IS FILIPINO THOUGHT MEDIEVAL? PRELIMINARY WORK IN WRITING THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE PHILIPPINES

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Abstract

The Philippines is an Asian nation which has a long and complex relationship with the West. And so its philosophy and cultural heritage shares this same complexity. What is Filipino philosophy? In what sense can it be said to be Medieval or Modern? The first major part of this preliminary work discusses the meaning of medieval philosophy, modern philosophy, and philosophy itself. The second part gives a philosophical understanding of the works of Abstract artist Nena Saguil in order to describe how visual artists can be a source of philosophical thought in a non-traditionally philosophical culture, and to describe the course modernity has already taken in other humanistic disciplines.

When I had an opportunity to meet Prof. John Maraldo, a student of Rahner who had become an expert in Japanese and Chinese Philosophy, I asked him if I could write a paper comparing Nishitani and Filipino Philosophy. He asked me a question that I had not been able to answer up to now: "What would be the sources of Filipino philosophy?" The incident turned out to be very significant because it made me realize that what seemed very obvious was virtually unknown to me. At that time the paper would have meant comparing Ferriols's *Pambungad sa Metapisika*[1] to Nishitani's *Religion and Nothingness*[2].

Maraldo, however, was asking the more fundamental question of sources (*mga bukal*) of our philosophy, i.e., where our philosophy comes from. He might have been asking for specific texts and authors, but he could also have been asking for the history of our philosophy. In the Ateneo de Manila philosophy department, the usual suspects are French and

German thinkers, such as Gabriel Marcel, Paul Ricoeur, Emmanuel Levinas, Michel Foucault, Martin Heidegger, Max Scheler, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jürgen Habermas, as well as Thomas Aquinas and Thomists like Norris Clark. Nevertheless, Maraldo's question made me ask other questions: 1) What can a culture that is not traditionally philosophical take as sources of philosophy? Can poets and artists be other sources for what we can consider its own brand of *philosophizing* (*pamimilosipiya*)?

On the other hand, a decade ago, David Keck and Jose M. Cruz S. J. held a round-table discussion on *Medieval Influences in Philippine Culture*[3] where I proposed to study the scholastic philosophy that was current in philosophical education since the time of the Spaniards and continued into the American and post-war eras. In the meantime, acquiescing to institutional demands, I decided to work on Medieval Philosophy for my doctorate. In 2002, I completed my text on Nicholas of Cusa's metaphysics and political philosophy under Prof. Jos Decorte, who suddenly died from a vehicular accident. Through fellow medievalists, I discovered books by the medievalist Jorge Garcia who has also written on Latin American philosophy.[4] This led me to ask how we can write the history of philosophy in the Philippines. This task imposed itself upon me as a kind of a moral duty, especially since when one skims through encyclopedias of Philosophy,[5] one will see entries on Asian Philosophy that would have no mention of anything on the Philippines.

Although many would see the importance of writing the history of our intellectual culture, few would agree with the use of the rubric of the Middle Ages in analyzing our thought. Aren't we putting the horse before the carriage, i.e., deciding a particular direction in performing the task we have just set out to do? Indeed, this author consciously chooses to use the rubric of the European Middle Ages to understand the development of philosophy in our country. Why? Firstly, he hopes that eventually historical evidence can be presented that the Spaniards did bring in medieval thinkers and used them in their evangelizing work. The fact that these missionaries were Augustinians, Franciscans, and Dominicans (as well as Jesuits)[6] already present *prima facie* evidence that the importation of medieval ideas in our country was not marginal in the way the colonizers dealt with and reconstituted the existing culture. Such introduction, however, could already have begun when the Muslims came here. Is it possible that the

Muslim religious leaders brought with them the Arabic learning that have been developed by thinkers such as Avicenna and Averroes? Finally, to ask our question implicitly asks another question, that is, is Filipino thought modern? In fact, we undertake this inquiry to know whether we are still in the threshold of modernity and, more importantly, how we can enter into it definitely.

Methodologies

The question we pose presents some serious methodological problems. One can treat it as a historical problem: If we surmise that our thought is medieval, are we reducing it to the Philosophy brought by the Spaniards and the Americans? This leads to the basic problem of when we started doing philosophy. I already mentioned that perhaps it began earlier when Islam spread to the Philippines. It is also possible that the Chinese and Hindu settlers also brought their own philosophies albeit not systematically. Could this explain why we have an ethical as well as Gnostic side to our thinking? We would also wish to know when the Spaniards began teaching western philosophy here. This is a problem that can be answered through the manuals and text books still kept in the Archives of religious orders, and also through the literature and art done during these times.[7] The Propaganda movement and the birth of the *Ilustrado* probably mark a different phase of philosophy in the Philippines. This is most likely the earliest moment our thought tried to enter into modernity. Was this a movement offset by the American Occupation when they continued teaching philosophy through the scholastic manuals? Did the professors in State universities try to continue the modernization efforts initiated by the *Ilustrados* by introducing Anglo-Saxon philosophy? In the Ateneo, the break from Scholasticism started with the introduction of Phenomenology and Existentialism. How did this staunchly Catholic university try to move away from "traditional philosophy," especially after Vatican II and during the Martial Law years? How come it preferred the French thinkers over Marx and Nietzsche?

