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Abstract

The dialogue between Napoleon Mabaquiao Jr. and F. P. A. Demeterio III at the 1st Union of Societies and Associations of Philosophy in the Philippines (USAPP) marks a turning point in Filipino Philosophy, shifting its concern from questions of existence to debates on definition, method, progress, and application. This paper examines their exchange as a site where competing yet complementary visions of philosophizing in the Philippines are articulated. Mabaquiao, grounded in analytic philosophy, emphasizes clarity, rigor, and global recognition. Through his F-property and P-property framework, he seeks to secure the identity, integrity, and development of Filipino Philosophy within international standards. In contrast, Demeterio, informed by philosophy and Philippine Studies, advances a pluralistic and historically sensitive approach that maps Filipino Philosophy through taxonomies, critical historiography, and interdisciplinary engagement. His notion of "low-altitude philosophizing" stresses social responsiveness, accessibility, and grounding in lived realities through culturally situated and bilingual articulation. This paper argues that their positions are mutually illuminating: Mabaquiao safeguards rigor and disciplinary legitimacy, while Demeterio expands philosophical plurality, relevance, and transformative potential. Their exchange reflects the maturing character of Filipino Philosophy as it negotiates analytic precision with critical engagement and global recognition with local embeddedness. Situated within broader decolonial and Global South philosophical movements, this dialogue highlights tensions between professionalization and social relevance. Ultimately, the paper contends that Filipino Philosophy must sustain this productive tension toward a critically disciplined, socially engaged, and globally conversant practice.

Keywords: *Demeterio, Mabaquiao, Filipino Philosophy, Decolonial philosophy*

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INTRODUCTION

Philosophy conferences and philosophy organizations/associations are not merely venues for the presentation of research papers. These are spaces and arenas of spirited debate and dialogue. They involve living practice and conversations among philosophy scholars, enthusiasts, practitioners, and students. This is crucial in the discipline as it prevents ideas from being confined to isolated theorizing. It opens spaces for thoughtful exchange, allowing different perspectives and lenses to confront, critique, and challenge one another. In this way, conferences embody the very communal character of philosophizing, where knowledge emerges through dialogical interaction and mutual critique. This is equally vital in sustaining the miniversian spirit for it provides the institutional platforms where academic communities can be nurtured through thoughtful collaboration. Thus, conferences and organizations allow philosophy to function as both a community of inquiry and a community of practice. As a community of inquiries, it enables philosophers to ask questions together, to pursue shared problems, and to refine conceptual frameworks through critical dialogue. At the same time, as a community of practice, these organizations create spaces where shared traditions, pedagogies, and intellectual tools are transmitted, adapted, and applied to concrete cultural and social contexts. Given this, this interplay of inquiry and practice ensures that philosophizing is not confined to the abstract but is continually renewed by the lived experiences with the shared challenges of the community.

Philosophy conferences and organizations in the Global South can also be understood as venues for decolonialization, precisely because of their context of localization, which enables local scholars to present, debate, confront, and intervene in ideas grounded in their cultural, historical, and social realities. These spaces challenge the dominance of Eurocentric frameworks and universalizing assumptions. In fostering dialogue around locally rooted philosophies, the localized conferences assert the legitimacy of indigenous, postcolonial, and context-specific knowledge within global philosophical discourse. In this sense, conferences and organizations are not just sites of intellectual exchange but active arenas where philosophy is decolonized, localized, and socially engaged, reinforcing the dual mission of rigorous inquiry and culturally relevant discourses. This dialogical and communal orientation can also be seen in African philosophy and Latin American Philosophy.

In African philosophy, a long-standing tension exists between ethnophilosophy and professional philosophy. Ethnophilosophy, championed by scholars such as Placide Tempels, John S. Mbiti, Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Alexis Kagame, seeks to document and systematize the traditional worldviews,

cosmologies, and moral practices of African societies.[1] These philosophers emphasize philosophy as a reflection of communal life and indigenous epistemologies. Professional philosophy, on the other hand, represented by figures such as Paulin Hountondji, stresses analytic rigor, methodological clarity, and critical reasoning. Hountondji critiques ethnophilosophy for its uncritical cataloguing of communal beliefs, arguing for a philosophy that can engage with universal scholarly standards while remaining attentive to African realities.[2]

Similarly, in Latin American philosophy, decolonial thought has been shaped by liberation philosophy, which emphasizes philosophy's relevance to political struggle and social emancipation. Key figures include Leopoldo Zea, Enrique Dussel, and José Carlos Mariátegui, who insist that philosophy must confront and challenge the legacies of colonialism and Eurocentric abstraction.[3] Therefore, liberation philosophy advocates for praxis—a philosophy that engages directly with lived realities, popular struggles, and cultural identities, challenging abstraction divorced from social conditions.

In the Philippine context, several organizations nurture these spaces for dialogue and collaboration, such as the Philosophical Association of the Philippines (PAP), the Philosophical Association of Visayas and Mindanao (PHAVISMINDA), the Philosophical Association of Northern Luzon (PANL), PAGABURAN, the Societas Ethica Philosophica, Social Ethics Society (SES), and Philippine National Philosophical Research Society (PNPRS). These associations/societies continue the task of cultivating a vibrant community of philosophers in the country. In this spirit, Gripaldo envisioned and articulated the need for the consolidation of the many existing groups into one umbrella organization.[4] Such unity, accordingly, was not merely administrative but philosophical, for it meant weaving diverse voices into a shared discourse capable of advancing Filipino philosophy at both national and international levels. This vision anticipated the eventual formal establishment of the Union of Societies and Associations of Philosophy in the Philippines (USAPP), which institutionalized a nationwide community of inquiry and practice. More than certificates of attendance, certificates of presentation, and formal membership, this collective

1 Paul O. Irikefe, "Ethnophilosophy as Decolonization: Revisiting the Question of African Philosophy," *Philosophical Papers* 52, nos. 2–3 (2023): 109–42, https://doi.org/10.1080/05568641.2024.2416459.

2 Paulin J. Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983).

3 Eduardo Mendieta, ed., *Latin American Philosophy: Currents, Issues, Debates* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).

4 Rolando M. Gripaldo, "Filipino Philosophy and Nation Building," in *The Making of a Filipino Philosopher and Other Essays* (Manila: National Book Store, 2017).

and shared endeavor is a reminder that philosophy flourishes when it is lived in conversation—across institutions, provinces, and regions—sustaining the hope of making Filipino philosophy part of the global philosophical discourse.

It was within this framework of organizational dialogues that the First Philosophy Summit of USAPP was held in 2019, alongside the 40th anniversary of PHAVISMINDA at Silliman University, Dumaguete City, with the theme *"Philosophy and the Filipino: An Assessment of the Direction of Philosophizing in the Philippines."* The theme sought to provide a critical space for reflection on the state and directions of philosophical practice in the country. The call for papers (2019) states that the urgency of this endeavor can be traced back as early as 1940, when Camilo Osias, in his work *The Filipino Way of Life: The Pluralized Philosophy*, lamented the estrangement of ordinary Filipinos from philosophy. This has been so because philosophy was often seen as abstract, impractical, or elitist.[5] But the call for papers states that, when rightly understood and applied, philosophy is not only vital but necessary, for it can guide both citizens and the nation by providing meaning, cohesion, and purpose to individual and collective life.

The launching of USAPP during this milestone event represented the realization of a long-held vision: a federation of philosophical organizations committed to dialogue and collaboration. This achievement reflects the vibrancy of philosophical activities in the Philippines, evidenced by the growing number of societies and associations across the country. As the call for papers states, the summit positioned itself as both historical and auspicious.[6] It was historical because for the first time, various philosophical associations came together in solidarity to convene a national philosophy summit. It was auspicious because the times demand a deeper reflection on philosophy's role in shaping the nation's life, setting its path right, and responding to pressing cultural, political, and existential challenges. The theme directs attention to the relationship between philosophy and Filipino life, inviting scholars, academics, students, and independent researchers to critically assess the directions that Filipino philosophizing has taken and the possibilities it may yet pursue. Through this collective reflection, the Summit sought to transform Filipino philosophy from a misunderstood abstraction into a community of inquiry and practice that meaningfully contributes to society.

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5 Union of Societies and Associations of Philosophy in the Philippines, Silliman University, and Philosophical Association of the Visayas and Mindanao, *Call for Papers: PHAVISMINDA's 40th Anniversary Celebration and the 1st Philosophy Summit of the Union of Societies and Associations of Philosophy in the Philippines* (Dumaguete City: Silliman University, 2019).

