

## **AN EPISTEMOLOGY OF THE OVERLAP: A POSSIBLE CONCEPTUAL FRAME FOR A FILIPINO PHILOSOPHY**

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### **Abstract**

In this article, we shall present a possible philosophic-conceptual frame for a Filipino Philosophy through the social-scientist-philosopher (SSP) perspective.<sup>1</sup> As an outcome of the overlapping relation between the sensibilities of the social-scientist and that of the philosopher, we propose these three epistemological frames of an overlap, namely: reconstituting overlap, mitigating overlap, and symbolic overlap. These frames are borne out of the dialectic between the social-scientist's need for grounding and the philosopher's reflection on thought assumptions or conditions of possibilities. Thus, this paper is a product of an effort to ruminate on the epistemological nature of the SSP perspective. This paper is also done to possibly contribute in the stride to carve a path that can be used for a Filipino Philosophy that maybe called philosophic and is hinged on the ideas that well-up from the ground.

**Keywords:** Epistemology, Overlap, SSP Perspective, Filipino Philosophy

### **Introduction**

A discourse on Filipino Philosophy prompts us to be mindful of these questions: (1) Is there a Filipino Philosophy?; (2) If a Filipino Philosophy exists, then what is its content? The first question strikes the very chord of the kind of philosophizing that exists in the country. While we are aware of the presence of renowned philosophy professors in the region, many Filipino scholars are not that sure if we do have Filipino philosophers. This hesitation, in part, speaks of the lofty ideal that students of philosophy have when one uses the term philosopher and attaches it to a name or an individual. More to the point, our expectation of a philosopher is someone who can present

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<sup>1</sup> The social-scientist philosopher perspective is initially discussed in our article, "Filipino Philosophy and Post-Modernity" published in *International Journal of Arts and Sciences*, 3, 15 (2010), 238-254.

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a novel way of looking at conditions of possibilities in any of the traditional fields/disciplines in philosophy. Hence, the absence of a systematic philosophical position – which can stand as a contribution to the platform of philosophizing – somehow grounds or affirms the seeming absence of a recognizable face which we can paint to the category of a Filipino philosopher.

But is the foregoing evaluation entirely sufficient? Do we also have other descriptions or ideals that we presently attach to the category of a Filipino philosopher? Perhaps, the initial query on the existence of a Filipino Philosopher does not do justice to the kind and degree of philosophizing amongst philosophy professors in the country. In our reflection, there is a need to temporarily bracket the initial question and proceed to the next so we can be connected to the more fertile conditions upon which the status of philosophizing in the country can be construed. Hence, this question is in order: If a Filipino Philosophy exists, then what is its content?

In an International Proceedings on Philosophy in UST, 2011, we encountered an article that can succinctly address our query. The article of F. P. A. Demetrio III, ‘*A Comparative Study on the Status and Directions of Filipino Philosophies as Implied in the Taxonomies and Periodizations of Zialcita, Quito, Abulad, Gripaldo, Co and Mabaquiao,*’<sup>2</sup> provides a useful analysis of the history and trajectory of Filipino Philosophy. Let us see what Filipino Philosophy is from his perspective and how it has fared through the various philosophic reflections of leading philosophy scholars in the country.

### **An Overview of Filipino Philosophy**

Demetrio highlights six Filipino scholars who reflected on the status and meaning of the concept Filipino Philosophy. These individuals are the following: Zialcita, Quito, Abulad, Gripaldo, Co, and Mabaquiao. What is Filipino Philosophy for these individuals? Using

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<sup>2</sup> In the proceeding page, a summary of Feorillo Petronilo A. Demetrio's III work – which he presented during UST's International Conference on Philosophy held last May, 2011 – will be provided. Moreover, permission has been sought from the author to use his article as a reference material for this paper. Early next year, he mentioned in an e-mail that his paper will be published in *Philosophia International Journal* 2013.

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Demetrio's account, here is a summary of their points:

(1) In Zialcita, three expressions of Filipino Philosophy are identified, namely: (i) Filipino Philosophy as a method, (ii) as critique of political and economic structures, and (iii) as interpretation of Filipino world view.