Another method we can use is that of the History of philosophy and ideas. We now have to take into account the place of the history of philosophy itself in the philosophical culture. How we look at the history

of philosophy certainly reflects our own philosophy and how we will write our own history of philosophy. A simpler question would be how current Filipino philosophers use the history of philosophy? In other words, how do they lend authority to what they are saying, by referring to Thomas or Augustine? Or to Kant or Hegel? Or to Foucault or Habermas?

Do Filipino philosophers present the history of philosophy in their own terms and purposes? What would be the consequence if we relied on the Anglo-Saxon synthesis of philosophical history? Shouldn't we in fact look at the more Continental European tradition? Certainly, the Spaniards, who consider some of its 18th century Jesuit philosophers greater than Descartes, would present the history of philosophy differently.[8]

We can also use the method of philosophy itself. Does our philosophy begin with metaphysics in the same way most medieval thinkers did. Do we in fact begin with ethics or philosophy of nature? Can we, however, trace our streak of anti-intellectualism to a form of Franciscanism that favored asceticism over the intellectualism of the Jesuits?

Perhaps one would say that true Filipino philosophy is the one unsullied by western philosophers. At this point what becomes clear is our true question, that is, what is philosophy? Jan Aertsen says, however, that philosophy is defined by its own practitioners. Philosophy in the course of history, as well as colonization, liberation, dictatorship, and peaceful revolutions have been defined by those who do it. It bears a self-understanding independent of what other philosophies in other times and cultures have done.[9]

The first major part of this preliminary work discusses the meaning of medieval philosophy, modern philosophy, and philosophy itself. The second part gives a philosophical understanding of the works of Abstract artist Nena Saguil in order to a) describe how visual artists can be a source of philosophical thought in a non-traditionally philosophical culture and b) to describe the course modernity has already taken in other humanistic disciplines.

Medieval Philosophy

Roque Ferriols translates Ancient Greek Philosophy as "Sinaunang Pilosopiyang Griyego."[10] Should we translate medieval as "gitnang panahon" and modern as "makabago?" Our word for modern, in fact, influences the way we look at the traditional. Is it justified to call it "maka-luma?"[11]

How we answer our question for this paper depends on how we define medieval and modern. Bertrand Russell, in fact, did not think that there was philosophy independent of theology in the middle ages. On the other hand, what Medieval Philosophy is has recently been an object of reflection among medievalists, proving that the question is a hotly debated topic. Jan Aertsen provides us with a summary of the dispute. He begins with Pierre Hadot, who is actually a Greek Philosophy scholar.[12] Hadot maintains that for the ancients *philosophia* had, first and foremost, an existential dimension: "It was not so much a system of thought but a "way of life, a spiritual exercise preparatory to wisdom." Carlos Steel, however, uses Hadot's thesis in order to argue that medieval philosophy is "an impossible project."[13] If philosophy is search for happiness, and if happiness can only be found in theology or in the Christian religion, then Islamic philosophy and Greek philosophy is impossible, that is not capable of reaching its goal. In his adherence to Hadot, Steel wishes to criticize Alain de Libera's approach to medieval philosophy, and rejects the thesis "that masters in the faculty of arts represent the true "essence" of medieval philosophy."[14] He also points out the fact that Thomas Aquinas radically rejected the idea of a philosophical way to happiness.

Steel's contention is significant because it questions the reduction of medieval philosophy to the Gilsonian idea of "Christian philosophy." Aertsen points out that in the Middle Ages, the expression "Christian philosophy" stood for the monastic life. For Gilson, however, this notion is the authentic medieval philosophy whose uniqueness cannot be understood apart from its relationship to Christianity.[15] This means that medieval philosophy is the twin sister of theology or what is called *sacra doctrina*. Hadot disagrees with Gilson's reduction of philosophy in the Middle Ages to Christian philosophy because he thinks that Christian ideas, such as the incarnation and the Trinity, transformed ancient philosophy. Such a view is mistaken insofar as it misses the continuity between ancient and medieval and forgets the existential aspect of medieval philosophy. It has also given

the false impression that philosophy in the middle ages serves only the purposes of theology.

Aertsen thinks that through Hadot's thesis, one can say that there is philosophy independent of theology even in the middle ages. He also shows that Steel's thesis presupposes that "the conception of philosophy as promising salvation were normative."[16] In other words, the medieval thinkers did rule that a system has to lead to salvation in order for it to be counted as philosophy. Aertsen's article, in fact, shows that the middle ages developed a self-critical philosophy that set down limits to the reason itself: "it was a possible project because medieval philosophy was a critical philosophy, reflecting on the human condition of knowledge."[17]

This is not the place to take sides on this issue; but through this summary of the debate, we see that none of the historians think that medieval philosophy is scholasticism nor is it simply Christian philosophy. From here, however, we can ask very crucial questions: a) can we say our philosophy is medieval because it is scholastic and Christian, b) can we assume that although we have outgrown scholasticism we have ceased to refer to the medieval world view, c) to what extent have Filipino philosophers used medieval or scholastic or Christian sources, d) and how have they used these sources in their own brand of philosophizing?

