldo shows the quantity of Abulad's publication on Kant that during that time, at least, is unsurpassed. See Rolando Gripaldo, *Filipino Philosophy: A Critical Bibliography, 1774-1994* (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 2000).

that Abulad devotes to one particular critical work of Kant, that is, the first book of the critical trilogy, the *Critique of Pure Reason* and, by extension, its later clarificatory addendum the *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysic*.¹⁸

Abulad's devotion to the *Critique of Pure Reason* is a telling gesture that points to his reading of the *Critique of Pure Reason* as what deeply informs his theorization of postmodernism; such that if a center is to be located in Abulad's scholarship, a reference that no matter how temporarily it may be, it finds itself in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and its extension, the *Prolegomena*. Hardly does he even mention the *Critique of Power Judgement* nor Kant's later works.

Abulad's Reading of Kant: *Via Negativa* and *Via Positiva*

Much of Abulad's early work, following the inventory of Bolaños, focused on an exposition of Kant's philosophy, with a particular attention on themes culled from his reading of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.¹⁹ If we locate the central reference of Abulad's scholarship in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, what then are the points and themes that he particularly focus his attention on?

¹⁸ Although the *Critique of Pure Reason* has been considered to be Kant's most important work, this, however, is not shared by all philosophers. Onora O'neil, for instance, proposes that the supreme law that serves to be the overarching principle in Kant is the categorical imperative, which is explicitly articulated in the second critique and is, according to her, implied in the first work. See Onora O'neil, *Constructions of Reason: Explorations of Kant's Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989). This does not mean, however, that Abulad does not deal with the other works of Kant, such as the *Critique of Practical Reason* or the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, both works which he oftentimes returns back to, particularly when he uses Kant's Good Will and Rousseau's General Will, to ground his assertion on ethics and politics. His discussion of Rousseau's General Will and Kant's Good Will, in the second critique, are oftentimes discussed not only in relation to ethics but also to the EDSA revolution, which he marks with emphasis in his discussions of philosophy and the Philippines. For instance, see Romualdo Abulad "Ethics and Governance in the Postmodern Glocalized Society", in *USC Graduate Journal*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 2, (March 2012), 161-183.

¹⁹ Abulad's works in 1972; 1974; 1982; 1987 and 1990. See Bolaños, "Introduction To the Special Tribute Section".

Perhaps, the most strategic way to begin is to let Abulad examine the syntagma that bears the title of the work, *Critique of Pure Reason*. In the essay “Kant and Postmodernism”, Abulad directs us to Kant’s own explanation of what a critique of pure reason is. According to Abulad, “there are at least three places where Kant explicitly explains what he means by the term *Critique of Pure Reason*: in the Prefaces, the Introduction, and the section in the Transcendental Doctrine of Method called “The Doctrine of Pure Reason in Polemics.”²⁰

a) Form and Style

In these places in the *Critique*, Abulad explicates the function of critique through the analogy of a tribunal or court that “protects rightful claims but dismiss groundless pretensions.” Because this concerns pure reason—a critique of pure reason—then it is a court that judges reason by reason to determine what it can rightfully claim and what is deemed to be mere illusions.²¹ Of course, the question that the *Critique* and, by extension, the *Prolegomena*, seek to ask: Is metaphysics, constituted by synthetic a priori judgements, as a science even possible? But already, here in the analysis of the syntagma, we are able to see both the form and style of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* that Abulad says and shows throughout his philosophizing in different variations. The form that shapes the scholarship of Abulad can be taken to be the decisive bipartition that results as a conclusion of the first division of the first part of the critique, the distinction between what can be known and what cannot be known.²² Respectively, the former is contained in the part preceding the second division of the first part of the *Critique* but after the Introduction; while the latter is demonstrated in the transcendental logic dialectic, beginning in the second division of the first part of the *Critique*. The former contains Kant’s discussion of the pure forms of intuition and the pure concepts of the understanding with its elements and its applications that contain the deduction; the synthetic unity of

²⁰ Abulad, “Kant and Postmodernism”, 36; the passages that Abulad refers to here can be found in Axi-xii and B779/A75.

²¹ Axi-xii.

²² B295=A236-B324=A268.

apperception, which Abulad focused his dissertation on; and the schematism of pure reason. The latter, on the other hand, examines the illusions of reason particularly with regards to the three highest questions in metaphysics, viz., the immortality of the soul, freedom in the world, and the existence of God. This bipartition in Kant serves the undercurrent in Abulad's several essays on ethics, politics, religion and science; that is, in these essays, the crucial thesis that underlies the different particular concerns in his different essays is the power of reason and the limitation of knowledge.

Abulad thematizes the realization of this split in the unfolding of the world spirit as postmodernism, viz., postmodern ethics,²³ postmodern politics (which he calls post-Machiavelli)²⁴ postmodern Christ,²⁵ God and postmodernity, Thomas Aquinas and postmodernism, etc. As in the opening lines of his celebrated essay, he writes: "I suspect that there might be some of us who think that we are still living in the modern times. Allow me to disillusion you at the very onset: Ours is no longer the modern age, ours is already the postmodern age that is the age after modernity, the times after modernity has closed."²⁶ Notice that the realization of this bipartition is what Abulad calls the "postmodern age" and, later on, postmodernism. When read together in his earlier text, such as "Kant and Postmodernism", Abulad emphasizes the position that the modern times is the age that has not fully grasped Kant's critique, while the postmodern times is the period that realizes the critique such that—in Abulad's words—we are brought by Heidegger, the successor to Kant, "calmly to the other shore."²⁷

²³ See Romualdo Abulad and Alfredo Co, *Two Thomasian Philosophers on Postmodernism* (Manila: UST publishing, 2004), 78-93; 115-132. Also, Abulad "Ethics and Governance in the Postmodern Globalized Society", 161-183.