(2) Quito's treatment of Filipino Philosophy suggests these categories: (i) Filipino as exposition of Scholasticism/Thomism, (ii) as exposition of phenomenology and existentialism, (iii) as exposition of logical analysis, (iv) as exposition of oriental philosophies, (v) as application of other philosophies to Philippine settings, (vi) as unarticulated Folk/Indigenous Spirit, (vii) as description of Folk/Indigenous Spirit, and (ix) as appropriation (making use of) of Folk/Indigenous Spirit.

(3) Abulad coins two phases in Filipino Philosophy: the early phase and the late phase. The late phase of Filipino Philosophy is a period wherein present Filipino scholars pass over to the next generation the task of reflecting what Filipino Philosophy shall configure in the future. This is a task addressed to all of us who are still starting to inquire what a Filipino Philosophy entails. The early phase of Filipino Philosophy include these domains: (i) First colonial phase of Filipino Philosophy, (ii) discourse/discussion on phenomenology and existentialism, (iii) discourse/discussion on logical analysis, (iv) discourse on foreign theories, (v) anthropological philosophy, (vi) application of foreign theories to local/Philippine settings.

(4) Gripaldo, in raising the question, 'Is there a Filipino Philosophy?' allows these meanings of Filipino Philosophy to unfold: (i) Filipino Philosophy in the traditional sense, (ii) as folk/indigenous philosophy, (iii) as description of folk/indigenous philosophy, (iv) as expository writing, (v) as breakthrough/novel writing, and (vi) as appropriative (making use of existing philosophical systems) writing.

(5) Co identifies two main waves in the history of Filipino Philosophy. The first wave refers to Filipino Philosophy as: (i) untextualized (absence of written texts/articles) discourse on Iberian scholasticism, (ii) untextualized discourse on foreign theories, and (iii) as description of the Filipino mind. The second wave, meanwhile, talks of Filipino Philosophy as the period of textualized (written)

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discourse. It is in this realm where many of the leading scholars in the country have contributed.

(6) Lastly, Mabaquiao itemizes two types of referent when one talks of Filipino Philosophy – appropriate and inappropriate. Under the inappropriate category, Filipino Philosophy is understood as (i) folk/indigenous philosophy, (ii) philosophical lectures, and as (iii) pseudo philosophies. For the appropriate referent of Filipino Philosophy, these senses are proposed: (i) textualized (written) discourse on local themes, and (ii) textualized discourse on foreign and universal themes.

With these interpretations of Filipino Philosophy, we can see that the concept Filipino Philosophy is complex and it is something which has a historical footing. This means that Filipino Philosophy has existed and has been practiced in many ways. However, we can also notice that most of these thinkers are aware of the possibility of having a more productive future for philosophy in the country. These possibilities, in Demetrio's account, specifically refer to tracks/routes with high developmental potentials. What are these directions that could possibly inject more life and success to Filipino Philosophy?

### **Tracks with High Development Potentials**

(1) Under Zialcita's scheme, Filipino Philosophy as a critique of political-economic structure and as the interpretation of Filipino world view is conferred with high development potentials. Both directions are encouraged to contribute in the discourse on method and content of Filipino Philosophy. More specifically, such tracks of thinking are advocated to critically evaluate semi-feudal, neo-colonial, and capitalist states and relations here in our country.

(2) With Quito's taxonomy, the directions encouraged so Filipino Philosophy will develop include: the appropriation of foreign theories, and of folk philosophy, and the interpretation of Filipino worldview. These areas, when pursued, promise a unique sense of exchange between foreign and emerging local themes/concepts. Quito hopes that by stressing such areas, we can develop our own unique philosophical positions.

(3) In the case of Abulad, Filipino Philosophy can gain more developmental momentum when these routes/methods are followed

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through: phenomenology/hermeneutics, logical analysis, and interpretation of Filipino world view. These areas pertain to the development of a philosophical method which is still unaccounted for even by the more known figures/names in the study of philosophy here in the country.