Modern Philosophy

Since it is not very clear what medieval philosophy is, should we then take the negative route, and ask whether our philosophy is modern. Aertsen's article is a good example of why the question of the medieval necessarily brings one to the question of the modern, for he himself has a short discussion on what modern philosophy is. He says: "This ideal of ancient philosophy nearly disappeared in the Modern Age, and today, especially in the university milieu, philosophy is usually conceived of as a purely theoretical manner."[18] This point of view states that modern philosophers have lost the wholeness of life, especially the unity between the practical and theoretical. After philosophy became a servant of theology, it eventually exercised autonomy and later dominated it. This became the mark of modernity. Different from Aertsen, we view modernity not

necessarily as a step down in the ladder, nor do we think that the task of the philosophy is simply to return to traditional wisdom. One can only live in the age he is born in, and his task is to bring his age to other and higher possibilities.

For the purposes of this paper we refer to Louis Dupré's article "*The Modern Idea of Culture: Its Opposition to Its Classical and Christian Roots*."[19] Dupré, an ex-Jesuit who started as a Marx scholar and became an astute historian of philosophy, philosopher of religion and culture, and a Cusanus scholar, thinks that modernity is characterized by the turn from nature to culture, the turn to subjectivity, and the loss of transcendence.

Giving the examples of Hesiod and Lucretius, Dupré explains that the opposition between nature and culture is an ancient problem. The Greeks symbolized each by the mythical figures. Hercules stands for the success nature accords to those who diligently obey her laws; while Prometheus stands for the depths one will fall if he revolts against nature and tries to steal the treasures of the gods. Dupré thinks that traditional man did not try to dominate nature, but conformed to its workings, while modern culture sought independence from nature and eventually controlled it. Modernity no longer thinks that there is an intrinsic rationality, an order manifested in the eternal dance of the spheres. On the other hand, it thinks that rationality means the quantification of nature: "Instead it (nature) has become what we entrap and control as a calculable, predictable force."[20] At this point, culture has come to mean the refusal to accept nature as given. Human craftsmanship changed from *techne* to technological control and ownership of nature.

The radical turn of modernity is thus from nature to subjectivity; we begin to look at reality no longer from the point of view of what is objectively *out there* and that which we can discover (*pagtuklas*), and recognise what is *out there* is what is constituted by us (*itinatakda*). The example *par excellence* is René Descartes, who thought that the primary idea (*clair et distinct*) is his own existence. For him, what is true is his own being that becomes clear in the very act of doubting. Descartes says also that if the object of knowledge is outside that which is clear and distinct, it can only be known through the subject's categories. Modernity has stipulated that the self is a self-constituting subject, and that reality is

not what is out there but what one thinks. Popular psychology summarizes this view when it advices that a situation is not decided by what has happened but how one looks at it.

Dupré, however, thinks that the idea of a constitutive subjectivity turned against man himself. "What began as a radical subjectification of the real ended by reducing the subject itself to the mere function of constituting objectivity in the theoretical and the practical order." He gives the example of Marx who eventually placed man as a part of the product of productivity itself. Marx has placed the absolute priority onto praxis, where in man constitutes both himself and his world.[21]

When man turns to himself as self-constituting subject, his self-assertion resulted into a loss of transcendence. Dupré does not only describe the Nietzschean death of God, but the loss of man's capacity to go beyond immanence. The assertion of the self through his systems and technology has actually obscured man's very self. The categories he created have absorbed him, for now he is an organism that evolved like any other. Now he is living an immanentist existence, wherein God is simply part of the other choices in life. The divine no longer occupies as special place in reality, but is simply another aspect of reality, just like sports and entertainment.

Obviously Dupré's view of how modernity changed human culture is not completely accurate. He has, for example, not explained how modernity contributed in the development of politics and society. I warn my students in my philosophy of religion class that the opposition between the traditional and the modern is not identical to the opposition between good and evil. Would it, however, be fair to say that our philosophy is not modern because it is imbued with religious and metaphysical concerns?

Certainly, modernity has led to the loss of transcendence in most parts of the world, especially in the developed countries. We can ask whether we can be Christian and modern? Once a priest from South Africa and I talked about the lack of Christian identity in the *Katholieke Universiteit* in Leuven. But then we realized how radically privileged we were, sitting in cafeteria just like ordinary Belgians, and having full rights as their citizens. Belgian society is such that if there are hierarchies, these hierarchies are neither rigid nor exclusive. Can one not say that since their society is more humane that it is more Christian than a church-going society?

What is (Filipino) Philosophy?

At the root of our question, however, is what philosophy is and whether there is such a thing as Filipino philosophy. In this regard, the rubric of medieval philosophy is truly helpful. For Aertsen, in explaining the definition of medieval philosophy, says that "what philosophy is and of what it is capable are to be determined by philosophy itself." Philosophy has its own self-understanding. For most philosophers, the definition of philosophy is moot and academic; once you have done, it is very clear to you when you're doing it. As Ferriols drummed into our young heads before, "Philosophy is easier to do than to define."[22]

Is there Filipino Philosophy? Is our philosophy similar to existential and practical philosophy of Ancient Greece and Rome and of the European Middle Ages. Is our philosophy that which cannot be separated from religion? Is *philosophia* that which the Spaniards used in order to do away with the existing beliefs and ethical systems? We can continue to debate and write on these questions, but it is certain that philosophy in the Philippines has its own self-understanding, which when he has done it, one knows what it is.