²⁴ For instance, see Romualdo Abulad, "Post-Machiavelli", in *Two Thomasian Philosophers on Postmodernism* (Manila: UST publishing, 2004), 94-103.

²⁵ This is the topic of his masteral thesis in theology. See Romualdo E. Abulad, "Toward a Reconstruction of Christology in the Context of Postmodernity" (Master's Thesis, Divine Word Seminary, 2003).

²⁶ Romualdo Abulad, "What is Postmodernism?" in *Two Thomasian Philosophers on Postmodernism* (Manila: UST publishing, 2004), 19.

²⁷ In an unpublished work, Abulad writes: "That vision of enlightenment started by the Greeks was too precious to be given up so easily. As late as the twentieth century, a thinker of Husserl's stature was still bravely hoping to see if there was any way to salvage the dream, but that was not anymore to succeed; his successor was no longer a

On the matter of style, which should be familiar to his students, Abulad says and shows Kant's critique. The style that Abulad employs can be taken to be inspired from the general division of the entire critique, the division between the "transcendental doctrine of elements" and the "transcendental doctrine of method." The transcendental doctrine of elements draws the border between the phenomenon and the *noumenon*; in its entirety, this is the part that marks Kant's negative feature, the destructive force that dismantles systems and structures of western thought; while the latter marks the positive character in the *Critique*, which provides for a "determination of the formal conditions of a complete system of pure reason" without having to repeat "the endless controversies"²⁸ that confounded reason before its self-critique. When appropriated to Abulad's theorization of postmodernism, Kant's "transcendental doctrine of elements" and the "transcendental doctrine of method" serve as undercurrents, in as much as style as it is form, in Abulad's philosophizing that would become what he calls as the *via negativa* and the *via positiva*.²⁹

Noticeable to the reader of Abulad's text, and obvious to any of his students, is his insistence, which seems to border into a universal law that he demands of himself, of teaching and writing that almost always narrate a historical movement in philosophy.

modern man, but a postmodern man, a true successor of Kant - the inimitable Martin Heidegger. Carrying us calmly to the other shore, this time of postmodernity, Heidegger inaugurates the construction of the new consciousness, no longer simply *via negativa*, even while ceaselessly being critiqued by it, at home in imagination and *poiesis*, in Deleuze's logic of sense, in no way averse to legends, myths and paradoxes, as well as, needless to say, parables and miracles." Romualdo Abulad, "Immanuel Kant as the Father of Postmodernity", Zeferino Gonzales Quadricentennial Lecture Series. UST Martyr's Hall, February 19, 2011.

²⁸ Respectively, B735=A707; and, Avii.

²⁹ See Romualdo Abulad, "What is Postmodernism?" in *Two Thomasian Philosophers on Postmodernism* (Manila: UST publishing, 2004), 19-38. His explicit discussion of these two pairs, side by side, can also be read in his essay, "God and Postmodernity." Romualdo Abulad, "God and Postmodernity" in *Two Thomasian Philosophers on Postmodernism* (Manila: UST publishing, 2004), 198.

Perhaps, this is the burden of tradition that philosophers have to carry.³⁰ Here, the student is not so far from the teacher. In the Introduction to the Festschrift in honor of Emerita Quito, whom Abulad considers as “no doubt the most important philosopher in the Philippines”, Abulad describes his teacher as “a historicist.” He continues: “she is both Occidental and Orientalist... it is safe to say that Quito’s philosophy is Catholic in that, bereft of the constraints of a systematic philosophy”.³¹

Thus, for some thinkers, this historical thinking is less conspicuous, while for others, like Abulad, more explicit. This is Bolaños’ observation when he writes of Abulad’s idiosyncratic ways that is preceded, if not, constituted, by his narration of the history of philosophy.³² But a student of Abulad, for sure, will see that this is not merely style, but also “pedagogically effective,” as Bolaños agrees.³³

Abulad’s technique and style follows with conviction, Kant’s own prescription for method which can be found in the second part of the Critique of Pure Reason, “the transcendental doctrine of method”, which I have mentioned earlier. If we review our critique of pure reason, we would remember that the second part of the critique has four chapters, respectively: 1) The discipline of pure reason, 2) the canon of pure reason, 3) the architectonic of pure reason, and 4) the history of pure reason.

³⁰ In an interview with Günther Gauss in 1964, Hannah Arendt pointed out the historical burden that philosophers have to carry in their thinking and philosophizing. Because of this burden, she identifies herself as a political theorist rather than a political philosopher for the reason that she does not want to carry the burden of the history of philosophy in her work; and yet this is the same scholar who wrote on important commentaries on Greek philosophy and philosophers, such as her peculiarly powerful reading of Socrates. See Hannah Arendt, “Socrates” in *The Promise of Politics* (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), 5-39. The history of philosophy cannot be taken for granted for any student of philosophy. This, for sure, grant rigor, and also, profundity in philosophy.