6 Ibid.

Among the highlights of this Summit was the plenary exchange and debate between Napoleon Mabaquiao, Jr.[7] and Feorillo Petronilo A. Demeterio III[8] —two of the most influential voices in Filipino Philosophy. Their dialogue embodies a living encounter where differences in approach become opportunities for reflection, and where the future direction of Filipino philosophizing could be more sharply imagined. It signifies a space where different approaches to Filipino Philosophy could interact and together shape the future direction of the discipline in the country.[9]

This paper aims to analyze the exchanges of Mabaquiao and Demeterio at the 2019 First Philosophy Summit of USAPP, critically examining their respective approaches to Filipino philosophy as articulated during the conference. It seeks to situate their debate within the broader trajectory of Filipino philosophy, highlighting how Mabaquiao's rigorous and systematic methodology contrasts with Demeterio's pluralistic and contextually responsive framework. Furthermore, this paper aims to explore how this dialogue reflects both continuity with the pioneering efforts of earlier Filipino philosophers and the renewal of philosophical inquiry in response to contemporary cultural, social, and global challenges, thereby contributing to the institutionalization, legitimacy, and critical relevance of Filipino Philosophy in the Philippines and beyond. Specifically, the paper is divided into six major parts: "Dialogues and Existing Scholarship on Mabaquiao and Demeterio," "Meta-normative-applied Theoretical Framework of Filipino Philosophy," "Napoleon Mabaquiao Jr. on Filipino Philosophy: Identity, Progress, and Recognition," "F. P. A. Demeterio III on Filipino Philosophy: Multiplicity, Critical Engagement, and Low-Altitude Philosophy," "Critical Assessment of Mabaquiao and Demeterio's Philosophical Exchanges ," and the "Conclusion."

Dialogues and Existing Scholarship on Mabaquiao and Demeterio

Mabaquiao and Demeterio are the intellectual heirs of what the Philosophical Association of the Philippines (PAP) has honored as *Our Philosophical Pioneers in the Legacy Lectures*—thinkers such as Romualdo Abulad, Alfredo Co, Manuel Dy Jr., Leovino Garcia, Florentino Hornedo, Roque Ferriols, Julius Mendoza, Leonardo Mercado, Zosimo Lee, Emerita Quito, Ramon

7 Napoleon M. Mabaquiao Jr., "Filipino Philosophy: Three Challenges," plenary lecture, 1st USAPP Philosophy Summit and PHAVISMINDA 40th Anniversary Celebration, Silliman University, Negros Oriental, May 30–June 1, 2019.

8 Feorillo Petronilo A. Demeterio III, "15-Minute Opening Statement on Filipino Philosophy," paper presented at the 1st USAPP Philosophy Summit and PHAVISMINDA 40th Anniversary Convention, Silliman University, Dumaguete City, May 30, 2019.

9 Demeterio, "15-Minute Opening Statement on Filipino Philosophy,"

Reyes, Florentino Timbreza, and Amable Tuibeo.[10] These luminaries laid the groundwork for philosophy in the Philippines, establishing both institutional presence and intellectual direction for generations to come. They labored under conditions where much of the philosophical training required exposure abroad, gathering frameworks and concepts that could be reworked within the Filipino context.[11] As immediate products of this pioneering wave, Mabaquiao and Demeterio represent the next stage in the unfolding waves of Filipino Philosophy. These two belong to a different milieu: the global and digital age, where access to knowledge is immediate and possibilities for dialogue are vast. Thus, these two are in a position not just to preserve and interpret the legacy of the pioneers but also to carry Filipino philosophy into a more critical, dialogical, and internationally conversant phase. The debates and exchanges between Mabaquiao and Demeterio embody both continuity and renewal. Continuity lies in their firm grounding in the foundations laid by these pioneers; renewal lies in their push to advance Filipino philosophizing in new directions, addressing contemporary cultural, social, and political challenges while engaging the global philosophical arena.

Napoleon Mabaquiao, Jr., trained in analytic philosophy at the University of the Philippines Diliman,[12] is one of the most significant contemporary figures in the development and institutionalization of Filipino Philosophy. A major contribution of Mabaquiao lies in his articulation of the possibility of a genuinely Filipino Philosophy through rigorous philosophical method, consistently rejecting the notion that philosophy in the Philippines is merely derivative of Western thought. Instead, he asserts that Filipino Philosophy can emerge by critically engaging indigenous concepts, practices, and experiences while remaining open to dialogue with global philosophical traditions.[13] He has also contributed to the debate on the definition and scope of Filipino Philosophy,

10 The Philosophical Association of the Philippines conducted a national conference at De La Salle University-Manila with the theme "Legacy Lectures: Engaging Our Philosophical Pioneers" where they honored the pioneers of philosophy in the Philippines, namely: Romualdo Abulad, Alfredo Co, Manuel Dy Jr., Leovino Garcia, Florentino Hornedo, Roque Ferriols, Julius Mendoza, Leonardo Mercado, Zosimo Lee, Emerita Quito, Ramon Reyes, Florentino Timbreza, and Amable Tuibeo.

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

12 For the analytic tradition in the Philippines, see Jeremiah Joven Joaquin, "Analytic Philosophy in the Philippines," *Asian Journal of Philosophy* 1 (2022), article 36, https://doi.org/10.1007/s44204-022-00029-z.

13 Napoleon M. Mabaquiao Jr., "Isang Paglilinaw sa Kahulugan at Kairalan ng Pilosopiyang Filipino / A Clarification on the Existence and Meaning of Filipino Philosophy," *Malay* 23, no. 2 (2011): 39–56.

critically examining the positions of Florentino Timbreza[14], Emerita Quito[15], Rolando Gripaldo[16], Leonardo Mercado[17], and F. P. A. Demeterio III.[18] While Mercado explored the Filipino worldview through linguistic and cultural analysis, Mabaquiao questioned the methodological soundness of such an approach and emphasized instead the need for philosophical reconstruction to clarify Filipino thought in terms of logical coherence, argumentative rigor, and systematic analysis.[19] In ethics and applied philosophy, he has written extensively on Filipino moral thought, social responsibility, and socio-political philosophy, situating these concerns within Philippine social realities and demonstrating how philosophical reflection can both critique and guide praxis towards moral and political life[20]. Equally important are his roles as teacher, editor, and mentor within the philosophical community, especially through his active involvement in the Philippine National Philosophical Research Society (PNPRS) and his editorial work in Philosophia: The Official Journal of the PNPRS, which has preserved, curated, and disseminated Filipino philosophical scholarship locally and internationally. Mabaquiao's contributions are both theoretical—developing and defending a methodologically sound conception of Filipino Philosophy while engaging in dialogue with local and global traditions nurturing spaces for philosophical discourse through teaching, mentorship, editing, and organizational leadership. In this way, his work strengthens the legitimacy of Filipino Philosophy not as a mere appendage of Western thought but as a living, evolving, and dialogical philosophical tradition rooted in Filipino life and experience.

Mabaquiao's contributions to Filipino Philosophy have been examined and critiqued by several scholars, highlighting both the strengths and limitations of his approach. Joaquin emphasizes Mabaquiao's advocacy for a rigorous and systematic methodology, stressing strict adherence to philosophical standards and the need for a clear framework to guide inquiry

14 Florentino H. Timbreza, *Pilosopiyang Pilipino* (Rex Book Store, 1982).

15 Emerita S. Quito, "Ang Pilosopiya: Batayan ng Pambansang Kultura," in *A Life of Philosophy: Festschrift in Honor of Emerita S. Quito* (De La Salle University, 1990), 123–38.

16 Gripaldo, "Filipino Philosophy and Nation Building."

17 Leonardo N. Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy* (Divine Word University Publications, 1974).

18 Feorillo Petronilo A. Demeterio III, "Status of and Directions for 'Filipino Philosophy' in Zialcita, Timbreza, Quito, Abulad, Mabaquiao, Gripaldo, and Co," *Philosophia* 14, no. 2 (2013): 186–215.

19 Mabaquiao, "Isang Paglilinaw sa Kahulugan at Kairalan ng Pilosopiyang Filipino."

20 Mabaquiao, "Filipino Philosophy: Three Challenges."

within the Filipino context.[21] While this structured approach seeks to elevate the academic status of Filipino Philosophy, it may also risk stifling creative and indigenous expressions and alienating non-academic philosophical traditions. Atim situates Mabaquiao alongside other Filipino philosophers, such as Gripaldo, Timbreza, and Demeterio, noting that his work represents a distinct viewpoint that enriches the diversity of thought in the field, even if Atim does not extensively analyze Mabaquiao's arguments.[22] Biana and Joaquin recognize Mabaquiao's *"strict discipline"* approach while advocating for a more inclusive and critical examination of methodologies to advance a dynamic and progressive Filipino philosophical tradition[23]. Complementing these critiques, Demeterio categorizes Mabaquiao's contributions into six discourses—ideological, ethical, philosophy based on Filipino concepts and categories, philosophy from the viewpoint of Filipino consciousness, Filipino philosophy using the Filipino language, and Filipino philosophy using Filipino concepts and categories—demonstrating how his systematic framework contributes to establishing a distinctly Filipino philosophical tradition that is both culturally grounded and academically rigorous.[24]

Feorillo Petronilo A. Demeterio III, on the other hand, is one of the most prolific and systematic contemporary Filipino philosophers whose work has significantly advanced the discourse on Filipino Philosophy. He is best known for his comprehensive mapping and meta-philosophical analyses of the field, which clarified the different trajectories of thought in the Philippines, from Ethnophilosophy to Hermeneutics and Postmodern approaches. Central to his contribution is his critical engagement with the question of what constitutes Filipino Philosophy, where he advocates a pluralistic methodology that avoids essentialism and instead embraces multiple approaches such as linguistic analysis, cultural studies, and critical theory. Demeterio also played a vital role in introducing Frankfurt School Critical Theory and Postmodern thought into Philippine philosophical reflection, demonstrating how global philosophies can be appropriated to interrogate local issues like colonial mentality, poverty, and social inequality. Beyond his theoretical work, he mentors young scholars and

21 Jeremiah Joven B. Joaquin, "Gripaldo and Mabaquiao on Filipino Philosophy: A Critical Assessment of Two Attempts to Establish a Filipino Philosophy," *Dalumat: E-Journal* 1, no. 1 (2010): 121–129.