Modernity, Art and Philosophy: The Case of Nena Saguil

Perhaps, however, the sources of Filipino philosophy are not only found in commonly accepted texts but also in art and literature. [23] What is surprising is that most of our early modernists are artists and writers. One prime example is Alejandro Abadilla, who is not coincidentally a Philosophy Major from UST.[24] In this last part of our paper, however, we shall talk about the modernity of the woman painter Nena Saguil. Our discussion will show how a Filipino has already traversed the path from the traditional to the modern.[25]

Saguil embodies the myth of the Filipino intellectual who has to leave his country to find enlightenment (*Ilustrisimo*). Most Filipinos who study abroad eventually end up losing their first naiveté, especially with regard to their religion. Some recover it, leaving their agnostic stage and

become more enlightened believers. On the other hand, Saguil who would never be a *balik-bayan*, converted from Catholicism to the Church of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Eric (Emmanuel) Torres characterizes her art as a transition from the material to the spiritual.[26] Even so, her art is not reducible to this, for it is not marked by a single conversion but a continuous evolution. Unlike Picasso, who has varied periods, Saguil's art reveals a search for personal clarity and the appropriate artistic style for such clarity. What is significant, however, is that her search for the divine did not make her less of a modernist. The modernity and abstraction is not simply a *moda*, but a conviction or a way of seeing the world.

Where does her personal modernity begin?[27] First, her modernity is in longing for freedom, which she finds in "Flight" (1962). Indeed, she had to leave her house in Manila and go abroad to find liberation, and yet once she found the locus of her freedom, i.e. Paris, Saguil would never leave it. In the process, she became the "first woman to pioneer in non-figurative, purely abstract, art."[28] Saguil took abstraction as the medium of this freedom. This viewer, however, thinks too that she was using her painting to depict her life-story. One does not associate her art to the ideas nor events, but a kind of autobiography or confession. The impulse of the viewer is to attach the frame to her life.[29]

Then, her abstractness takes a more definition and focus. She began drawing *The Tunnel*, which cannot be dissociated from a road or a train trip and thus from journey.[30] The works about tunnels bring to mind not only the Paris metro system, but also the trains system and numerous tunnels that burrow through the European mountain ranges. The tunnel works impart the incessant comings and goings referring to progress and movement.

Nevertheless, the full meaning of the tunnel actually becomes unambiguous through the *Inscape* paintings.[31] Her Inscapes should be studied in relation to Landscape painting itself, not only of Saguil's but the whole of Philippine art.[32] Landscape also refers to the land both as political as well as an economic issue.[33] To the mind of the author, the Landscape meant prison, the limits of artistic possibilities in her own country. For this reason, when she found freedom abroad, she depicted the core of the land: the tunnel. Saguil, however, could also have depicted another symbol

Nena Saguil,

"**The Island**" 1970

oil on canvas mounted on wood (tondo)

110 cm. (diameter).

Collection Ateneo Art Gallery.

Gift of Benjamin Saguil Jr.

Courtesy of Ramon E.S. Lerma, Curator

of progress, namely, the skyscraper. One can say that this did not interest her at all because none of the works in the exhibition showed the usual fascination for the monuments in Paris. Even more fascinating is that her early Parisian works were on the subject matter of the Night.[34] Yet, even the painting "Paris by Night" (1956) does not really bear any indication that it could not be anywhere else.[35]

In this regard, her painting of "The Lamppost" (1956) is significant. Having gone to Paris in the 1950's, she would have reached the time when those lampposts ran on gas, and would have witnessed their electrification. Up to now, the modernization of cities begins with improvement on street lighting. Saguil demonstrates her genius by painting, rather than just its light, the alluring form of the post and its place in the frenzied city. Compare this to the depiction of the lamp in an earlier painting which gave off neither light nor life.[36]

If one goes back to the Inscape paintings, one notices playfulness in the drawings that is also found in Pop art. Yet the series is a true exemplar of how a person would draw his own *mind*. How are we to understand the word *Inscape*? In terms of art, it stands in contradistinction to Landscape. Is Inscape about the Self or is it about the mind?

Saguil's abstraction, although it is also about freedom, differs greatly from expressionism. For her abstraction used a very specific figurative language: the circle, the semi-circle, the line. The colors are very distinct too. The composition is stunning too, there is not one stroke of pen, especially in the Triptych Series, that needs to be changed. In this sense, she continues the task of the landscape artist, who portrays the external order of the physical world. In her case, however, the ordering is internal, while the movement is upward and expansive, reminiscent of a cathedral.

Saguil's modernity, then, would not conform to the one Dupré described. Most Christian thinkers have deplored modern art, especially abstract art. Dupré's essay on modernity reveals the same bias. If we look at the works of Saguil, however, there is not the same violation of humanity Dupré talks about.[37] In her works, the self is completely herself, and yet she does not get lost in her own categories or even in her own expression. Furthermore, Saguil includes the viewer in the conversation that goes on between the artist and her self as well as her Self. Just like in Rothko, abstraction in these works is truly spiritual.[38] Indeed her choice

to make Inscapes rather than landscapes distances her from the Romantic artists who wish to experience their inhibited self in nature. Instead, her modernity is an individuation through the experience of the religious, where the self is truly herself within the interior order.