(4) Filipino Philosophy, using Gripaldo's version, can benefit from these topics: critical philosophy as non-academic discourse, appropriation of foreign theories, breakthrough writing, and interpretation of Filipino world view. From this list, a breakthrough philosophical text that is recognized by the international community is highly valued and is still idealized. Will there be a time when a Filipino will be recognized as a Philosopher in other countries? Hopefully, such a time will come.

(5) Co's stress on the interpretation of Filipino world view has high development usefulness. Comparable to other thinkers, such direction seeks to mainstream local experiences into academic philosophic discourse. What has philosophy done to the issues in our society today? Is philosophy limited to the confines of the academe? Co hopes that philosophy's social relevance will be made more transparent.

(6) Filipino Philosophy in Mabaquiao is disposed to succeed when guided by these concerns: discourse on local themes, and on universal-foreign themes. By pursuing such interests, philosophy is engaged in discussions that are relevant to both local/national and international communities. Mabaquiao is worried that an over emphasis on local philosophies will result to our isolation to the philosophical discussions amongst international communities.<sup>3</sup>

### **An Analysis: Some Themes in Filipino Philosophy**

Based on Demetrio's taxonomy, three themes can be magnified from the list of high development tracks in Filipino Philosophy. These

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<sup>3</sup> To better appreciate these points, kindly refer to Demetrio's Grand Synthesis of the Taxonomies and Periodizations of Zialcita, Quito, Abulad, Gripaldo, Co and Mabaquiao (p. 20) in his "A Comparative Study on the Status and Directions of Filipino Philosophies as Implied in the Taxonomies and Periodizations of Zialcita, Quito, Abulad, Gripaldo, Co and Mabaquiao."

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are the possible themes that we can think of and work on in our project in this article: (1) the interfacing of local and international/foreign questions/interests in philosophy, (2) the overlapping relation between local/indigenous concepts/activities and written/textual philosophical discourse, and (3) the search for/anticipation of a breakthrough standpoint that is recognized and discussed as truly philosophic. Let us further explain the relevance of these points to our SSP perspective project:

The first theme shows the perceived need to provide a space or an entry point for both local and foreign interests/ideas in philosophy. Since the space is open to/from both directions, Filipino Philosophy, in this sense, caters to the need of creating and maintaining a bridge where an exchange of thoughts, positions and sensibilities between foreign and local sources can take place. This is the theme that Filipino thinkers in the country are beginning to explore.

For the second theme, the indigenous/local practices and concepts play a crucial role in the overlapping relation with the academic/textual discourse. In this respect, a philosophy student's sensibilities have to account the interface between the indigenous/local practices and the discussions in the academe. For instance, philosophy teachers start seeing the point and relevance of using local situations or examples to explain ideas/concepts that come from the west. How can we explain Plato using the experiences of the indigenous group? This is a question which an increasing number of philosophy students and teachers today begin to appreciate. Possibly, such a question deserves attention since it has the capacity to limit or caution the divide between foreign and local ideas. In turn, the western paradigms are better comprehended given that local instances are magnified as the select locations of the discussion. Moreover, the local ground is elevated as a location of philosophic thoughts and becomes a platform for philosophizing.

The third theme stands for a respected, recognized, and relevant philosophic stance which is exemplified in a philosophic research, reflection, or endeavour. What is this thinker/individual philosophically saying? This is a simple question that points to an idea, a system or a mind that speaks of a philosophic point of view that is worth discussing. Will we ever have a Filipino Philosopher who will

also be discussed, at least among philosophic circles here in the country? This is perhaps one measure or a way of telling if the individual succeeds in formulating a philosophic thought/system. In the various conferences in philosophy around the country, we can reckon Feriols as a figure whose ideas usually find a space in plenary or parallel discussions. His works well-up and might become more profound as more students in philosophy find time in discussing his point of view on the concept of 'loob' and 'pagpapakatao'.

### **Cultivating a Route: The Social-Scientist-Philosopher (SSP) Perspective**

From the chosen themes, we shall propose a route that might be fertile enough to maintain a sense of openness to foreign philosophic themes, introduce a way of seeing that can do justice to realities that are local/indigenous and respond to the invitation to propose a philosophic stance through the SSP perspective and its epistemology of the overlap.