22 Ben Carlo N. Atim, "Ang Diskurso ni Feorillo Petronilo Demeterio Tungkol sa Pilosopiyang Pilipino: Isang Pagsusuri," *Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy* 11, no. 2 (2017): 28–53, https://doi.org/10.25138/11.2.a2.

23 Hazel T. Biana and Jeremiah Joven B. Joaquin, "Questioning Demeterio's Approach to Filipino Philosophy," *Philosophia: International Journal of Philosophy* 24, no. 1 (2023): 131–55, https://doi.org/10.46992/pijp.24.1.a.8.

24 Demeterio, "Status of and Directions for 'Filipino Philosophy.'"

strengthens the discipline's legitimacy in academic and international spaces, both in philosophy and Philippine Studies. His interdisciplinary orientation further integrates philosophy with culture, politics, and development studies, proving its relevance beyond the academic sphere. Altogether, Demeterio's contributions not only systematize Filipino Philosophy but also push it toward greater critical depth, methodological rigor, and global dialogue.[25]

Like Mabaquiao, the contributions of Demeterio have been the subject of extensive discussion in recent scholarship, reflecting his status as one of the leading figures in contemporary Filipino philosophy. Atim traces Demeterio's development across two stages: the *problematic stage* (2000–2004), in which he confronted the difficulties of defining Filipino philosophy and situating it within global discourse, and the *probing stage* (2005–2015), where he appropriated critical theories to examine Philippine society, culture, and education.[26] Central to Demeterio's approach is *critical Filipino philosophy*, which adapts both local and foreign theories, employs Filipino as a philosophical language, and applies cognitive anthropology as a strategy to address social realities. His emphasis on the dialectical relationship between theory, context, and praxis highlights philosophy's transformative potential—not only to interpret but also to respond to concrete national problems. Deleña, Felicilda, and Liwanag, in celebrating F. P. A. Demeterio III in his 25th year in philosophy, recognized him as a pivotal figure in Filipino philosophy who has made it relevant, accessible, and critically engaged with Philippine society. They emphasize the importance of philosophizing in the Filipino language to root philosophical discourse in local culture and make complex ideas more understandable and support Demeterio's approach of appropriating and interpreting foreign philosophical theories within the Filipino context, enriching local thought without merely imitating Western perspectives. They further advocate for a critical and reflective philosophy that addresses social, political, and cultural issues, highlighting the intellectual responsibility of philosophers in society. They present Filipino philosophy as a dynamic discipline that should be both culturally grounded and globally informed, with Demeterio's 25 years of work exemplifying this vision.[27] Abenes and Mahaguay provide a more comprehensive intellectual and praxiological

25 Rodrigo D. Abenes and Jerwin M. Mahaguay, "F. P. A. Demeterio III: Simula sa Pagbubuo Hanggang sa Pakikibahagi," *Lukad: An Online Journal of Pedagogy* 1, no. 1 (2021): 85–114, https://lukad.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/volume1_issue1_abenes_mahaguay_June2021.pdf.

26 Atim, "Ang Diskurso ni Feorillo Petronilo Demeterio Tungkol sa Pilosopiyang Pilipino."

27 Mary Irene Clare O. Deleña, et al., "Si Demeterio at ang Pilosopiyang Pilipino: Pakikipanayam Tungkol sa Kanyang Ika-25 na Taong Pamimilosopiya," *Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy* 12, no. 1 (2018): 98–139, https://doi.org/10.25138/12.1.a6.

biography of Demeterio, framing his work within four distinct periods. These include his *formative years* (1969–1994), marked by a shift from chemistryto philosophy; the phase of *academic radicalization* (1995–2008), where his critical philosophy and activism were most visible at San Beda College; the stage of *academic Filipinization* (2008–2014), during which he began writing in Filipino and engaging Philippine contexts more deeply; and the era of *Humboldtian radicalization* (2015–present), characterized by collaborative and research-oriented philosophizing inspired by Wilhelm von Humboldt. Their account underscores not only Demeterio's publications but also his role in socio-political discourse and mentorship of younger scholars, situating him as a pivotal figure in expanding and institutionalizing Filipino philosophy.[28]

In the same way, Demeterio's *twelve-discourse* framework has influenced subsequent generations of Filipino philosophers, particularly his students and mentees. For instance, scholars such as De Leon[29], Deleña, Felicilda, Liwanag[30], Abenes, and Mahaguay[31] have utilized these discourses as springboards for their own inquiries, demonstrating the framework's pedagogical and heuristic value. Through such applications, Demeterio's classificatory project has extended beyond his own writings and become a shared reference point in contemporary Filipino philosophical debates. While contested, the framework has thus functioned as both a generative and a provocative tool, shaping how younger scholars engage with the evolving landscape of Filipino philosophy.

Despite these affirmations, Demeterio's work has also attracted critical scrutiny. Pada critiques the methodological tensions in Demeterio's framework. While acknowledging his rejection of Emerita Quito's pessimism and his efforts to professionalize Filipino philosophy, Pada points out that Demeterio's reliance on cognitive anthropology may oversimplify Filipino identity. Furthermore, his mapping of Filipino philosophy into distinct phases, while structurally useful, tends toward schematic reductionism that detaches philosophical discourse from its historical and cultural contexts. Pada also objects to Demeterio's dismissal of folk philosophy, Thomism, and non-academic discourses as

28 Abenes and Mahaguay, "F. P. A. Demeterio III: Simula sa Pagbubuo Hanggang sa Pakikibahagi."

29 Emmanuel Catibog De Leon, *Mga Tomasino sa Pilosopiyang Filipino: Ang Intelektuwal na Pamana ng mga Pangunahing Tomasinong Pilosoper sa Kasaysayan ng Pamimilosopiyang Filipino* (Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino, 2019).

30 Deleña et al., "Si Demeterio at ang Pilosopiyang Pilipino."

31 Abenes and Mahaguay, "F. P. A. Demeterio III: Simula sa Pagbubuo Hanggang sa Pakikibahagi"; Rodrigo D. Abenes and Jerwin M. Mahaguay, "Dekolonisasyon para sa Diwang Pilipino ni Emerita S. Quito: Isang Pagpupugay," *Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy* 11, no. 2 (2017): 1–27, https://doi.org/10.25138/11.2.a1.

"unproductive."[32] Biana and Joaquin question Demeterio's attempt to categorize Filipino philosophy into twelve discourses and to rank them according to "developmental potential." They argue that his taxonomic and bibliometric methods are arbitrary and methodologically weak, relying on rubric such as Filipinoness, cognitive level, and sustainability that risk superficiality. Far from advancing the field, they contend, this classificatory impulse may constrain Filipino philosophy by reducing it to repetitive categorizations, thereby discouraging authentic and innovative philosophizing.[33]

These studies present a balanced view of Demeterio's role in Filipino philosophy: he is recognized for advancing a critical, socially responsive mode of philosophizing, but also challenged for methodological choices that may limit rather than expand the horizons of the discipline. His work continues to provoke dialogue among Filipino philosophers, reflecting both its influence and its contested character within the evolving discourse of Filipino philosophy.

Meta–Normative–Applied Framework of Filipino Philosophy

This study employs the meta-normative-applied framework of Filipino Philosophy as its primary theoretical and analytical lens in examining the philosophical exchanges between Mabaquiao and Demeterio III. The framework was originally articulated by Mabaquiao in his plenary lecture, *"Filipino Philosophy: Three Challenges,"*[34] where he argued that the development of Filipino Philosophy must proceed through three interrelated dimensions: the meta-philosophical, the normative, and the applied. These dimensions correspond to the fundamental philosophical tasks of clarifying identity, establishing standards, and demonstrating social relevance. Although initially proposed as part of Mabaquiao's own philosophical project, this study appropriates the framework as a broader interpretative model capable of analyzing both Mabaquiao's and Demeterio's contributions to contemporary Filipino Philosophy.