The religious evolution continued until she found Illumination.[39] Regardless of the possible reference to Rimbaud, no one can deny the reference to Augustinianism in this regard.[40] It was also during this time that she converted to being a Jehovah's Witness. Can one say that Illumination is the discovery of the One God through His own the gift of knowledge? We notice that sometimes Saguil depicts illumination in black and white, and sometimes in bursts of colors. The colors of the Illumination paintings have come very far from the colors of the Manila period. The later ones are pristine, and are truly light, both in the sense of being luminescent as well as not being ponderous.

The final turn is the turn to Space.[41] In at least one later work there is centering as well as simplification. The centering, however, might deceive us into thinking that the painting is about the forms, but rather it is about space. It talks about how figures make one see the space, which is not the subject matter in all the other paintings. Most of her work manifest the same horror for emptiness (or love of fullness) found in most Filipino art. Again one can be deceived, for Emptiness is in the numerous circles. For Saguil, space is not exterior but interior. Even so, in the late works, she has converted from the over preoccupation for the interior space to Space itself. She did not want also the freedom of individuality, but wanted also to be in All.

Is the philosopher over reading the works of Saguil? Is he too steeped in the medieval world to see that Saguil is not? But the more he looks at Triptych I (1977)[42] the more sure he is that the inspiration is the cathedral. Did not Nena live near the Notre Dame? But the Notre Dame no longer meant for her the center of French Catholicism. It meant only what is truly essential—the spiritual. The little girl who lived in front of the Sta. Cruz church has now become the apostle of abstraction rather than representation, of the Mind rather than of the land, of Illumination rather than knowledge, of Space rather than form and color. The Triptych drawings encapsulate how she no longer sees the incarnated and suffering God, but instead the pure lightness and being of God, i. e., He who is.

She has become modern, but in being modern she also embodied what is essential in her communal self, that is God and religion. Saguil's modernity is not a discovery of a self constituting subject, but of a transcendent light or the all-encompassing space. Contrary to Dupré 's assertion, her modernity does not exhibit dehumanization or a romantic return to nature where the self communes more intimately with itself. Instead, they speak of Illumination, wherein the mind understands through the efficiency of divine light itself. In Saguil, however, this ethereal light appears only at Night. For her, God does not rise in the morning but in twilight.[43]

Conclusion

This paper gave a very preliminary discussion of the question "Is Filipino Thought Medieval?" Primarily using the method of philosophy, it clarified the questions involved in answering the question, namely, the definition of medieval, modern, and philosophy. At the same time, it discussed the relevance of the question, especially to the writing of the History of Philosophy in the Philippines. Finally, it discussed the work of Nena Saguil to illustrate how a Filipino thinker has gone over modernity. This also shows that thought transcends philosophy and that philosophy is present in other areas like art. Nonetheless, the main message of this paper has been that philosophy is not defined from the outside. Filipino philosophy is decided by its own practitioners. At the same time, it can assume a broad definition that can include the philosophy discernible in art, architecture, and literature.

Addendum: The First Synod of Manila

The *Sinodo de Manila* refers to the *Junta* convoked by the first Philippine bishop, Domingo de Salazar in 1581 and which ended in 1586.[44] The documents pertaining to the Synod are three: A] Document 1: Archivo de la Universidad de Santo Tomas (Manila), Seccion de Becerros, Tomo 14 Suma de una junta que hizo a manera de concilio el año 1582, para dar asiento a las cosas tocantes al aumento de la fe, y justificacion de las conquistas hechas ; y que en adelante se hicieren por los españoles. B] Document 2: Árchivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (Roma), Seccion

Philippinarum, Volumen 12, Folios 268-289v Junta i congregacion hecha en la ciudad de Manila para aviso de los confesores y remedio de algunos casos de abusos de las Islas Filipinas. 1582. C] Complementary Document: AGI, Audiencia de Filipinas , 84 Tondo 17, de Octubre de 1581 « La junta y resolucion que el obispo tomo sobre la execucion de la cedula de los sclavos ».[45]

How can we prove that these texts can be sources of philosophy? Can one use synodal texts for philosophy at all? Historians who have studied the text would be first to say that the Synod's "theological conclusions were not drawn up on the basis of abstract principles excogitated by theologians enclosed in their cloisters."[46] Although they are clear that those present were theologians and not philosophers, this does not mean that those present in the synods and those who drew up the documents did not use philosophy at all. By pointing out that the theological conclusions were not drawn from abstract but "concrete" principles, the historian seems to be saying that there were practical considerations involved in the resolutions of the Synod. These precepts, however, have to be taken as examples of communal truth for they were reached through discussions and not individual cogitation. These texts belong to the conciliar tradition, which historians of political philosophy have long studied as adumbrations of constitutionalism. They resemble the conciliarist writings (e.g. Nicholas of Cusa's *De concordantia catholica*) insofar as they use theology and metaphysics to justify political claims.[47]

The texts can be used as sources of philosophy for two main reasons: a) there is enough historical evidence linking its protagonists with philosophers like Francisco de Vitoria and Bartolome de las Casas. b) Corollary, through the work of scholars like Cary Nederman, one can use these texts as examples of medieval toleration.[48]