While many students of philosophy are traditionally trained to pay attention to how truths/ideas are generated through texts, we recommend that a special attention is given to a kind of gaze which the SSP position can provide. In this manner, the student of philosophy descends from his traditional tower and is now committed to toil in the field while philosophizing. Filipino philosophy, in this regard, is provided with this unique opportunity – to see the field of relations as a reservoir of novel thoughts, systems, and schemes.

To structurally traverse this exposition of the SSP perspective and its epistemology of the overlap, we shall turn to this sequence: (1) The meaning of a local ground, (2) the meaning of philosophy, and (3) The epistemology of the overlap.

### **The Meaning of a Local Ground**

The domain of the social sciences enjoy this peculiar interest towards this intellectual commitment: that truth emanates from particular locations/situations within the purview of human relations/systems/organizations.<sup>4</sup> This is a truth condition that marks

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<sup>4</sup> Scott Gordon, *The History and Philosophy of Social Science*, (London:

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the social science point of view. This means that the object of investigation which the social science attends to is constitutively tied up to the actual/concrete activities, rituals and relations that take place in definite time and space. This is what we have in mind when we refer to the concept of a local ground. In Mindanao, this ground is highly multicultural being a melting pot of various ethnicities/indigenous groups. As we shall later see, the local ground of the indigenous communities will be a reservoir of philosophic discourse.

If we zoom into the philosopher's traditional way of generating truth, the social scientist can easily comment that it is not enough to rely on books. After doing the library work, it is time to proceed to the field of relations and be immersed in the world of phenomena. While many philosophy students remain untrained to look at the grounds as a compendium of thoughts and ideas, some students of philosophy may start to inquire on how they can gain this access to the world of phenomena. Perhaps, more students can start to acquire this peculiar thirst for local grounding. In point of fact, this need for a concrete basis is something which the social scientist cannot live without. But is this a need which the philosopher can also appropriate and possibly learn from?

In the concept Filipino Philosophy, this article proposes that the need for local grounding is something which philosophical thinking should reckon with great importance. Here are some questions which the philosopher can start including in his foray of inquiries: Is there a local example that exemplifies the ideas that a philosopher proposes? Is there a local practice that is somewhat antithetical to what a philosopher suggests as true and meaningful? In raising these questions, the philosopher can gradually imbibe the need for a local grounding of his ideas in support to or as criticism of a philosophical position. As a reward, he is disposed to acquire the sensitivity to a

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Rout ledge, 1993,) 1-4. The meaning and scope of social science is complex. But amidst such complexity, it can be said that social science works and thinks within the bounds of human concerns/constructs that takes place in a community/society which is also not to be categorically separated from other species/communities of entities.



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unique kind of dialectic that can happen when philosophical ideas are modified and assessed using the practices and activities peculiar to the experiences of the Filipinos. Moreover, the philosopher might eventually be interested to see the epistemic connection between philosophical thoughts and concepts/ideas heavily coloured and shaped by local beliefs and practices.

### **The Meaning of a Philosophy**

The dialectic between philosophical reflection and the sensibility for local grounding is a unique trademark in the SSP perspective. But what is this notion of Philosophy that we want to interface with the sensibility of the social scientist in his relation with local grounding?

The term philosophy has various connotations. In the history of philosophy, for instance, every philosopher is somewhat expected to come up with his own reflection of its meaning. But it can also be observed that such a meaning only becomes available when the philosopher has at least owned the question, 'What is Philosophy?' If the philosopher did not raise and own the question, we can assume that he is still a student of philosophy and has not gained the cudgels to face the complexity and burden which the question is capable of unleashing. In our own reflection, philosophy is a location that disposes and gives witness to the interplay among the three kinds of thinking categories, namely: regression, progression and digression.

In an encapsulated form, the term **regression** is used to punctuate philosophy's love-affair with thought presuppositions. This makes the presupposition its fundamental object of investigation which when examined paves the raising and unfolding of meta-questions.