At the meta-philosophical level, the framework examines the problem of identity and legitimacy in Filipino Philosophy. This level asks foundational questions concerning what counts as Filipino Philosophy and what conditions make philosophical work genuinely "Filipino." We can deduce that such inquiry includes issues of conceptual definition, methodological orientation, intellectual genealogy, and disciplinary boundaries. The metalevel, therefore,

32 Roland Theuas DS. Pada, "The Methodological Problems of Filipino Philosophy," *Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy* 8, no. 1 (2014): 24–44, https://doi.org/10.25138/8.1.a.2.

33 Biana and Joaquin, "Questioning Demeterio's Approach to Filipino Philosophy."

34 Mabaquiao, "Filipino Philosophy: Three Challenges."

concerns the philosophical self-understanding of the discipline itself. It interrogates whether Filipino Philosophy is defined primarily through subject matter, cultural experience, language, geographical location, methodological approach or philosophical tradition. At the normative level, Filipino philosophy examines the standards, values, and ideals that Filipino philosophy ought to pursue. It moves beyond merely describing philosophical practices or traditions and instead engages in prescriptive and evaluative reflection. It asks what kind of Filipino philosophy should be developed, what intellectual and cultural orientations should guide it, and what national or institutional purposes it should serve. Within this dimension, criteria such as philosophical rigor, conceptual coherence, argumentative validity, originality, and social relevance become central in assessing and guiding philosophical work. Thus, normative Filipino philosophy functions as a framework for shaping the direction, quality, and purpose of philosophical inquiry in the Philippine context. Conversely, the applied framework shifts the analytical focus toward how philosophical reflection translates into tangible social, cultural, and pedagogical engagements. Rather than confining Filipino Philosophy to a detached academic exercise, this dimension interrogates its practical efficacy and capacity to resonate with everyday human experience. It redefines philosophy as an active praxis—one that dynamically intersects with public discourse, ethical deliberation, education, and social reform. By prioritizing questions of accessibility, vernacular philosophizing, and grassroots community engagement, this framework anchors abstract concepts to localized realities. Through this, it underscores the performative and transformative agency of philosophy, establishing it as a vital catalyst for meaningful change within contemporary Filipino society.

The meta–normative–applied framework serves as an exceptionally potent analytical lens for this study, as it uniquely captures the multi-layered architecture of the intellectual dialogue between Mabaquiao and Demeterio. Their engagement transcends mere terminological or methodological disputes; it fundamentally interrogates divergent, deeply held assumptions regarding the core identity, purpose, and ultimate trajectory of Filipino Philosophy. Rather than settling for surface-level comparisons, this triadic framework facilitates a structured investigation that illuminates how each thinker operates from distinct, well-defined philosophical priorities.

Crucially, the framework demonstrates that the divergence between Mabaquiao and Demeterio is not strictly adversarial, but rather dialectically productive. Mabaquiao anchors his vision within the meta-philosophical and normative dimensions, championing definitional clarity, disciplinary coherence, and rigorous professional standards. On the other hand, Demeterio privileges the normative and applied dimensions, emphasizing plurality, historical situatedness, public accessibility, and a critical immersion in socio-

cultural realities. To sum up, their exchange embodies two vital, interdependent impulses essential to the growth of Filipino Philosophy: the consolidation of intellectual rigor and the enduring pursuit of social relevance.

Napoleon Mabaquiao Jr. on Filipino Philosophy: Identity, Progress, and Recognition

In his plenary lecture *"Filipino Philosophy: Three Challenges,"* Mabaquiao confronted directly the present condition and future direction of Filipino Philosophy (FP). He argued that Filipino Philosophy must seriously contend with three fundamental challenges: 1) the challenge of identity, 2) the challenge of progress, and 3) the challenge of recognition. Without addressing these concerns, FP risks falling into vagueness, stagnation, and marginality. But with conceptual clarity, scholarly rigor, and global engagement, Filipino Philosophy can become a vibrant intellectual tradition that contributes not only to Filipino national identity but also to the universal body of philosophy.

The first challenge, identity, raises the foundational question: *What is Filipino Philosophy?* Mabaquiao's lecture made it clear that Filipino Philosophy cannot be simply equated with any Filipino thought or cultural reflection. Instead, he proposed a framework based on two properties. As Mabaquiao mentioned: *"how does one know whether a text is Filipino and philosophical? What are their indicators? F-property and P-property are actually complex properties in that they consist of further properties which then serve as their indicators."*[35] The first is the F-property, which identifies the Filipino element in a text. This property can be satisfied in multiple ways: if a text is written by a Filipino author, if it is composed in a Philippine language, if it addresses Filipino problems and concerns, or if it promotes the welfare of the Filipino nation. A work only needs to meet one of these indicators to be counted as Filipino. In developing this criterion, Mabaquiao drew an analogy from how librarians classify works under the *Filipiniana* section—where authorship, language, subject matter, or national relevance may each serve as a sufficient basis for inclusion. Mabaquiao added that:

> I take the F-property as having three indicators, having to do with the subject matter and language of texts and the nationality of the author of these texts. Accordingly, for a text to be Filipino, it should: (1) deal with issues concerning the Philippines or affecting the Filipinos; (2) use the Filipino language or one of the Philippine languages; and (3) written by

35 Mabaquiao, "Filipino Philosophy: Three Challenges."

someone with a Filipino nationality. Let us call these three indicators of the F-property as the 'F-indicators.'[36]

The second property, on the other hand, is the P-property, which guarantees that the work is genuinely philosophical. Here, Mabaquiao is uncompromising: a work must raise fundamental or framework questions, employ a recognized philosophical method such as Pphenomenology, analytic philosophy, or critical theory, and present arguments backed by reasons. Unlike the F-property, which is disjunctive, the P-property is conjunctive—all three indicators must be present. This balance between liberality in what counts as Filipino and strictness in what counts as philosophy is captured in his oft-quoted maxim: *be liberal with the Filipino but strict with the philosophical.* Mabaquiao *stressed that:*

> I take the P-property as likewise having three indicators, having to do with the theme or subject matter, method, and style. Accordingly, for a text to be philosophical, it must: (a) deal with framework questions or any theme falling under any of the branches of philosophy; (b) uses any of the recognized philosophical methods such as phenomenology, analytic philosophy, feminism, critical theory, and others; and (c) should advance claims in an argumentative way, that is, these claims are not merely stated but are backed up by arguments. Let us call these three indicators of the P-property as the "P-indicators.[37]

This framework gains stronger grounding when read in light of Mabaquiao's essay *"Isang Paglilinaw sa Kahulugan at Kairalan ng Pilosopiyang Filipino."*[38] There, he makes a crucial distinction between the strict and non-strict uses of *Pilosopiya*. In everyday usage, "philosophy" can simply mean an outlook or principle of life, as when one speaks of a "philosophy of leadership." But in academic discourse, philosophy must be taken in the strict sense: it is a rigorous intellectual practice defined by method, argument, and the pursuit of foundational questions. If we fail to maintain this strict sense, Mabaquiao warns, then anything can be considered Filipino Philosophy, reducing the concept to triviality. His insistence on strictness preserves the integrity of FP by ensuring that it remains proper philosophy and not just cultural ideology or folk wisdom. Further support for this identity framework can be found in his essay *"Pilosopiyang Pilipino: Isang Pagsusuri*."[39] In this work, Mabaquiao surveys six possible definitions of Filipino Philosophy that have emerged in

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

38 Mabaquiao, "Isang Paglilinaw sa Kahulugan at Kairalan ng Pilosopiyang Filipino."

39 Napoleon M. Mabaquiao Jr., "Pilosopiyang Pilipino: Isang Pagsusuri," *Philippine Social Sciences Review* 55, nos. 1–4 (1998): 203–15.

scholarly discourse. These include definitions based on the use of indigenous categories, on the employment of the national language, on the citizenship of the philosopher, on the cultivation of Filipino ideology, on the promotion of Filipino values, and on the national identity of the philosopher's consciousness. After examining their strengths and limitations, Mabaquiao concludes that the most viable definition centers on the consciousness of the philosopher. If a Filipino philosopher's philosophizing bears a consciously Filipino orientation, then it qualifies as Filipino Philosophy. This definition is capacious enough to encompass the other indicators, but it avoids the pitfall of making the concept either too vague or too narrow. The importance of this clarification cannot be overstated for it addresses the persistent worry that Filipino Philosophy is either a forced invention or an incoherent label. For Mabaquiao, Filipino Philosophy exists, but only if defined with conceptual precision and defended against dilution.

The second challenge, which is progress, is about the flourishing and development of Filipino Philosophy. In his lecture, Mabaquiao observed that Filipino philosophers are more than capable of producing high-quality work, but their efforts are hampered by institutional neglect and lack of support. Philosophy is often undervalued in academic funding priorities, and Filipino philosophers struggle to find opportunities for publication and international exposure. For Mabaquiao, overcoming these obstacles is essential. Filipino philosophers must actively engage with the global academic community, presenting papers at international conferences, publishing in peer-reviewed journals, and making their research accessible to the public and international community. Visibility and participation are key to progress. He encouraged Filipino philosophers to do quality research in philosophy.