Francisco de Vitoria and Natural Law

Lucio Gutierrez states: "The Synod faithfully follows the teaching of the Spanish theologian Francisco de Victoria" (1485-1546)[49] He rightly makes this claim because Vitoria was part of the dispute over the legitimacy of the colonization of the Americas, "to which Vitoria alludes at the

beginning of *On the American Indians*, began in 1513 when King Ferdinand called a commission (*junta*) of theologians and civil and canon lawyers to discuss the matter."[50] It was Vitoria who said that legitimacy of sovereignty can only be derived from natural law.[51] Failing to meet the requirements of natural law, Spanish colonial presence, however, could only be justified through laws of nations (*ius gentium*) which made room for natural partnership and communication between nations, *ius peregrinandi*, and *ius predicandi,*[52] and just war.[53]

John Schumacher states that according to the texts of the Synod: "The king of Spain had no natural law title to sovereignty over the Philippines, supporting the earlier opinion of Fr. Martin de Rada that no part of the Philippines had come under Spanish rule by any *just war*."[54] For this reason Schumacher explains the legitimacy of Spanish colonial rule through what he calls s*upernatural sovereignty.*[55] The Spanish could only stay in the Philippines on the following conditions: 1) that they had commission to preach the Gospel; 2) that colonial presence did not give the right to take away all authority from the pre-Hispanic native rulers; and 3) that it meant the role of supervision to the extent necessary that the Gospel be effectively preached.[56]

For Schumacher the relevance of the texts of the Synod goes beyond demonstrating to us the thought prevalent in Manila in the latter part of the 16th century; instead, it is an enduring testament to the need for the Church to ponder on the principles of justice.[57] It is also interesting that because he wanted to draw up guidelines for the 1979 Synod of Manila, he uses a Vatican II term to describe the synod's underlying political philosophy; namely, subsidiarity: "The governor…should put in the larger and more stable towns Indio judges, elected by the Indios themselves, who should take care of general justice and good order, and settle ordinary disputes."[58] The Synod thought that those who would proximately rule Filipinos should be Filipinos themselves, for Spanish sovereignty was legitimate only to the extent that it permitted the spread of the Catholic faith.[59]

De las Casas and Toleration

There is also evidence of the possible link of the texts to Bartolome de las Casas (1484-1566). Gutierrez quotes Salazar himself who said: "I

was reared in the doctrine of the bishop of Chiapas [Las Casa]."[60] Cary Nederman takes de las Casas as an example of late medieval form of toleration.[61] Distinguished from Vitoria for not being a theologian who disputed over the Americans in the safety of the University of Salamanca, "Bartolome de las Casas, had observed the process of conquest at first hand and could draw on empirical as well as philosophical evidence to refute justifications of Spanish imperialism."[62] Nederman considers him a philosopher of toleration because he thought that conversion could not be humanly effected through coercion*:* "To employ coercion is inhumane because it fails to take into account that humanity is defined by possession of certain inborn, but imperfectly realized, potentialities, it is uncivilized because it mistakes occidental cultural development for a singular process that no other people is capable of recapitulating, except perhaps at sword's point."[63] Thus, if non-Christians cannot be forced to be baptized into the Catholic Church, the authorities in the Americas have to forbear the non-Christian rites and beliefs until the natives themselves voluntarily embrace the imported religion.[64] Such toleration is the locus of dialogue, which the missionary has to practice in order to remain true to himself as a Christian.

According to Schumacher, the texts of Synod indicate their adherence to de las Casas' principle of toleration: "What is more significant, however, is some of the reasons given, which show an underlying respect for the Filipinos and their personal dignity which contrasts not only with that of the generality of the *conquistadores* but with that which even the clergy would express in later times."[65] One indication that perhaps the Synod upheld the principles of toleration is the ruling on the language to be used for evangelization: "The momentous decision it took in this matter was that the Filipinos were to be evangelized in their own languages, which the missionaries should set themselves to learn, if they had not done so already."[66] It must be emphasized that this decision of the Synod differs from the directive given in 1555 for America. It also differs from the effort to superimpose Spanish in the whole of Iberia itself. Schumacher explains that not only was this a practical and effective evangelical strategy, but it also demonstrates that the synod thought that "Filipino society, the "republica de indios," as it was called, had a right to existence of its own, and that Spanish rule was only justified to the extent that it created conditions necessary for preaching of the Gospel."[67] To a large extent this directive

to missionaries to preach in the native languages changed the entire course of Spanish presence in the Philippines. Although significant in the preservation and development of the native languages, the decision not to teach Spanish also set the Philippines behind Spain and the other colonies, thus becoming an issue in the egalitarian efforts of the Propaganda Movement. Language figures prominently too in the colonization process of the United States which decided to teach English to the Filipinos.

In one sense the Synod of Manila is a logical consequence of what has been going on in Spain since the 15th century. The place of the texts of the Synod of 1581 in writing the history of philosophy in the Philippines is large, not primarily because it used scholastic thought but because it is political philosophy. This is evident not only in what historians have called its agenda of justice but more especially in its links to Vitoria and de las Casas. Gracia pegs the starting point of Hispanic philosophy to the time Spanish philosophers began thinking about the territories in America.[68] The texts of the Synod prove that this is true in the Philippines as well. If we accept this as a starting point of Western Philosophy in the Philippines then it means that a) Filipino thought might be more interested in practical philosophy than in speculative and metaphysical philosophy, and b) that the Spanish culture that came here had roots in the Middle Ages.