³¹ Romualdo Abulad, “Introduction”, in *A Life in Philosophy: Selected works (1965-1988) of Emerita S. Quito* (Manila: De la Salle University press, 1990), iii.

³² See Bolaños, “Introduction To the Special Tribute Section”.

³³ *Ibid.*, 7.

These four chapters are the basis for Kant's guidelines in building a new science of metaphysics after the destruction of dogmatism, the old science of metaphysics, which was elaborated in the first part of the critique of pure reason. In general, the doctrine of method asserts that for any science to be, in this case, metaphysics (or philosophy), it must have learned already the distinction between what can be known and what cannot be known. It is only from learning this distinction that one can proceed to a new science that is radical and revolutionary. It is a science that is disciplined because it knows it has its limitations that it must not go beyond. It is a science that reflects on its capacity in knowing and acting, and its yearning from its limited capacities. This is particularly sketched in the Canon of Pure Reason which famously summarizes any project of science/metaphysics/philosophy—in Kant's terms: transcendental philosophy—after the critique: "What can I know? What can I do? What can I hope for?"³⁴ It is a science that must proceed systematically beginning from the critique; this is the architectonic of pure reason. It is a science that understands its conflicts, its struggles, and its overcoming, a science that understands its history. It is particularly in the last part that Abulad emphasizes in his style the narration of the history of thought, to understand its own dialectical movement. In the end, Kant, writes:

The critical path alone is still open. If the reader has been kind and patient to follow me to the end along this path, he may judge for himself whether, if he wishes to contribute as much as he can towards making this footpath a highroad, it may not be possible to achieve, even before the close of the present century, what so many centuries have not been able to accomplish: namely, to give complete satisfaction to human reason with regard to those questions which have in all ages, though hitherto in vain, engaged its desire for knowledge.³⁵

³⁴ B833=A805.

³⁵ B884=A856.

b) Radical and Revolutionary

Noticeable in Abulad's work is the *expositio* before the radical *disputatio*; that is, the exposition of philosophers and philosophies is the *conditio sine qua non* for the deployment of his own critique, particularly on the grounding assumptions to the object of inquiry. Taking an eagle's eye view to Abulad's own *oeuvre*, movement of his mastery and exposition of Kant informs his application of critique to unsettle familiar metaphysical assumptions, then turns what is left as a new ground, his postmodernism.

Let us further expound on the interpretation I have forwarded by discussing, in Abulad's own historicist means, the *via negativa* and *via positiva* with what I consider as two added features that complement these two aspects of Abulad's philosophizing. Perhaps we can thematize these binaries with another pair: radical and revolutionary. For sure, Kant's project is radical and revolutionary, but it is in the reading of Abulad's reading of Kant that this theme, and I am not arguing for originality, becomes explicit; and to be explicit, as the history of philosophy shows from Parmenides, Hegel to Wittgenstein, cannot be underestimated.

Reading Abulad, Kant's project is radical because the critique is more devastating than the universal doubt of Descartes. Abulad, in his dissertation, extends the discussion of this radicality to the point that Descartes' *cogito* turns, through a critique of pure reason, into a mere illusion, a paralogism. Thus, in Kant, the *cogito* is reduced into a mere functionality without substance. Kant calls the "I think" as the synthetic unity of apperception, or the transcendental apperception.³⁶ In reading Kant, Abulad extends this further by concluding that Kant's transcendental apperception shares the same non-substantial character of Atman-Brahman as propounded by the champion of *Advaita Vedanta* a millennia earlier, Sri Shankaracharya.³⁷

³⁶ B132=A97.

³⁷ See Abulad, "Links Between East and West".

If the claim to the foundation for a universal science that ushered in modernity is, as considered by historians of thought, to be attributed to Descartes, thus, attributing to him the title of being the Father of Modernity, and if this foundation is rendered by Kant as a mere paralogism,³⁸ then the foundations of modernity itself is left shattered and in ruins. The “*mirabilis scientiae fundamenta*”³⁹ that Descartes literally dreamt of, indeed, is demonstrated by Kant to be merely a dream that although logical in its formulation, is but a mere transcendental illusion. Through his reading of Kant, Abulad argues that modernity reached its death before it saw its peak. In his idiosyncratic narration of philosophical history, the peak of modernity, which refuses to accept its death from the destruction of Kant, is attributable to the greatest system builder after Aristotle, that is, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. The radicality of Kant’s critique also led Abulad to read the critique as the bedrock model, or perhaps, the *Abgrund* —the abyss— the negative ground, that informs Nietzsche’s nihilism and Derrida’s deconstructionism. In many of his writings, Abulad almost always cites Kant’s contemporary, Moses Mendelssohn’s claim of Kant being an “all-destroyer” to emphasize this important aspect of leaving the slate cleaner than the doubting Descartes.⁴⁰

Kant, however, is not only radical, but also revolutionary because his critique is able to establish a certitude that, at first, takes from Locke’s suggestion in the Epistle of his famous Essays, in which instead of the subject conforming to the object, it is the object that must conform to the subject.⁴¹

³⁸ B411-B412.

³⁹ foundations of a marvelous science

⁴⁰ See Abulad, “What is Postmodernism?” Also, Abulad, *Immanuel Kant as the Father of Postmodernity*.