> I strongly believe that Filipinos are very much capable of doing quality research in philosophy. I have witnessed this personally when I attended several international conferences in philosophy. Filipino philosophers, however, are facing many obstacles, which include the lack of appreciation and support from academic institutions (philosophical researches are usually the least prioritized in terms of funding), which affect their motivation to further pursue their philosophical interests. If resources permit, however, we need to attend more international conferences and publish in international journals. Let us make ourselves visible in the global philosophical community.[40]

In his essays, this call for progress is reinforced by the insistence on rigorous standards. Since Filipino Philosophy must always satisfy the P-property, progress cannot be measured by the volume of works produced

40 Mabaquiao, "Filipino Philosophy: Three Challenges."

alone but must be evaluated by their philosophical quality. Do the works raise fundamental questions? Do they use disciplined methods? Do they present carefully reasoned arguments? These criteria ensure that Filipino Philosophy evolves not only in breadth but also in depth. Moreover, he stresses in his article entitled *"Pilosopiyang Pilipino: Isang Pagsusuri"* the importance of recognizing that Filipino philosophizing has a history. It is not a new or artificial creation but a tradition that has already taken shape in different forms, from the writings of Filipino nationalists to contemporary academic discourse. Recognizing this continuity means that progress involves building upon a foundation that already exists, refining and expanding it, and addressing underdeveloped areas of inquiry. Progress also means that Filipino Philosophy must interact critically with global traditions. In other works, Mabaquiao has noted the influence of analytic philosophy in the Philippines, as well as the relevance of phenomenology, critical theory, and feminism. As he would note, Filipino philosophers should not retreat into isolation but should appropriate global methods and frameworks while grounding them in Filipino contexts. This dual engagement allows Filipino Philosophy to be both globally conversant and locally relevant. Thus, progress is measured by the ability of Filipino philosophers to produce work that stands shoulder-to-shoulder with international scholarship while still rooted in Filipino experiences.

Recognition, which stands as the third challenge, deals with legitimacy and acceptance. In his lecture, Mabaquiao observed that recognition is often misunderstood. Some assume that because Filipino Philosophy is not widely recognized, it must not exist. But recognition is not a precondition of existence. Rather, recognition must be earned through clear identity and substantial progress. Filipino Philosophy must demonstrate its value both locally, in addressing Filipino concerns, and internationally, by showing that its works meet universal philosophical standards. His essays again provide crucial support for this argument. Mabaquiao explains that because the Filipino property is non-essential, Filipino Philosophy can claim universality without losing its local character. A Filipino philosophical work is localized by its F-property but universal by its P-property. In other words, it speaks to Filipino concerns while still participating in the global philosophical enterprise. This dual character makes Filipino Philosophy uniquely positioned to contribute to both national identity and universal discourse. Mabaquiao strengthens this claim by tracing the history of Filipino philosophical writings, showing that they form a continuous tradition rather than a recent fabrication. This historical depth provides legitimacy and recognition by situating Filipino Philosophy as a tradition in its own right. Moreover, by carefully distinguishing Filipino Philosophy from other Filipino disciplines such as psychology or anthropology, he ensures that it is recognized as philosophy proper and not mistaken for cultural studies or social science.

Mabaquiao's plenary lecture and essays offer a comprehensive and rigorous vision for Filipino Philosophy. The lecture identifies the three existential challenges—identity, progress, and recognition—while the essays provide the detailed conceptual and historical grounding needed to meet them. Identity is secured by distinguishing strict philosophy from loose usage and by defining the Filipino trait as non-essential but decisive. Progress is achieved by raising standards, building on historical continuity, and engaging global traditions. Recognition is won by demonstrating both rootedness in Filipino experience and universality in philosophical method. Mabaquiao's contribution is not only diagnostic but prescriptive: he shows where Filipino Philosophy currently stands, what risks it faces, and what must be done to ensure its flourishing. His work positions Filipino Philosophy as a serious intellectual enterprise. It is neither an accidental collection of Filipino ideas, nor a provincial curiosity, but a field of inquiry that is both Filipino in orientation and philosophical in rigor. By demanding clarity, excellence, and engagement, Mabaquiao envisions a Filipino Philosophy that can claim its rightful place in the global philosophical community while remaining deeply relevant to the Filipino people. His vision is ambitious, but it is precisely this ambition that makes his work vital. In confronting the challenges of identity, progress, and recognition, Mabaquiao charts a path for Filipino Philosophy to move from the margins to the center, from uncertainty to confidence, and from mere existence to meaningful contribution.

F. P. A. Demeterio III on Filipino Philosophy: Multiplicity, Critical Engagement, and Low-Altitude Philosophizing

In his plenary talk, Demeterio reflected on three guiding questions posed by the moderator Jeremiah Joven Joaquin: *Is there Filipino Philosophy? What is Filipino Philosophy? How can we best approach it?* These questions provided the framework for Demeterio's remarks, but these also opened a wider window into his broader scholarly project, which spans decades of writing on Filipino philosophy, critical theory, and cultural studies. The talk served as an articulation of his standpoint, while his published works flesh out the nuances of his position. It reveals a vision of Filipino Philosophy that resists rigid definitions, embraces plurality, and insists on relevance to Filipino realities through what he calls "low-altitude philosophizing."

On the first question—'Is there Filipino philosophy?'—Demeterio begins by acknowledging the complexity of the issue. He recalls Ricardo Pascual, an early pioneer of the analytic philosophical tradition in the Philippines, and notes that Pascual never offered a definitive answer to the question. Demeterio himself draws on Romualdo Abulad, who argued that Filipino Philosophy is not something that can be defined *a priori* but must be discerned inductively

from the texts written by Filipino philosophers. Instead of being an abstract category, Filipino Philosophy emerges from actual writings. For Demeterio, the problem lies not in the absence of Filipino Philosophy but in the lack of sufficient production, careful reading, and circulation of Filipino philosophical works. Echoing Abulad, he insists that Filipino philosophers should not be paralyzed by definitional debates but should focus on writing philosophy because in time, the body of works will speak for itself.

> To answer the question: is there Filipino philosophy? I take my cue from Romualdo Abulad who argued that Filipino philosophy is not an a priori category that we should pursue, but the network of characteristics that we may decipher from the philosophical writings of Filipinos. The reason why Filipino philosophy is still vague at this point is that we simply do not have enough corpus of these philosophical writings of Filipinos, and maybe also because we are not reading what few philosophical texts we have. Abulad's advice is never to be bothered with the question "am I doing Filipino philosophy?," but just go on writing that philosophical text that you are working on. As Filipino scholars of philosophy our motto should be, just do it.[41]

On the second question—'What is Filipino philosophy?'—Demeterio rejects essentialist definitions and instead adopts a Wittgensteinian approach. Just as Ludwig Wittgenstein spoke of concepts defined by "family resemblances,", Demeterio sees Filipino Philosophy as a cluster of discourses that are related not by one common essence but by overlapping similarities. This position is consistent with his long-standing interest in taxonomy and mapping of Filipino philosophy.

> After studying the taxonomies and periodizations of Filipino philosophy of Fernando Nakpil-Zialcita, Emerita Quito, Abulad, Rolando Gripaldo, Alfredo Co and Napoleon Mabaquiao, I was able to identify 12 textualized discourses of Filipino philosophy. I assume that these five Filipino philosophy scholars, or Filipino philosophers, came up with their taxonomies and periodizations based on their respective ex post facto studies on some corpus of Filipino philosophical writings and activities. As far as my 12 textual discourses of Filipino philosophy are concerned, I and some of my students and former students tested them repeatedly against a number of aggregated Filipino philosophical writings.[42]

In his published work, especially in his writings between 2005 and 2015, he identified and tested a twelvefold taxonomy of Filipino philosophical discourses. These include: (1) exposition of foreign systems, (2) application

41 Demeterio, "15-Minute Opening Statement on Filipino Philosophy."

42 Ibid.

of logical analysis, (3) application of phenomenology and hermeneutics, (4) appropriation of foreign theories, (5) revisionist writing, (6) academic critical analysis, (7) interpretation of Filipino worldview and identity, (8) research on Filipino ethics and values, (9) appropriation of folk spirit, (10) study of presuppositions and implications of the Filipino worldview and identity, (11) study of Filipino philosophical luminaries, and (12) philosophizing in Filipino. This classification shows both the diversity and unevenness of Filipino Philosophy. Some discourses, like exposition of foreign systems, are overrepresented, while others, like revisionist writing, remain underdeveloped. His point is not to enforce hierarchy but to demonstrate that Filipino Philosophy already exists in multiple forms. It is not a single tradition but a constellation. This pluralist perspective is also evident in his writings on periodization and trajectories. In earlier works, he mapped Filipino Philosophy into stages, from the early ethnophilosophical approaches that explored Filipino worldviews, to the academic stage influenced by Western categories, and finally to more critical and creative appropriations of theory. These studies illustrate his commitment to showing the *continuity* and *variety* of Filipino Philosophy, resisting reductionist narratives that would limit it to one definition or approach. For Demeterio, Filipino Philosophy is best understood as a field of overlapping conversations rather than a single, monolithic discourse.