Hopefully, this medievalism is not static but dynamically looks forward to modernity. The texts of the Synod are significant only insofar as they can be a source for reflection on democratic thought.[69] The Synod it must be remembered was not an extraordinary event in the process of colonization for it came after two previous juntas: The Junta of Burgos called by King Ferdinand in 1513 and the Ecclesiastical Junta of Mexico in 1546. There is mention in the historical studies of many juntas (civil and ecclesiastical) that were held in the Philippines. To what extent did the experience of the *juntas* lead to the formation and development of democratic thought among ordinary citizens as well as the founding of the Katipunan? It is significant that our word *huntahan*, which means telling stories, comes from the word Spanish *junta*. The texts of the Synod of Manila tell us that our obsession for telling stories in the streets is indeed an avenue towards democracy.

ENDNOTES

[1] Roque Ferriols, *Pambungad sa Metapisika* (Quezon City: Office of Research and Publication, 2002).

[2] Keiji Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

[3] David Keck, "Influences of the European Middle Ages in the Philippines," *Philippine Studies* Vol. 44 1996: 447-464.

[4] Jorge Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity A Philosophical Perspective* (Mass: Blackwell Malden, 2000).

[5] Cf. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1990).

[6] One can argue that, as a counter-reformation foundation, the Jesuits Order preserved and developed the medieval fund of knowledge in the face of the Spain's position in the world order. The relationship of this powerful order of priests to the Middle Ages should be a relevant subject to explore.

[7] Cf. Addendum on the First Synod of Manila.

[8] Cf. Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity*, 86: "Suarez's Disputationes metaphysicae, for example, was printed in more than 17 editions outside the Iberian peninsula between 1597 and 1636, whereas Descartes's Meditations appeared only

nine times between 1641 and 1700. Yes Descartes is considered a major figure in the history of philosophy, whereas Suarez is hardly known." The Spanish tradition also looks at the *Pensador* as being different from a Philosopher. How Spanish philosopher also traversed the road from tradition to modernity might also be helpful for our purposes.

[9] Jan Aertsen, "Is There a Medieval Philosophy?," *International Philosophical Quarterly* Vol. 34 1999: 397. Cf also Adreas Speer, "Qu-est-ce que la Philosophie au Moyen Âge? Bilan Philosophique du Dixième Congrès International de Philosophie Médiévale tenu à Erfurt du 25 au 30 Août 1997" *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie Médiévales* 65 1 (1998): 133-146.

[10] Roque Ferriols, *Sinaunang Pilosopiyang Griyego* (Quezon City: Office of Research and Publication).

[11] We are immediately within a political discourse here, for these two terms can also be retranslated into English as Conservative and Progressive. *Sinauna* sometimes considered not tribal, but Spanish. Sometimes it is considered the Superstitious versus the enlightened faith of products of Catholic schools.

[12] Pierre Hadot, *Qu'est-ce que la Philosophie Antique?* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995).

[13] Carlos Steel, "Medieval Philosophy: An Impossible Project? Thomas Aquinas and the Averroistic Ideal of Happiness" in *Was ist Philosophie im Mittelalter?* (Miscellanea Mediaevalia 260, ed. A. Aertsen and Andreas Speer 9Berlin: Degruyter, 1998): 152-74.

[14] Alain de Libera, *La Philosophie Médiévale*, 2nd ed. (Paris: PUF, 1992).

[15] Etienne Gilson, *L'Esprit de la Philosophie Médiévale* (Paris: Vrin, 1969).

[16] Aertsen, *Is There a Medieval Philosophy*, 397.

[17] *Ibid*., 399.

[18] Aertsen, *Is There a Medieval Philosophy*, 386.

[19] Louis Dupré , "The Modern Idea of Culture: Its Opposition to its Classical and Christian Origins," in *Modernity and Religion* ed. Ralph McInerny (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994): 1-18.

[20] Dupré, *Modern Idea of Culture*, 5.

[21] Dupré, *Modern Idea of Culture*, 11.

[22] Roque Ferriols, *Magpakatao: Ilang Babasahing Pilosopiko* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1999).

[23] Karsten Harris, *The Meaning of Modern Art* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968).

[24] Alejandro Abadilla, *Ako ang Daigdig* (Manila; Silangan Publication House, 1955).

[25] The Addendum would show that some texts can be found as sources of Philosophy in the Philippines. Its culture, however, is still largely non-discursive in nature; For this reason, it tries to bring out the philosophy found in the arts. Cf. Peter Murphy, *Civic Justice: From Greek Antiquity to the Modern World* (Amherst New York: Humanity Book, 2001). For additional literature cf. Josef Chytry, "Fair Play," *History and Theory* 43 (Feburary 2004), 83-106;

[26] Emmanuel Torres, *Nena Saguil: Landscape and Inscapes From the Material World to the Spiritual* (Quezon City: Ateneo Art Gallery, 2003).

[27] Although a modernist even before she went to France, Saguil only fully developed her own true form of modernism there.