⁴¹ John Locke, “The Epistle to the Reader” in *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (New York: Dover, 1959), 9. Kant radicalizes this remark from the Epistle and raises the claim that its discovery is similar to the revolution inspired by Copernicus, only this time in philosophy. Kant writes “We should therefore attempt to tackle the tasks of metaphysics more successfully by assuming that the objects must conform to our knowledge. This would better agree with the required possibility of an *a priori* knowledge of objects, one that would settle something about them before they are given to us. We are here in a similar situation as Copernicus was at in the beginning. Unable to proceed satisfactorily in the explanation of the motions of the heavenly bodies on the supposition that the entire collection of stars turned round the spectator, he tried to see whether he

This suggestion from the English empiricist is then brought together by Kant, with rationalist elements, to yield an explanatory power to Hume's question of causality.⁴² This, in the end, resulted in the overcoming of the impasse between the dogmatism of the continent and the skepticism of the British Isles. Abulad's reading emphasizes the mention of a Copernican revolution in the second preface to punctuate the Kantian discovery that, as Abulad oftentimes mentions, is famously summarized in the formula: "thoughts without contents are empty; intuition without concepts are blind."⁴³ The radicality and revolutionary themes that we read in Abulad's reading complement each other, which are particular instances of Abulad's *via negativa* and *via positiva*, because their relation serves to characterize the transition and crossing from old paradigms to a new paradigm, from modernity to postmodernity.⁴⁴

For Abulad, the result of critique is perpetual peace, which is the recognition of our limitations and our capacities to act. At the end of the last millennium, this perpetual peace, which is more informed by the *Critique* than Kant's later political works, is Abulad's optimistic theorization of postmodernism, which, following Abulad, is the result of Kant's transcendental philosophy, particularly in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

might not have a greater success by making the spectator revolve and leaving the stars at rest." Bxvii.

⁴² In the Preface to the *Prolegomena*, Kant claims to be indebted to Hume for waking him up from his "dogmatic slumber." Hume's problematic explication of the relation of cause and effect serves as a springboard for Kant to consider cause and effect as pure concepts of the understanding that can only make sense in the application to possible experience. See Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, trans. and ed. Gary Hatfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 10, 5-14.

⁴³ B76=A52.

⁴⁴ It is not an accident that Abulad cites Thomas Kuhn often, and employs Kuhn's term "paradigm shift" to describe this transition ushered by Kant, a revolutionary transition that shifts paradigms in a radical way; for Abulad, this is postmodernism. See Romualdo Abulad, "The Future of Ethics: A Postmodern View", in *Two Thomasian on Philosophers Postmodernism* (Manila: UST publishing, 2004), 125-126. Also see Romualdo Abulad, "Filipino Postmodernity: Quo Vadis?" in *Kritike*, 13: 2 (December 2019), 37-59.

Abulad's Theorization of Postmodernism

Earlier, the two aspects of Abulad's postmodernism are identified as the *via negativa* and the *via positiva*. These two aspects are connected with the earlier themes that I interpret in Abulad. The *via negativa* is parallel to the first part of the critique; the *via positiva* parallels the second part of the critique. The *via negativa* is the radical character, while the *via positiva* is the revolutionary character. The *via negativa* is the deconstructive part; the *via positiva* is the constructive part. In Abulad's articulation of postmodernism, he summons and employs different philosophers to his cause, and categorizes them according to their positive and negative functions. Abulad reads Kant as having accomplished both features. Based on our previous explications on Abulad's reading, Kant accomplished both the *via negativa*, that is, a radical destruction through the critique of pure reason, and *via positiva*, which provides guidelines to build upon the ruins brought by the critique such that these result into a consciousness that is no longer iron-caged in –isms that defined modernity and the historical periods preceding it. To clarify this, let us digress and discuss Abulad's postmodernism.

For Abulad, postmodernism is “an age after modernity.”⁴⁵ That is, modernity has ended and the postmodern has entered the scene. However, he is quick to clarify that postmodernism “is not an ism In short, postmodernism is not an ideology or a school of thought one may or may not espouse.... It is a consciousness, a way of thinking, a mode of life... a perspective that defines one's attitude towards reality and existence.”⁴⁶ This is why Abulad first considers Nietzsche as the father of postmodernism because Nietzsche was a reaction to modernity, the iconoclast par excellence. His declaration for the death of God shook the foundations of the Europeo-Christian culture.⁴⁷ This declaration serves as one of the impetus for a new consciousness, a consciousness that is no longer modern. Such is why for Abulad, the path of the negative —*via negativa*— of deconstruction and destruction, is an important, nay, a necessary path of postmodernism.

⁴⁵ Abulad, “What is Postmodernism?”, 19.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 24.

Nietzsche's declaration of the death of God is *via negativa*, which he likens to the Buddhist concept of Nirvana, the revelation of nothingness and groundlessness.