The third guiding question— 'How can we best approach Filipino philosophy?'—leads Demeterio to reflect on methodology and personal orientation. He acknowledges that earlier in his career, he tended toward what he now calls "philosophical ethnocentrism," the belief that his own preferred method was superior to others. Over time, however, he came to see the futility of such exclusivity. Filipino Philosophy, he argues, must be pursued along **multiple pathways**. No single school—whether analytic, phenomenological, or critical—can monopolize the field. This openness does not mean relativism, but a recognition of plurality as the proper mode of Filipino philosophizing. Demeterio situated himself, however, within a specific intellectual context. Trained in Philippine Studies at the University of the Philippines Diliman, his philosophical inclinations have been shaped more by cultural studies, critical theory, and postcolonial thought than by strict, logical analysis. He embraces what he calls **critical philosophy**, with a distinctive emphasis on *low-altitude philosophizing*. By this he means philosophizing that is rooted in the pressing realities of Filipino society: inequality, injustice, corruption, inhumanity, and systemic dysfunctions.

> I think as we grow older, we begin to realize that there is no single best approach for Filipino philosophy. When we were younger, a long, long time ago, we used to think that our favorite approach is the best approach. You can call this cognitive disease "philosophical ethnocentrism."

> Thus, my alternative question for this thorny third question is "how am I approaching Filipino philosophy so as to maximize my relevance to my readers and hopefully impact on the further development of Filipino philosophy?" I am a product of my own idiosyncratic biography and context. At the University of the Philippines Diliman, I was influenced more by the philosophical theorists of cultural studies and postcolonialism, instead of the luminaries of logical analysis. Hence, my tendency is towards Filipino philosophy as a critical analysis of Philippine culture and society.[43]

Unlike "high-altitude" philosophy that often soars into abstraction, low-altitude philosophizing grapples with what is immediately before us. This orientation is not anti-intellectual but deliberately engaged; it seeks to make philosophy responsive to social realities. In his published essays, Demeterio has defended this orientation as both a philosophical and pedagogical strategy. By lowering the altitude of discourse, he makes philosophy more relevant and accessible to Filipino readers, even if it sometimes blurs the boundaries of academic philosophy. For him, in a society where philosophy is not privileged, this blurring may actually be necessary.

> The type of critical philosophy that I am doing is a low- altitude philosophizing that grapples directly with these injustices, inequalities, inhumanities, and structural deformities. Such critical philosophy need not be Marxist, Nietzschian or Freudian, because in our context the injustices, inequalities, inhumanities and structural deformities are staring directly at our faces cancelling the need for highly refined hermeneutic frameworks from these triumvirate philosophers of suspicion. This low altitude philosophizing is so low, that oftentimes my readers will miss the fact that I am already injecting so much philosophy into my writings. In our context where philosophy does not have a very impressive reputation, blurring the appearance of philosophy is sometimes desirable. Philosophy is not a privileged discourse in our country, and flaunting it may just turn away our potential readers.[44]

Another important dimension of Demeterio's approach is language. In his 2019 talk, as well as in his writings, he emphasizes the importance of using Filipino and other Philippine languages as vehicles for philosophy. He notes that his Filipino-language essays are read far more widely than his English-language ones, especially on online platforms such as Academia. This demonstrates that writing in Filipino maximizes accessibility and readership. At the same time, he is realistic, emphasizing that English remains the language of global philosophy, and Filipino philosophers must also publish in it to engage

43 Demeterio, "15-Minute Opening Statement on Filipino Philosophy."

44 Ibid.

in universal conversations. In this sense, he advocates a bilingual strategy, which is to write in Filipino for local readership and in English for international recognition. This is consistent with the insights of Brother Andrew Gonzalez, who argued that the national language debate should be framed as a pedagogical issue rather than merely a political issue. For Demeterio, philosophy must speak to its people in their own language if it is to be truly transformative.

> The positive lesson is that there will be more Filipinos who will read your writings if these are written in the Filipino language. The negative lesson is that you will end up with very few readers if you insist on writing for that universal Anglophone audience. Brother Andrew Gonzalez once wrote that our mistake is that we framed the national language debate as a symbolic political issue that is devoid of a sense of urgency. He said that we should have framed it as a pragmatic pedagogical issue. He meant that our people need a common language that is much easier to master and use, and this need is something that is very urgent. I am mentioning Brother Andrew Gonzalez' wisdom because I am very aware that my fellow Cebuano speaking philosophy teachers and scholars are not comfortable with the idea of exploiting the Filipino language.[45]

Demeterio's insistence on critical engagement and low-altitude philosophizing is also linked to his pedagogical commitments. Drawing from his taxonomy, he argues that merely exposing foreign systems or cataloguing Filipino worldviews only reaches the lower levels of learning, namely remembering and understanding. By contrast, doing Filipino Philosophy as critical analysis engages higher levels: applying, analyzing, and evaluating. At its highest point, it may even achieve the creative act of producing new philosophical discourses. While Demeterio humbly notes that he may not himself reach this creative peak, he hopes that his students—or their students—will. This reflects his long-standing commitment to developing Filipino Philosophy not only as a body of texts but as a community of scholars.

Demeterio's talk and published works articulate a vision of Filipino Philosophy that is both plural and critical. He resists the temptation to define it rigidly, preferring to see it as a constellation of overlapping discourses. He emphasizes the importance of writing and producing texts rather than endlessly debating definitions. Likewise, he advocates for a plurality of approaches, but within his own practice, he privileges critical philosophy that engages concrete Filipino realities. He also underscores the need for accessibility, especially using the Filipino language, without abandoning the need for global engagement in English. In the same manner, he insists that philosophy in the Philippines must be socially relevant, pedagogically effective, and intellectually rigorous, even

45 Demeterio, "15-Minute Opening Statement on Filipino Philosophy," 3.

if it sometimes disguises itself in more accessible forms. Demeterio positions Filipino Philosophy as a dynamic, evolving field. It is not a single discourse but many discourses; not an essence but a network of family resemblances. It is an intellectual practice that must grow in both quantity and quality, broaden its language of engagement, and deepen its critical orientation. His call for low-altitude philosophizing ensures that Filipino Philosophy does not lose sight of the concrete struggles of the Filipino people, even as it aspires to global recognition. In this way, Demeterio complements and contrasts with Mabaquiao: where Mabaquiao insists on strict definitional clarity and philosophical rigor as the path to recognition, Demeterio emphasizes multiplicity, plurality, and critical engagement as the path to relevance. Both agree, however, that Filipino Philosophy exists, that it must grow, and that it must find its rightful place in both the Filipino nation and the global philosophical community.

Critical Assessment of Mabaquiao and Demeterio's Philosophical Exchanges

To better understand the debate between Napoleon Mabaquiao Jr. and F. P. A. Demeterio III, it is useful to employ the meta-, normative-, and applied levels of Filipino Philosophy as an analytical lens. As mentioned above, this tripartite framework was first articulated by Mabaquiao in his plenary lecture, "Filipino Philosophy: Three Challenges," where he proposes that the development of Filipino Philosophy must proceed through three interrelated and progressively demanding tasks. First, at the meta-philosophical level, Filipino Philosophy must clarify its identity by defining what counts as "Filipino Philosophy" in the first place. This involves conceptual and methodological work such as drawing disciplinary boundaries, identifying criteria of inclusion and exclusion, and determining whether Filipino Philosophy is defined by language, geography, cultural experience, intellectual tradition, or methodological orientation. In this sense, the meta-level is concerned with questions of essence, classification, and philosophical legitimacy. Second, at the normative level, Filipino Philosophy must be evaluated in terms of prescriptive ideals and intellectual standards. Here, the question is no longer simply what Filipino Philosophy is, but what it ought to become. This includes establishing criteria of rigor, coherence, argumentative validity, and philosophical contribution. It also involves assessing whether Filipino Philosophy should prioritize global recognition, local relevance, critical engagement, or a balance of these aims. In Mabaquiao's formulation, this level ensures that Filipino Philosophy does not merely exist as a label but develops as a disciplined and respectable field of inquiry. Third, at the applied level, Filipino Philosophy must demonstrate its relevance by engaging lived realities. This includes its capacity to respond to social problems, inform ethical reflection, and participate in public discourse. It also raises questions about

accessibility, pedagogical translation, and whether philosophical discourse can move beyond academic circles into everyday Filipino life. At this level, philosophy becomes not only an intellectual enterprise but also a form of social engagement and transformation.