The term **progression**, meanwhile, stands for thought constructions built upon the thought presuppositions. This is what this kind of thinking is always interested to look into. More specifically, it zooms into the processes involved in thought constructions and the relationship that such constructs have on thought presuppositions. In broad strokes, thought constructs either affirm or neglect the solidity of or cracks in identified assumptions.

For **digression**, however, thinking becomes an occasion of the creative or tension-filled relation between: the surreal and the logical

world. The term surreal, on the one hand, is used as a marker for thinking experiences that occasion the blurring of boundaries which can be described as a mix of disbelief, the real, the fictive, and that which makes sense and non-sense. This is our way of describing thoughts that occasion the radicalization of possibilities. The logical, on the other hand, pertains to the effort of the mind to hold on to clarity and the concept of boundaries. The logical in digressive thinking, while it is immersed in the surreal, is regulated by this compass or a map that can be invoked to anchor the mind while it is engaged in the full throttle of the surreal in digression.<sup>5</sup>

Given this notion of philosophy as thinking – regressively, progressively and digressively – we may now have an idea of this demand that philosophy has as a discipline: It views the processes of the mind towards the world in a three-fold manner. Consequently, this makes the question 'What does philosophy think about?' as our way of addressing the question 'What is philosophy?'

Provided with these categories as the thinking ways of philosophy, we are now prepared to handle the question that we have formulated at the start of this section: How can we describe or give an account of the interface between these points: (1) the sensitivity for local grounding, and (2) the three thinking categories. As an initial attempt to make sense of this unique interplay, we have mounted three notions of the overlap that take place when the interfacing instance of the SSP sensibilities ensues.

### Three Kinds of Overlap

To describe the SSP perspective, these notions are introduced: (1) Reconstituting Overlap, (2) Mitigating Overlap, and (3) Symbolic Overlap.<sup>6</sup> What do these concepts represent? Here is our discussion:

(1) The reconstituting overlap admits those kinds of interface that implicates substantial reconstitution and radical change. When

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<sup>5</sup> These thinking categories are initially explored in our article, "Categories of Thinking: Regressive, Progressive and Digressive Thinking," *PHAVISMINDA Journal* 8 (May, 2009) 89-103.

<sup>6</sup> This is a temporary list of kinds of overlap. As we further reflect on the concept, we hope to arrive at other notions of overlap to represent the kind of interface that can take place among other concepts.

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two concepts meet and coalesce, a hybrid concept is created and produced. This implies a sense of anticipation for creation and creativity which may give birth to novel ideas, positions and judgments. This is the reason why an integral aspect of this reconstituting experience is the depth of violence that it inflicts on familiar ways of being and thinking. This is the intellectual discomfort which strikes the one whose thinking is in the midst of reconstitution. Given this description of the nature of a reconstitution, our question now is: How does the sensibility for local grounding participate in the reconstituting overlap?

In our reflection, the unique need for grounding reconfigures the location of the reconstituting effect of the overlap. From being a dominantly mental event, the ground, being a reservoir of experiences, issues and instances, is an equally important modifier of understanding. This means that a reconstitution of concepts pays attention to how ideas interface with ideas that are hinged on or conditioned by practices or discussions that originate from the ground. In other words, philosophizing becomes a witnessing of this interface/overlap between notions that are speculatively thought of and locally configured.

Here is an example which might demonstrate how local grounding can be featured as a specific sensibility in a reconstituting overlap:

Robin George Collingwood proposes in his *An Essay on Philosophical Method*<sup>7</sup> that the principle of overlap when admitted implies the precariousness of margins. This means that when two concepts overlap, it is logical to assume that the effects of such overlapping cannot be delineated and defined.<sup>8</sup> While the principle of the overlap magnifies the precariousness of margins and the reconstitution of concepts that comes along with it, there is a certain local practice in Bunawan, Agusan del Sur that admits the overlap between concepts yet implicates stricter delineation of the operative

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<sup>7</sup> Robin George Collingwood, *An Essay on Philosophical Method*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933) 177.