Postmodernism, then, seeks to deconstruct the foundations of modernity. For Abulad, the highest peak of modernity is seen in GWF Hegel, whose philosophy attempted to encompass all of reality into a science, into the Absolute Spirit. Everything falls, in the words of Derrida, under the "mighty shadow" of Hegel.⁴⁸ Although Hegel is seen as the highest point of modernity, Abulad considers Husserl as the last of the great moderns, who attempted to resuscitate the project of Descartes; the project which founded modernity.⁴⁹ Nietzsche provides this destruction and deconstruction of foundations. It is exactly this nihilism that accorded Nietzsche the status of being a postmodern. However, Nietzsche is not the only one who reacted against modernity, and thus he is not the only postmodern. And yet he is considered by Abulad as the father of postmodernism because of convenience. He died at the end of the century.⁵⁰

A certain kind of cautious reticence seems to have prevented Abulad from outrightly considering Kant as the father of postmodernism. In his 1998 text, Abulad already intimates Kant to be a pioneer of postmodernism.⁵¹ He cites this more explicitly in 2005, the title of which already makes the claim: Kant as a pioneer in postmodernism.⁵² But it will take Abulad more than a decade from his original position to finally name Kant as the father of postmodernism. In the occasion of the Zeferino Gonzales Quadricentennial lecture, Abulad finally makes the claim that it is Kant and not Nietzsche, who should be credited as the father, and not only a pioneer, of postmodernism.⁵³

⁴⁸ Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas", in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (New York: Routledge, 2009), 100.

⁴⁹ Abulad, "What is Postmodernism?", 29.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁵¹ Abulad, "Kant and Postmodernism"

⁵² See Abulad, "Immanuel Kant as a Pioneer of Postmodernity"

⁵³ Abulad begins the first paragraph of his lecture with "I shall alter, not only slightly but radically, the title of the paper that you asked me to write this year's Zeferino Gonzales Quadricentennial Lecture Series. Instead of speaking of Kant merely as a pioneer of postmodernity, I shall be referring to him here as its father, in the same way as we dub

Because for all the radicality of Nietzsche's gesture of announcing God's death, Kant already centuries earlier demonstrated this in his critique.

But, why Immanuel Kant? We have to remember that the project of modernity, starting with its father, Rene Descartes, sought to establish a foundation for certainty but in doing so had to put everything into doubt. Kant brought this project to culmination with the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which we brought to fore earlier as the Kantian text that Abulad is most preoccupied with. The *Critique of Pure Reason* brought the project of modernity into culmination, because ultimately, Kant's conclusion is a certitude that is not founded on the object. Kant famously makes his conclusion that we can never know the thing-in-itself or the *noumenon*.⁵⁴ Kant's conclusion, for Abulad, became the guiding theme in the era after modernity. The critique, which is accentuated in the first part of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, paradigmatically informs the ground(lessness) of this consciousness after modernity. But the realization of this consciousness after modernity finds its most decisive form, according to Abulad, in Heidegger's thought. If postmodernism is not just a *via negativa*; that is, it is not just a shaking of foundations; but it is also a *via positiva*, that is, after the shaking and questioning of foundations, an architectonic can be built but already conscious against the system-building of modernity, then the relation between the two meets their realization in Heidegger.

Heidegger is "the paradigm" for this new consciousness that is Abulad's postmodernism. In a posthumous text, "Filipino Postmodernity: Quo Vadis?", Abulad gives a more focused discussion of Heidegger's thought as the instance, nay, the event that, for me, marks the coinciding of Abulad's two paths of postmodernism, the *via negativa* and the *via positiva*.⁵⁵ Whereas Kant is the father because he cleared the ground and laid down the guidelines for this new consciousness, Heidegger brought these two to realization. What allowed Heidegger to bring these two together is his

Descartes today as the father of modernity." Abulad, *Immanuel Kant as the Father of Postmodernity*.

⁵⁴ B61=A44.

⁵⁵ See Romualdo Abulad, "Filipino Postmodernity: Quo Vadis?", in *Kritike: An Online Journal Of Philosophy*, 13: 2 (December 2019), 37-59.

appropriation of phenomenology to the question of Being.⁵⁶ Heidegger's appropriation of phenomenology serves as the bridge between the "first beginning" to the "second beginning"; that is, from phenomenology's usage by the great modern thinkers, Husserl and Hegel, in order to stretch the optimism of the modern project, to its appropriation by Heidegger that would bring about the thinking *vom Ereignis*, when "the time of "systems is over."⁵⁷ Although Kant provided an all-destroying critique, it is Heidegger that retains the critique but at the same time demonstrates the guidelines in a way that allows for the coinciding of both the negative and positive paths as an event, thinking *vom Ereignis* that as Abulad claims carried us to the shore of postmodernism, the "second beginning."⁵⁸ Abulad writes,

Heidegger read this human predicament as a long history of the forgetfulness of being, the original object of the intellectual quest, a forgetfulness which has produced a series of metaphysical ideas, all of which needs to be destroyed. This end of metaphysics is, so far as Heidegger is concerned, in the service of the recovery of the real metaphysics, a new ontological groundwork that should underlie all our future thought, that thinking which he describes as coming not so much from reason as *vom Ereignis*.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Abulad writes: "Phenomenology thus established itself as the method appropriate for the new way of thinking, not however the phenomenology of Hegel alone nor the phenomenology of Husserl alone, but the phenomenology of both together. It is this phenomenology which Heidegger used in order to cross the borders of the "first beginning" into the "new beginning," mistakenly taken by Husserl to be a betrayal of his method. With Heidegger the paradigm shift is done, and there is no more turning back." *Ibid.*, 42-43.