Although originally proposed by Mabaquiao to articulate and strengthen his own philosophical orientation, this framework also provides a highly productive interpretive tool for analyzing both his position and that of Demeterio. It allows for a structured comparison that goes beyond surface disagreements by revealing how each thinker operates with different emphases across the same three philosophical dimensions. Mabaquiao tends to foreground the meta- and normative levels, emphasizing identity formation, disciplinary rigor, and international legitimacy, while Demeterio extends the applied dimension by foregrounding pluralism, historical situatedness, and social engagement. This framing shows that the debate is not merely about competing definitions of Filipino Philosophy but about fundamentally different visions of philosophical development itself. It highlights how philosophical disagreement emerges not only at the level of conclusion but also at the level of what counts as philosophical work, what standards govern it, and how it should function in society. In this way, the meta–normative–applied lens provides a coherent and internally grounded structure for interpreting the Mabaquiao-Demeterio exchange as a productive tension that reflects the broader evolution of Filipino Philosophy as a discipline in human formation.

At the metaphilosophical level, Mabaquiao takes the stance of the analytic philosopher who seeks to define and police boundaries. His framework of the F-property (the Filipino marker) and the P-property (the philosophical marker), as presented in his plenary talk and later developed in *"Isang Paglilinaw sa Kahulugan at Kairalan ng Pilosopiyang Filipino"* and *"Pilosopiyang Pilipino: Isang Pagsusuri",* reflects his analytic background, where precision, logical rigor, and systematic criteria are essential. For him, Filipino Philosophy exists only when it fulfills two conditions: it must be Filipino in some respect (through authorship, context, language, or purpose), and it must be genuinely philosophical, meaning it engages with fundamental questions, employs recognized methods, and presents coherent arguments. This mirrors Ricardo Pascual's earlier insistence that philosophy in the Philippines must be distinct from vague cultural or literary musings. Mabaquiao continues this tradition by guarding against the danger of diluting philosophy into general cultural commentary. Demeterio, however, interprets metaphilosophy differently. With training in both philosophy and Philippine Studies, he resists rigid definitions and instead approaches Filipino Philosophy as a plural and evolving discourse. His twelvefold classification of Filipino philosophical discourses—ranging from expository works on foreign thinkers to praxis-oriented, vernacular philosophies—illustrates this pluralist

outlook. Rather than narrowing the field to those works that meet analytic criteria, Demeterio broadens it to include a spectrum of philosophical engagements, each contributing to the richness of the tradition. In doing so, he expands on Emerita Quito's historical surveys and Leonardo Mercado's ethnophilosophy but avoids their limitations: Mercado's essentialism and Quito's cataloguing. For Demeterio, Filipino Philosophy is best understood as a constellation of family resemblances, dynamic and historically situated rather than defined by strict boundaries.

At the normative level, their divergence becomes sharper. Mabaquiao prescribes rigor and recognition as the imperatives of Filipino Philosophy. His "three challenges"—identity, progress, and recognition—serve as benchmarks for the discipline's survival and growth. Without a clear identity, Filipino Philosophy risks conceptual confusion; without progress, it stagnates; without recognition, it remains marginal in both local and global academic communities. This normative orientation reflects his analytic training, which values logical precision, argumentation, and international professional standards. It also resonates with Alfredo Co's call for Filipino philosophers to engage universal traditions and to contribute something distinct from a Filipino standpoint. Yet Mabaquiao is stricter, even gatekeeping, in his refusal to classify works as philosophy if they do not meet analytic criteria. Demeterio, by contrast, prescribes plurality, criticality, and social engagement. He values rigor but warns against what he terms "philosophical ethnocentrism"—the elevation of one philosophical method as the only valid one. For him, Filipino Philosophy must not only be rigorous but also plural in its approaches and critical in its spirit. His idea of low-altitude philosophizing embodies this normative claim: Filipino Philosophy should not be content with exposition or abstract theorizing but must confront the pressing realities of Filipino society, such as poverty, corruption, and inequality. In this vision, he echoes Roque Ferriols's insistence on philosophizing in Filipino and engaging local realities, as well as Quito's critique of derivative and unoriginal philosophical work. Yet he radicalizes their concerns by rooting them in critical theory and postcolonial critique, intellectual resources he acquired in his Philippine Studies formation. It would be safe to say that while Mabaquiao's normative project emphasizes professional legitimacy and global recognition, Demeterio's emphasizes social relevance, plurality, and emancipatory praxis.

At the applied level, their differences are most visible. Mabaquiao allows for Filipino Philosophy to address Filipino realities—ethics, politics, culture, or values—but only if such works maintain strict philosophical standards. His framework filters applied philosophy through analytic criteria, ensuring it remains philosophy and not sociology or folklore. This caution echoes Mercado's critique of ethnophilosophy, which warned against confusing the cataloguing

of cultural beliefs with proper philosophy. For Mabaquiao, Filipino Philosophy must rise above description and retain its disciplinary rigor. Demeterio, conversely, embraces application as the very lifeblood of philosophizing. His low-altitude philosophy is unapologetically applied, insisting that philosophy must directly engage the lived struggles of Filipinos. His bilingual writing strategy—publishing both in English for international recognition and in Filipino for local accessibility—exemplifies this applied orientation. He has observed that his Filipino-language writings attract more readership, demonstrating that philosophy gains vitality when it speaks in the language of the people. This democratizing impulse reflects Ferriols's vernacular philosophy and Quito's lament that Filipino philosophy had become disconnected from everyday life. For Demeterio, applied philosophy is not secondary but central, even if it blurs the boundaries of analytic definitions. It is through applied engagement that Filipino Philosophy becomes transformative, socially relevant, and widely accessible.

By situating Mabaquiao and Demeterio within this meta–normative–applied framework, their convergences and divergences come into sharper focus. Both agree that Filipino Philosophy exists and must grow; both recognize its dual responsibility to engage Filipino realities and to claim a place in global philosophical discourse; both emphasize the need to produce, circulate, and institutionalize philosophical texts. Both also respond to earlier shortcomings in the field—Quito's concern for originality, Mercado's ethnophilosophical essentialism, Co's challenge of global engagement, Gripaldo's eclecticism. Yet their emphases diverge due to their intellectual backgrounds: Mabaquiao, trained in analytic philosophy, is the guardian of rigor, identity, and recognition; Demeterio, shaped by philosophy and Philippine Studies, is the mapmaker of plurality and advocate of relevance. The first is disciplinary and the latter is interdisciplinary. One seeks professional legitimacy; the other seeks social vitality. One prioritizes identity, the other diversity. However, their projects are not contradictory but complementary. Mabaquiao's metaphilosophy shields Filipino Philosophy from trivialization; his normative framework raises standards; and his applied model keeps the discipline academically rigorous. Demeterio's metaphilosophy maps the multiplicity of discourses; his normative project demands critical and socially engaged praxis; and his applied philosophy democratizes discourse through bilingual accessibility and responsiveness to social realities. Viewed through the lens of meta-, normative-, and applied philosophy, the debate between Mabaquiao and Demeterio highlights the two indispensable poles of Filipino Philosophy: the analytic philosopher who secures clarity, legitimacy, and recognition, and the interdisciplinary philosopher-critic who ensures plurality, accessibility, and engagement. Their debate is not a symptom of weakness but a mark of maturity. Filipino Philosophy is no longer

preoccupied with the question of whether it exists; it now debates how it ought to be practiced, developed, and institutionalized. In Mabaquiao's call for rigor and Demeterio's call for relevance, we find the dialectic necessary for growth: between protecting disciplinary integrity and opening philosophy to broader horizons, between securing identity and ensuring engagement. Their dialogue reflects the vitality of Filipino Philosophy as a living, contested tradition—one capable of standing in the universal community of philosophers while also walking alongside the Filipino people in their continuing struggle for justice, liberation, and meaning.

The table below presents a comparative analysis of the philosophical positions of Mabaquiao and Demeterio in relation to Filipino philosophy. It highlights how Mabaquiao's analytic and rigor-oriented approach emphasizes definitional clarity, disciplinary boundaries, and professionalization, while Demeterio's interdisciplinary and culturally grounded orientation foregrounds plurality, contextual engagement, and social relevance. Rather than treating these positions as oppositional, the table underscores their complementary contributions, showing how their tension between rigor and plurality, discipline and engagement, and global recognition and local responsiveness collectively enrich the development of Filipino philosophy as both an academic discipline and a socially embedded practice.