<sup>8</sup> Collingwood, *An Essay on Philosophical Method* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 182.

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concepts. Is it possible to think of the overlap in such a different way? This is a question, when addressed, might force us to reconstitute Collingwood's stance on the nature of the overlap. Let us make an account of such a phenomenon.

The Manobo groups of Bunawan practice a thanksgiving ritual prior to the rice harvest. This ritual is called *Taephag*.<sup>9</sup> The activity is done, following the Manobo's native tradition, to acknowledge the help and assistance of the Spirits for the rice produce. However, the Manobo group in Bunawan is also Roman Catholic. As Catholics, they pray to the Saints as an expression of their faith and gratitude for the good harvest. If the *Taephag* is done in the rice field, then the novena to the Saints is done in the chapel. There is a clear overlap in the concept of thanksgiving between these two practices – the indigenous and the Roman Catholic; but there is also a clear effort to contain the practices by doing the two expressions of thanksgiving in well-defined locations. There is no overlap in the physical space but there is a peculiar overlap in the concept of thanksgiving.

Since the precariousness of the margin between the two practices is cautioned and contained, Collingwood's notion of the overlap may be challenged. Does Collingwood's concept of the overlap only refer to one brand of precariousness between concepts? Is it possible to have a conceptual overlap that does not result in the reconstitution of the overlapping elements? These are some of the questions that we can critically raise in assessing the sufficiency of Collingwood's interpretation of the principle of the overlap. And if the insufficiency of Collingwood's account can be established, a reconstituting effect on the meaning of the overlap can be introduced.

(2) The mitigating overlap takes place when two concepts do not

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<sup>9</sup> The *Taephag* is part of our research project which centers on the life ways of the Manobo people in Agusan del Sur. After staying in their communities last year, summer of 2010, we have reached a decision to exert an academic effort to document practices and rituals endemic to such community. The documentation is done to produce a record which might help preserve the memory of such practices and traditions. To date, studies on the *Taephag* are not extensive enough to include the whole duration of the ritual activity.

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fully reach the reconstituting effect. Instead, the two concepts seemingly portray an oppositional relation which gives birth to a kind of tension which is carefully thought of and maintained. Interestingly, it is in the ensuing tension where the overlapping instance takes place.

But what kind of elements do we have in mind that can give birth to a mitigated tension? In our reflection, these elements are described as either familiar or unfamiliar. As a general condition, mitigation between concepts takes place when the unfamiliar is not usurped within the fold of the familiar. Instead, the unfamiliar concept is allowed to maintain a space in the thinking terrain existing side by side with current domain of familiarity. This is how tension between concepts is instanced.

The co-existence between the familiar and unfamiliar is preserved in the mitigated overlap. This is also the reason why the word mitigated is used: To highlight the presence of the tension and the overlapping attempts to moderate the effects of opposing/conflicting positions/beliefs.

The example that we have in mind for this type of overlap is the mitigated tension that we find among the Manobo of Agusan del Sur in the context of their thanksgiving ritual. The ritual or the *Taephag* is a traditional practice done to acknowledge the nature spirits. The Manobo do such a ritual to affirm their bonds with the Spirits that regulate their relations with the world. While these Manobo farmers perform such ritual, they also do the novena to the Saints as the thanksgiving counterpart of the Catholics for the successful rice harvest. Although the Roman Catholic side of the Manobo is hinged on a different set of beliefs, the members of the community find something worthwhile between the two seemingly opposing principles of belief and maintain the tension that exists between the two concepts of thanksgiving. And there is no attempt to resolve such tension. In point of fact, it is in the context of the tension where the Manobo experiences the mitigated overlap between his traditional cosmology and the new set of beliefs that his present affiliation with the Roman Catholic religion brings.

(3) The symbolic overlap stands for the marker(s) in a community of ideas and a community of actual practices as a meeting point of

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the various elements that regulate the identity of its being. As a symbolic nodal point, it elevates and brings to life the uniqueness that shapes and maintains the speculative and practical relations in a community of thought and practices. The reconstituting kind of overlap is not truly privileged in the symbolic. This is because the symbolic is not oriented towards change. Sameness and the re-affirmation of the thought and practiced traditions, for instance, are magnified in the way that a marker is symbolic.