⁵⁷ Particularly instructive is Heidegger's statement in the *Beitrag*, "[t]he time of 'systems' is over. The time of re-building the essential shaping of beings according to the truth of be-ing has not yet arrived. In the meantime, in crossing to another beginning, philosophy has to have achieved one crucial thing: projecting-open, i.e., the grounding enopening of the free-play of the time-space of the truth of be-ing." Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowing)*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 4.

⁵⁸ Abulad, "Filipino Postmodernity", 37-38.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 54.

The Abulad Circle: Kant and Postmodernism

Here, we have come full circle in explicating the relation of Abulad's reading of Kant and his theorization of postmodernism. What comes to fore in this articulation are the different levels of binaries in Abulad, viz., *via negativa* and *via positiva*, the radical and revolutionary, and the style and form that we forced to surface in our reading of Abulad's reading of Kant. This reading of Abulad's reading of Kant fills up the interstices in Bolaños' inventory of Abulad in three categories. I showed how Abulad's preoccupation with Kant, particularly his *Critique of Pure Reason*, frames in style and in form his theorization of postmodernism. German philosophy, particularly his preoccupation with Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger, is a necessary component to his *Bildungsroman*,⁶⁰ because the development of phenomenology from Hegel and Husserl to Heidegger, as Abulad articulates in his works, is the bridge between Kant's critique as *via negativa* and the guidelines in the doctrine of method as *via positiva*. Heidegger's phenomenology led to the thinking *vom Ereignis* that realizes and serves as "the paradigm" of the new consciousness that Abulad calls as postmodernism. In Bolaños' categorization, what we still need to account for is Abulad and Filipino philosophy. What, then, do Kant, Heidegger, and postmodernism have to do with Filipino Philosophy?

Abulad On Saying and Showing Filipino Philosophy

Giorgio Agamben remarks that "every ontology (every metaphysics, but also every science that moves, whether consciously or not, in the field of metaphysics) presupposes the difference between indicating and signifying, and is defined, precisely, as situated at the very limit between these two acts."⁶¹ This remark orients the frame in which we must see Abulad's participation in Filipino philosophy.

⁶⁰ Bolaños, "Introduction to the Special Tribute Section", 7.

⁶¹ Giorgio Agamben, *Language and Death: The Place of Negativity*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 17.

a) On Saying

At the onset, Abulad does not deny the possibility of a Filipino philosophy. The premise that allows him to claim for a possibility of a Filipino philosophy is that human beings, collectively, as a people, have a “natural disposition” for an “implied metaphysics,” an “enunciated *Weltanschauung*.”⁶² There is nothing surprising that Abulad is influenced by Kant, and cites the *Critique of Pure Reason* to support this claim, “Yet, in a certain sense, this kind of knowledge (metaphysics) also must be looked upon as given, and though not as science, yet as a natural disposition.”⁶³

Unlike some of his contemporaries, whose methods he categorized as the anthropological approach,⁶⁴ Abulad does not follow the persuasion that Filipino philosophy is a search for that hidden spring for the peculiarly Filipino mind, consciousness or psyche sedimented beneath layers upon layers of culture and language. Preoccupied with investigating Filipino languages and folk-sayings in the hope of grasping the Filipino psyche and thereby discovering the Filipino philosophy, Leonardo Mercado and Florentino Timbreza are examples, according to Abulad, of this approach.⁶⁵

Abulad's position holds what I call minimal qualification for Filipino philosophy. By minimal qualification, I mean he does not require narrow standards for consideration of a possible Filipino philosophy. There seems to be three general conditions, for him, that satisfy a possible Filipino philosophy, which I think already subsumes his different approaches to Filipino philosophy viz., regressive, progressive, anthropological et al..⁶⁶ First, either one is making the conscious attempt to “do Filipino philosophy,

⁶² Abulad writes, “[t]o be sure, there is a Filipino philosophy, if only because no people are known to survive without an implied metaphysics.” Romualdo Abulad, “Options for a Filipino Philosophy”, in *Karunungan* 1, (1984), 18.

⁶³ Abulad quotes from B21-B22. *Ibid.*, 28.

⁶⁴ For instance, see Romualdo Abulad, “Pilosophiyang Pinoy: Uso Pa Ba? (The Relevance of Filipino Philosophy in Social Renewal)” in *Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy* 13: 2 (December 2019), 16-36.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ See Abulad, “Options For a Filipino Philosophy”; Romualdo Abulad, “Contemporary Filipino Philosophy”, in *Karunungan* 5 (1988), 1-13.

but only as a way of reviewing what so far our Filipino philosophers⁶⁷ have done and assessed whether there has been anything substantial that has already come out of their effort;” or “not to indulge in any strategy at all, but simply to philosophize as one is inspired to do, without the thought that how one does it is the only way of doing Filipino philosophy.”⁶⁸ Second, whichever the case may be, conscious or not, it must be original, that is, authentic.⁶⁹ By original or authentic, Abulad does not mean to create a philosophy trans-historically, that is, in a vacuum; this is not possible. Originality, for Abulad, is synonymous with authenticity because it is an attitude of excellence that runs through self-criticism and bears the “fruit of intellectual thoroughness.”⁷⁰ In a later text, Abulad, coming again from Kant, prescribes the doctrine of method in the *Critique* to establish not only thoroughness in philosophizing but also to provide the same guidelines for a new consciousness—that informs authenticity—in a possible Filipino philosophy.⁷¹ The third general condition is, tersely, “Filipino philosophy is Filipino.” That is, at the minimum, the one doing philosophy is self-consciously a Filipino.⁷²

Abulad’s theorization of postmodernism that is deeply rooted and informed by his reading of Kant is a demonstration of our reading of his own considerations for the possibility of Filipino philosophy.