[28] Torres, *Nena Saguil*, 7.

[29] This is also paralleled by the fictitious information she gives in her interviews, almost saying that her art alone contains her biography.

[30] The Green Tunnel (1964); The Tunnel (1964), Book Jacket Covers (front and back) for Nena Saguil by Ernst Fraenkel and Waldeman George (Paris: Edition de Beaune, 1969 (1964).

[31] Landscape of the Mind I (1969), Landscapes of the Mind II and III (1973).

[32] Landscape 1949.

[33] Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology The English Rustic Tradition 1740-1860* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986).

[34] Night I and II, 1962.

[35] One can also note that in her Manila years there is an obvious sense of imitation, that is, she would imitate the style of the European modernists. While her later styles bore the mark of other painters less obviously, art critics hesitate to put her in any clear movement in art, even the ones current in Paris while she was alive. She became an individual, reflected in her being a recluse.

[36] Vanity (1948).

[37] Dupré, *Idea of Modern Culture*, 11.

[38] Richard Sennet, *The Conscience of the Eye* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990).

[39] Illumination I (Cloud, sun, sea, and marine creature) (1974), Illumination II (1977), Evening Illumination (1983), Illumination III (Yellow sky, purple landscape) (1985).

[40] Norman Kretzmann, *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[41] L'Espace sur rouge ver gris, noir et blanc (1989-90), Scriptures on the Wall (1990).

[42] Triptych II and III (1977, 1983).

[43] Cr*é*puscule de Dieu (1972), The Black Sun (1977).

[44] Domingo de Salazar, *Sinodo de Manila de 1582* Estudio Introductorio, Glosa y Transcripcion de los Textos Sinodales por José Luis Porras Camuñez (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Historicos del Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas, 1988).

[45] « Actas del Primer Sinodo de Manila (1582-1586)," *Philippiniana Sacra* (1969): 426-27; H. de la Costa, S. J., *The Jesuits in the Philippines 1581-1768* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961); John Schumacher, "The Manila Synodal Tradition: A Brief History," *Philippine Studies* 27 (1979): 285-348; Lucio Gutierrez, *The Archdiocese of Manila 1565-1999* (Manila: The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Manila, 1999).

[46] Schumacher, *Manila Synodal Tradition*, 305; De la Costa, *Jesuits in the Philippines*, 23; Gutierrez 42-43;

[47] For literature on this cf. bibliography of Jovino Miroy, *Tracing Nicholas of Cusa's Early Development The relationship between the De concordantia catholica and De docta ignorantia* (KULeuven, 2002).

[48] De la Costa mentions Thomas once, cf. *Jesuits in the Philippines*, 34.

[49] Lucio Gutierrez, *Archdiocese of Manila*, 44.

[50] Francisco de Vitoria, *Political Writings* ed. Anthony Pagden (Cambridge: Cambride University Press, 1991), xxiii. The careful study of Vitoria's relationship with the conciliarists is in order. It is also relevant to state that there are a number of notable conciliarists among the Spaniards, for example, Johannes de Segovia.

[51] Vitoria, *Political Writings*, xxiv.

[52] The right to go out to other parts of the world *peacefully,* Schumacher, *Manila Synodal Tradition*, 296ff.

[53] Vitoria, *Political Writings*, xxviff.

[54] Schumacher, *Manila Synodal Tradition*, 293.

[55] On the distinction between the two sovereignties, cf. *Ibid*., 296ff. Another distinction he uses is: sovereignty by natural law and hypothetical sovereignty *Ibid*., 294.

[56] Schumacher, *Manila Synodal Tradition*, 294. In addition, the king of Spain had right of sovereignty only because the native rulers did not rule according to natural law. This was the reason why the Synod was called because the way Spanish rulers were behaving proved that themselves did not adhere to natural law, cf. also. de la Costa, *Jesuits in the Philippines*, 28. Thus, the task of providing legitimation had the other effect of justifying and perpetuating their rule.

[57] Schumacher, *Manila Synodal Tradition*, 297.

[58] *Suma*, 455-56.

[59] Schumacher, *Manila Synodal Tradition*, 302.

[60] Cf. Letter of Domingo Salazar to Philip II, Manila, June 18, 1583, Archivo General de las Indias (Seville, Spain), Patronato 25, ramo 8.

[61] "In surveying the writings of Las Casas, one is struck by their constant and heavy dependence on the multiple conventional "languages" of philosophy, politics, and law in currency during the Latin Middle Ages" Cary Nederman, *Worlds of Difference European Discourses of Toleration* c. 1100- c. 1550 (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 2000), 101.

[62]Nederman, *Worlds of Difference*, 100.

[63] *Ibid*., 102.

[64] *Ibid.*, 111.

[65] Schumacher, *Manila Synodal Tradition*, 300.

[66] Ibid., 309.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity*, 76-86.

[69] Cf. De la Costa, *Jesuits in the Philippines*, 25: "They presented a cedula or decree, which they had obtained from Philip II, forbidding the colonists to retain

natives as slaves under any pretext whatever. This prohibition had been issued often enough before, even since Pope Paul III made his famous declaration that liberty and property were of the number of those inalienable rights with which, as the signers of the American declaration of independence finely said some two centuries later, all men are endowed by their Creator."