The interfacing of concepts and elements takes place in the symbol itself in the absence of opposition, as a contrast to what the mitigating overlap is a witness to. As a consequence, the nodal point weaves and ties together all the variegated elements in the community. The past, the future and those values that remain important to a person or a community are even vicariously preserved in the nodal point as an occasion of the symbolic overlap. Such that if this kind of overlap is changed, the consequence of such attempt might fall either to the reconstituting overlap or mitigated overlap. To better understand what the symbolic overlap means, this example is in order:

The image of the Manobo instructor who is teaching while breast-feeding her baby can speak of the continuity between her profession and the Manobo cultural milieu. This makes the act of breast-feeding a location which the social-scientist-philosopher can magnify. Being an occasion of the overlap between what is philosophically thought of and practiced in actual relations, the social-scientist-philosopher will have these thoughts in mind:

While the classroom is specially marked as an institution that is organized and built for academic learning, the image of the breast feeding Manobo teacher has the latent capacity of re-affirming the bigger philosophical context and location of the academic institution. This means that the Manobo teacher has peculiarly and interestingly acted as nodal point of the Manobo life ways. Consequently, her act and the image that it profusely projects remind the students that they are being taught within the purview of the values and practices of their community. Pedagogically, the image has the capacity to temper the possible alienating or disorienting effects of a so-called formal academic institution. While the students try to listen to what their

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teacher is explaining, the teacher can remind them that nurturing the mind starts in their unique location – the Manobo community. Hence, the Manobo teacher, who breast-feeds while proceeding in her class lecture, can be considered as a philosophical and enabling pedagogy. As a symbolic nodal point, its unique add-on is its influence in the preservation of the cultural thoughts, values and practices.<sup>10</sup>

What other gain can we think of if we become more mindful of cultural nodal points in pedagogical institutions? In our reflection, such a consciousness has this effect – the mind and the imagination of the students are conditioned to think and imagine using the features, aspects, and experiences of the local community. This makes the discussions in the class opportune occasions to affirm and magnify certain local sensibilities. To this effect, what the students and teachers achieve is that they are able to symbolically elevate themselves as reservoirs of sensations and impressions that help maintain and reify their notions of identity as a thriving community. Comparable to the artist of Collingwood (1938), the school can be reckoned as an exemplification of the vision of a community – the steady strengthening and reification of values, traditions and anticipations.<sup>11</sup>

### **Epistemology of the SSP's Overlapping Nature**

Given that we have three categories of thinking, we shall try to outline in this section the kind of philosophical thinking at work in each of three types of overlap.

#### **(1) Epistemology of a Reconstituting Overlap**

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<sup>10</sup> These thoughts are culled from this paper entitled, 'Learning from a Manobo Instructor: Emerging Pedagogical Presuppositions,' which I presented in an International Conference on Mindanao and Development Issues, November 8-9, 2010 in Davao City. In such an event, I was the lone presenter using the philosophical gaze as the privileged vantage point in assessing developmental issues in Mindanao. While I only used one case narrative, I had to defend my stance stating that such a gaze can be philosophy's contribution to topics and issues which are predominantly constituted by the social sciences.

<sup>11</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938,) 171-175.

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What kind of philosophical thinking is at work in a reconstituting overlap? In our estimation, regressive thinking is more pronounced in a conceptual reconstitution. This is because it specifically inquires into the sufficiency of thoughts, concepts or positions and investigates if the conditions that allow such thoughts, concepts or positions to stand still holds in the light of newly encountered and intellectually perceived notions. If the claimed stability of concepts or positions can be challenged, the next route which the regressive thinker will trek shall determine if the reconstitution implies a more fundamental modification—the changing of assumptions. As a consequence, the reconstituting overlap – as conditioned by concepts that emerge from actual and local conditions – shall finally be a philosophical reconstitution if it proceeds in the language of regression.