His conscious attempt to do Filipino philosophy, following his own account, is a review and assessment of scholars in the field. This accounts for

⁶⁷ In order to evade ambiguity, I interpret this to mean Filipino scholars who are doing philosophy.

⁶⁸ Abulad, “Pilosopiyang Pinoy: Uso Pa Ba?”, 27.

⁶⁹ See Romualdo Abulad, “The Filipino as a Philosopher in Search of Originality”, in *Karunungan* 2 (1985), 1-13.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 10. Abulad writes seven “personal convictions” that he deems as crucial in the Filipino’s search for originality. I quote only two to support the claim for excellence and originality. All the other convictions are subsumed in the three general conditions I mention in the text. These convictions are: “(5) The fountain of originality from which we generate the Filipino philosophy can only be excellence.”; “(6) Only a philosophy universally acknowledged in its excellence can start a tradition of thinkers, the wealth of whose collective judgement shall finally merit the title “Filipino philosophy.” *Ibid.*, 16.

⁷¹ Romualdo Abulad, “Doing Philosophy in the Philippines: Towards a More Responsive Philosophy for the 21st Century”, in *Suri* 5: 1 (2016): 10-11.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 15.

Abulad's important contribution to the discourse on Filipino philosophy. A prominent feature of his many contributions to this discourse is, by now, the familiar gesture of *via negativa* — a critique— of the attempts at a Filipino philosophy that led his own teacher, Emerita Quito, to describe his position as a “healthy pessimism.”⁷³

Critique forms the bulwark of Abulad's interrogations on Filipino philosophy. In his posthumous work, “Filipino Philosophy Uso Pa ba?,”⁷⁴ he continued this “healthy pessimism” and directed his gaze to the Filipino scholars who he identifies as coming from the anthropological approach. One by one, he explicates how the attempts of Filipino scholars to build a systematic Filipino philosophy can be problematic. Abulad argues that the attempts of Gripaldo, Timbreza, Alejo, Miranda, and Mercado⁷⁵ to formulate a systematic account of a Filipino philosophy or consciousness end up as (quasi) anthropological; the results of which seem to be wanting as a work in either philosophy or in anthropology, or both. Most of the arguments these scholars have made have already their logical forms in the history of philosophy, which Kant already in the 18th century demolished. For instance, the *loob* that some Filipino psychologists took as a referent in *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, and what the historians of the state university used to inform their historicizing of the Filipino identity, the same *loob* that Mercado transformed as an element in Filipino philosophy, and what Miranda took as the basis for a Filipino morality —the referent for “*buting pinoy*”⁷⁶— can be taken, regardless of their different contexts, to be the same instance of the substantiation of the soul. The same paralogism that shattered the notion of the soul should also have the same effect on what is structurally the same, but nominally different. Their position can be taken to be a paralogism. Knowing too well Kant's critique, Abulad's pessimism is, indeed, healthy. This

⁷³ Emerita Quito, Editorial, *Karunungan* 2 (1985), iii.

⁷⁴ See Abulad, “Pilosopiyang Pinoy: Uso Pa Ba?”

⁷⁵ According to Abulad, Mercado should be given the title of “Father of Filipino Philosophy” because he was the first to articulate, in explicit form, the elements of Filipino philosophy, which bears the title of his dissertation and was later published as a book. Abulad, “Pilosopiyang Pinoy: Uso Pa Ba?”, 17.

⁷⁶ Dionisio M. Miranda, *Buting Pinoy: Probe Essays on Value as Filipino* (Manila: Divine Word Publications, 1992).

is reason enough to understand deeply both the history of philosophy and the history of pure reason, the latter being one of the four in Kant's doctrine of method that Abulad employs for his *via positiva* for a new consciousness after modernity, so as not to repeat the same errors brought about by the natural disposition of reason to fly unfettered.

Abulad is a postmodern *provocateur*, whose inspiration draws from the "all-destroyer" of Königsberg. His gesture of *via negativa* on the discourse of Filipino philosophy is best read in his numerous reviews of Filipino scholars. One of them is the late Florentino Hornedo's work on a phenomenology of freedom,⁷⁷ which for Abulad is a commendable for being a scholarly work written by a Filipino, but it, however, fails to be either a phenomenology or a form of existentialism.⁷⁸

However, being true to his Kantian inspiration, Abulad was not only a postmodern *provocateur*, for he also tries to set out prescriptions towards a new consciousness in his attempt to engage the discourse on Filipino philosophy. This is his *via positiva*. He also recognizes works of Filipino scholars, who he considers to be already postmodern in their work. For instance, he mentions a work of a Filipino thinker that conveys "philosophy in the mode of Heidegger's quite harmlessly sounding 'contributions' (*Beiträge*), that is, doing philosophy vom Ereignis."⁷⁹

Throughout his essays on Filipino philosophy he provides guidelines, coming from what he calls as his "few personal convictions,"⁸⁰ but which we have revealed through our reading of his reading to come from Kant which, then, made its way to his distinctive theory of postmodernism.