Dimension	Napoleon Mabaquiao	F. P. A. Demeterio III	Complementary
Philosophical Formation	Analytic Philosophy	Philosophy and Philippine Studies	Represents disciplinary and interdisciplinary trajectories in Filipino philosophy
Metaphilosophical Orientation	Boundary-setting and definitional precision	Pluralistic and taxonomic mapping	Balances conceptual rigor with openness to multiplicity
Central Concern	Identity, rigor, and recognition	Relevance, plurality, and engagement	Filipino philosophy requires both legitimacy and social vitality
Methodological Orientation	Logical clarity, argumentative rigor, recognized philosophical methods	Critical theory, cultural studies, historical contextualization	Integrates analytic discipline with socio-historical critique

Dimension	Napoleon Mabaquiao	F. P. A. Demeterio III	Complementary
View of Filipino Philosophy	A philosophically rigorous discourse meeting F-property and P-property	A constellation of overlapping discourses with family resemblances	Combines definitional coherence with historical inclusivity
Normative Goal	Professionalization and global recognition	Social responsiveness and democratization of philosophy	Enables Filipino philosophy to be globally conversant and locally grounded
Applied Orientation	Philosophy must remain philosophically disciplined	Philosophy must engage lived Filipino realities	Preserves philosophy as both intellectual inquiry and social praxis
Language Orientation	Openness to Filipino language but emphasis on philosophical standards	Strong advocacy of bilingual and vernacular philosophizing	Encourages accessibility without sacrificing academic engagement
Philosophical Risk	Excessive gatekeeping and exclusion of alternative forms	Excessive pluralism and conceptual diffusion	Their tension functions as a corrective balance
Historical Contribution	Secures disciplinary legitimacy of Filipino philosophy	Expands the horizons and applicability of Filipino philosophy	Together they institutionalize and revitalize Filipino philosophizing

The complementarity between Mabaquiao and Demeterio can be philosophically justified through a dialectical understanding of disciplinary development. Intellectual traditions mature not through uniformity but through productive tensions between competing orientations. In the case of Filipino Philosophy, Mabaquiao functions as the philosopher of disciplinary consolidation, while Demeterio functions as the philosopher of discursive expansion. The former secures conceptual coherence, methodological rigor, and international legitimacy; the latter broadens the field's social relevance, accessibility, and interdisciplinary reach. These projects are not mutually exclusive but mutually corrective. Without Mabaquiao's insistence on philosophical rigor, Filipino Philosophy risks dissolving into vague cultural commentary or uncritical ethnographic description. Yet without Demeterio's pluralistic and socially engaged orientation, Filipino Philosophy risks becoming academically

isolated, inaccessible, and detached from the historical struggles of the Filipino people. Their tension therefore reflects what may be called the dialectic of rigor and relevance: the simultaneous need to preserve philosophy's disciplinary integrity while ensuring its responsiveness to concrete social realities.

CONCLUSION

The dialogue between Napoleon M. Mabaquiao Jr. and Feorillo Petronilo A. Demeterio III demonstrates that Filipino Philosophy is no longer a tentative or marginal endeavor but a steadily maturing discourse shaped by divergent yet ultimately complementary trajectories. Their exchange reflects not only a clash of methodologies and emphases but also the evolving character of Filipino intellectual heritage, where philosophy is no longer confined to proving its existence but is now actively debating its future directions, standards, and applications. The richness of this exchange lies in the fact that both philosophers approach the same overarching project that is to strengthen Filipino Philosophy from different starting points, informed by their respective academic formations and philosophical commitments.

Mabaquiao, trained in the rigors of analytic philosophy, privileges clarity, argumentation, and professional recognition. His project is fundamentally one of boundary-setting, ensuring that Filipino Philosophy does not lose its disciplinary integrity by being reduced to cultural musings or ethnographic description. His metaphilosophy emphasizes the need for definitional precision through the F-property and P-property distinction, while his normative framework insists on rigor, progress, and recognition as the indispensable challenges Filipino Philosophy must face. Mabaquiao became the custodian of philosophy's intellectual identity in the Philippines, determined to secure its legitimacy within the global community of scholars. Demeterio, by contrast, represents the interdisciplinary spirit of a philosopher shaped equally by philosophy and inclusion of Philippine Studies. His work draws heavily from cultural studies, critical theory, and historiography, allowing him to construct a broader and more inclusive vision of what Filipino Philosophy can be. Instead of erecting boundaries, he offers taxonomies and periodizations that map its plurality by capturing the wide array of discourses that contribute to the field. His normative orientation highlights the importance of social critique and transformative engagement, urging Filipino philosophers to move beyond abstract expositions toward critical praxis. His applied vision of *low-altitude philosophizing* reflects his commitment to accessibility and relevance: philosophy must not remain a discourse of the few but must descend into the lives of ordinary Filipinos, articulated in the vernacular, and responsive to pressing social realities.

When examined through the tripartite lens of meta-, normative-, and applied philosophy, the complementarity of their contributions becomes evident. Mabaquiao secures the identity and legitimacy of Filipino Philosophy by grounding it in recognized philosophical standards; Demeterio ensures its diversity and vitality by advocating plurality, accessibility, and critical engagement. One emphasizes philosophy's intellectual coherence and global recognition; the other, its social embeddedness and local resonance. These two trajectories, though distinct, are not mutually exclusive but mutually necessary. These two intellectual heirs embody the two poles indispensable for the discipline's continued growth. Without Mabaquiao's strictness, Filipino Philosophy risks collapsing into vague cultural commentary or being dismissed as non-philosophical by the global academic community. Without Demeterio's insistence on plurality and relevance, Filipino Philosophy risks irrelevance to the lived struggles of Filipinos and the urgent problems of Philippine society. One safeguards philosophy's intellectual integrity; the other expands its transformative reach. Their complementarity is not a weakness but a sign of vitality: Filipino Philosophy is simultaneously analytic and critical, disciplinary and interdisciplinary, universal in aspiration and particular in resonance.

The debate between Mabaquiao and Demeterio also signals a turning point in the history of Filipino Philosophy. Earlier generations of Filipino philosophers were preoccupied with proving the existence of Filipino Philosophy, often through surveys of thought, explorations of worldview, or calls for engagement with global traditions. By contrast, Mabaquiao and Demeterio take its existence for granted. Their concern is no longer whether Filipino Philosophy exists but how it should be defined, pursued, institutionalized, and applied. This shift marks a new stage of maturity, where the focus has moved from defensive justification to constructive development. The interplay between Mabaquiao's concern for rigor and Demeterio's call for relevance reveals the dialectical nature of Filipino Philosophy's ongoing growth. The tension between securing disciplinary legitimacy and ensuring social vitality is not a contradiction but a dynamic engine of development. Filipino Philosophy thrives precisely because of this interplay: it can both claim a rightful place in the universal community of philosophers and speak powerfully to the struggles and aspirations of the Filipino people. In the long run, the dialogue between Mabaquiao and Demeterio provides not only a map of present debates but also a blueprint for the future of Filipino Philosophy—one that is rigorous yet relevant, plural yet disciplined, local yet globally recognized.

This exchange and debate can also be fruitfully situated within broader global and decolonial philosophical currents. In African philosophy, a central tension exists between ethnophilosophy—which seeks to catalog and valorize indigenous worldviews—and professional philosophy, which emphasizes

analytic rigor and critical reasoning. In this context, Mabaquiao's approach aligns closely with the professional philosophy camp, prioritizing clarity, methodological rigor, and disciplinary recognition, whereas Demeterio's work resonates with the ethnophilosophical or liberationist strand, albeit framed with critical sophistication. A similar parallel emerges in Latin American philosophy, where liberation philosophy foregrounds the relevance of thought to social struggle, challenging Eurocentric abstraction. Here, Demeterio's "low-altitude" philosophizing echoes the Latin American commitment to philosophy's social engagement, while Mabaquiao mirrors the region's simultaneous efforts to achieve professional legitimacy and visibility in the global academy. These global parallels underscore an important implication for Filipino philosophy. The Mabaquiao–Demeterio debate is not an isolated national discourse but part of a larger decolonial challenge: the need to balance recognition within established philosophical disciplines with a commitment to social transformation and cultural relevance. The future direction of Filipino philosophizing may therefore lie not in choosing between Mabaquiao and Demeterio but in sustaining the creative tension between their projects. Filipino Philosophy must continue cultivating analytic rigor, conceptual clarity, and international scholarly participation while simultaneously deepening its engagement with Filipino historical realities, vernacular discourse, and social transformation. Future Filipino philosophers may need to move beyond the binary of disciplinary purity and interdisciplinary engagement toward integrative forms of philosophizing that are simultaneously rigorous, critical, accessible, and transformative.

Such a trajectory suggests several important implications for the discipline. First, Filipino Philosophy must strengthen its institutional foundations through research, publication, and international collaboration. Second, it must expand vernacular and bilingual philosophizing to democratize philosophical discourse beyond elite academic spaces. Third, Filipino philosophers must increasingly engage concrete issues such as inequality, education, technology, ecology, and decolonization while maintaining methodological discipline. Finally, Filipino Philosophy must position itself as part of a broader Global South philosophical movement capable of contributing alternative epistemologies and critical perspectives to world philosophy. In this way, the dialogue between Mabaquiao and Demeterio becomes not merely a debate between two thinkers but a philosophical horizon for the continuing development of Filipino Philosophy itself.

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