### **(2) Epistemology of a Mitigating Overlap**

What kind of philosophical thinking is at work in a mitigated overlap? In our understanding, digressive thinking is more attuned to the reality of preserved or maintained occasions of tension. Since digression prides itself in its capacity to weigh the tension between the real and the surreal, it can be the perfect witness of this interplay between the familiar and the unfamiliar concepts in a tension-filled thinking territory. Moreover, digressive thinking is most interested in reflecting on the kind of thinking sensibilities that emerge from such its peculiar interest. Will the opposition between the familiar and the unfamiliar lessen through time? Will both elements become either familiar or unfamiliar in the course of philosophic thinking? These are the questions which the digressive approach is most prepared to attend to.

### **(3) Epistemology of a Symbolic Overlap**

What kind of philosophic thinking is at work in a symbolic overlap? Since symbols are understood as markers or nodal points, we propose that the progressive approach to thinking is more attuned to the processes at work in a symbolic overlap. This perhaps has to do with progression's keenness on the nature or kind of constructions built on existing thought assumptions. Because as a thinking activity, it endeavours to show that there is a sense of continuity between what is assumed and what is construed. In this regard, a symbolic overlap is an occasion or instance which thrives on



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its capacity to consolidate elements, notions, practices or anticipations into a whole which stands a thought construct. How does a symbol maintain its sense as an organized or cogent construction? This is the question which progressive thinking is aware of when dealing with symbols as interfacing markers/nodal points.

### **Conclusion: The SSP Perspective and Its Overlapping Epistemology**

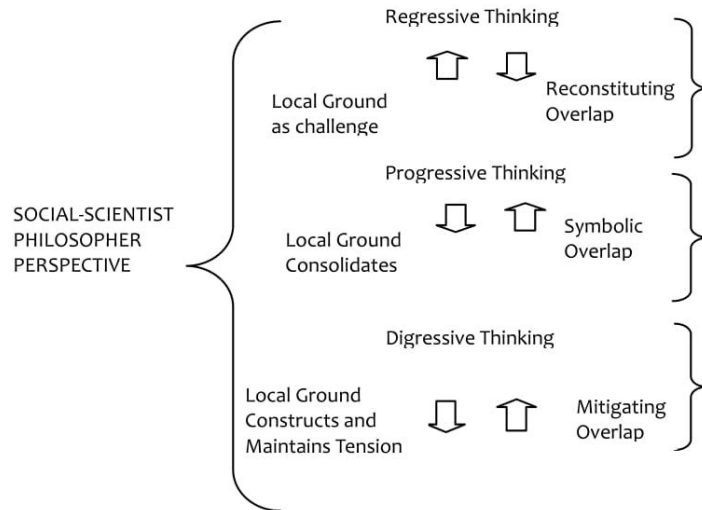
By stressing the need of the social scientist to go to the field and stay grounded on his pronouncement, we can introduce and eventually require this dialectic between what is thought of and what takes place in the concrete in the domain of philosophy through the SSP Perspective. By configuring philosophy through the three categories of thinking, we can expect a kind of philosophical awareness that is attuned to the role of assumptions (regression), the constructions (progression) and the creative possibilities (digression). In turn, we have arrived at three ways of describing the epistemological leaning of the three categories of thinking when configured by the ideas that well-up from the local ground.

With the kinds of overlap that we introduced and described, a Filipino Philosophy is hopefully given a sample context and method as it proceeds in its enterprise: That it happens within the purview of the overlapping relations ruminated by a social-scientist-philosopher. This is the conceptual category which we can use to classify and arrange some emerging notions in a Filipino Philosophy. This is also the reason why this article is presented as we share in the task of contributing a face when we talk of Filipino Philosophy. In our case, it is the face and epistemology of the overlap of the social-scientist-philosopher (**SSP Perspective**) that comes to our sensibilities and to our philosophic mind.

(Note: Attached in this article is a simple diagram of the conceptual frame of the overlapping epistemology of the SSP perspective.)

### **Conceptual Frame:**

Epistemology of the Overlap



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