⁷⁷ Florentino Hornedo, *The Power To Be - A Phenomenology of Freedom* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2000).

⁷⁸ See Romualdo Abulad "Freedom in Times of Crises", in *Unitas*, 74:1 (March 2001): 143-148.

⁷⁹ Abulad, "Doing Philosophy in the Philippines", 13-14. Abulad is referring to the work of Charito Pizarro. See Charito Pizarro, *The Symbolic Foundation of Human History* (Talisay City: Jader Publishing, 2016).

⁸⁰ Abulad, "The Filipino as a Philosopher", 16.

In his articulation, *via positiva*, of Filipino philosophy, Abulad makes a crucial claim that explicitly brings his theory of postmodernism to Filipino philosophy. For Abulad, the Filipino's absence of deep history compared to the Greek, Indian and Chinese civilizations, which informs the collective angst for a search of identity, can exactly be an advantage because the groundlessness leaves the Filipino more open to the infinite possibilities of postmodern thinking. Allow me to quote lengthily:

Postmodernism has at last found the key that would completely secure the foundationless and groundless knowledge whose unpredictable insights are boundless and limitless [...] It is with much ease that we understand the spirit of postmodernity precisely because of our lack of rootedness, or perhaps more accurately the meagerness of our roots. There is nothing to be ashamed of in the historical fact that we do not have a tradition as immensely rich as, say, China and India [...] This is the Philippines and all the facts about the Philippines belong to me, even the fact of my own lack—the lack of a long history and a glorious cultural heritage [...] The moment's task assigned to a Filipino philosopher is one of existential definition. If you don't believe that there is such a thing as a Filipino philosophy, then one thing I may ask you to do is gather all the writings of the authors I have just named above, see for yourself how much work has already been done, quantitatively, and then assess the intellectual worth of its entirety, qualitatively.⁸¹

b) On Showing

In so far as what Abulad has to say about Filipino philosophy, we have, at least, provided its link to Bolaños's categorization of Abulad's legacy, viz., Kant, German philosophy and postmodernism in order to hopefully fill the interstices, albeit simplistically, between them.⁸²

⁸¹ Abulad, "Pilosopiyang Pinoy: Uso Pa Ba?", 30-31.

⁸² Abulad's political works do not stand outside this *Bildungsroman*. I am convinced that the conclusions of his political works, particularly, his controversial claims

However, what Abulad says about Filipino philosophy is not enough to account for his participation to Filipino philosophy. As stated earlier, we must orient our frame to Abulad's participation in Filipino philosophy not only on what is signified but also on what is indicated; that is, not only what is said, but also in what is shown. It is in this light that the remark by Agamben comes to light. If we only listen and read what Abulad says, we will not be able to see what in his saying he has shown.

Abulad's reading of philosophers, such as Kant and Heidegger, is the basis for his idiosyncratic and peculiar theorization of postmodernism. The appropriation of his postmodernism takes the form of his conscious attempt to do Filipino philosophy. But what he says in this *Bildungsroman* of a singular thought is shown as an undivided life in philosophy, similar to that of Hadot's description of philosophy as a way of life.⁸³ It is in this sense that Abulad's singular thought shows philosophy as a Filipino; or if there is any difference, shows Filipino philosophy. The reading of his constatives lead us to see him as a performative. Agamben captures this quite well. In the prefatory note to the last book of his *Homo Sacer* series, Agamben writes:

In fact, we must decisively call into question the commonplace according to which is it a good rule that an inquiry commence with a *pars destruens* and conclude with a *pars construens* and, moreover, that the two parts be substantially and formally distinct. In a philosophy inquiry, not only can the *pars destruens* not be separated from the *pars construens*, but the latter coincides, at every point and without remainder, with the former. A theory that, to the extent possible, has cleared the field of all errors has, with that, exhausted its *raison d'être* and cannot presume to subsist as separate from practice.⁸⁴

connected with the Duterte administration is neither an accident of circumstance nor a mere feeling. They are, for me, crucial implications of his reading of Kant, who was, in the history of western thought, responsible for the transformation of potency and choice to a universal law that must be obeyed out of duty, and this duty transforms into destiny, to mission. This hypothesis, however, will have to be discussed in a future paper.

⁸³ See Hadot, "Philosophy as a Way of Life."

⁸⁴ Giorgio Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), xiii.

However, if we take Abulad seriously, not only in the categories of his writings but also as a singular thought of an undivided life —what he shows in what he is saying— then we would have to, in similar vein to his reference to Aquinas and Wittgenstein, “throw away the ladder” because in the end we have realize that what he says is “nothing but a straw.”⁸⁵

That is, if Abulad in his saying about Kant, Heidegger, postmodernism and Filipino philosophy shows Filipino philosophy, and if we really take Abulad seriously, then this now thematized showing of what is said as “Filipino philosophy” must also be purged, radically and without reserve. It is only then, that we take his position seriously. And, perhaps, then Abulad has given us his final lecture by showing us the path to “thinking vom Ereignis”, that which cannot be said.

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⁸⁵ Romualdo Abulad, “St. Thomas Aquinas and Postmodernism,” in *Phavisminda Journal*, 4 (May 2005), 15.

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