Featured Article

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Children as Dialogue Partners in Doing Filipino Philosophy

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Abstract: Since the introduction of Philosophy for/with Children in the Philippines in the early 1990s, studies on Filipino children's capacity for philosophical thinking are gradually increasing in number. To date, no research has been undertaken on the intersections of Filipino children and Filipino philosophy, a lacuna that I intend to fill. I proceed on the assumption that aside from being a pedagogical approach, P4wC is primarily a philosophical enterprise that must emerge from the country's philosophical landscape. With its emphasis on the previously lesser-known relationships between children and philosophy, P4wC invites us to reconsider our assumptions about what Filipino philosophy is, how it relates to the public, and our implicit notions of who can and cannot engage in philosophical inquiry. Such an invitation, in my opinion, is primarily addressed to Filipino philosophers and scholars, encouraging them to reconsider the generally-accepted ways of doing philosophy in the Philippines and seek new ways to expand them. Recognizing that no single Filipino philosopher can provide a definitive understanding of the status or direction of Filipino philosophy, I discuss some key ideas of two Filipino philosophers: Emerita Quito and her concept of grassroots philosophy, and Rolando

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Gripaldo and his ways to become a philosopher. Making connections between P4wC and Filipino philosophy opens a way to recognize Filipino children not only as subjects of philosophical investigation but more importantly, as dialogue partners in our philosophical pursuits. My overarching claim is that engaging philosophically with children expands the scope and directions of Filipino philosophy.

Keywords: Philosophy for/with Children, Filipino Philosophy, children, dialogue

INTRODUCTION

Children have played a minor role in the development of philosophy in the Philippines. Prior to the introduction of Philosophy for/with Children (or P4wC) in the Philippines in the early 1990s, there were few philosophical studies of Filipino children. Even fewer, if not practically non-existent, are studies in which children are treated as both research subjects and collaborators. In his book Filipino Philosophy: A Critical Bibliography, Rolando Gripaldo cited only 21 out of 1,457 published works on Filipino children over a period of more than two centuries (1774-2002).[1] Only six of these works can be classified as philosophical research on children; the rest are works in other fields, such as psychology, education, literature, and economics. However, from 2002 to the present day, the number of philosophical studies on children has increased, especially in relation to P4wC. With the growing interest in the field, one important direction for research is to link P4wC with Filipino philosophy, focusing on the identification of conceptual spaces where the theoretical assumptions of P4wC can take root. Since P4wC is fundamentally a philosophical enterprise and not merely a pedagogical approach, it therefore cannot be meaningfully adopted in the Philippine context without consideration of our philosophical landscape. Simply put, P4wC must emerge from the country's philosophical tradition.

In this paper, my underlying premise is that Filipino children play a significant role in the development of philosophy in the country, and thus their participation in discourses about Filipino philosophy is essential. Acknowledging that there is not one Filipino philosopher who can provide a definitive understanding of Filipino philosophy's status or directions, I discuss some ideas of two Filipino philosophers, namely, Emerita Quito and her notion of grassroots philosophy, and Rolando Gripaldo and his ways to become a philosopher. My purpose is not to make a comprehensive

[1] Rolando Gripaldo, *Filipino Philosophy: A Critical Bibliography* [1774-1992, 1993-1997, 1998-2002] (Manila: De La Salle University, 2004).

review of their ideas, but to find locations where P4wC as a philosophical praxis can 'position' itself within Filipino Philosophy. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to attempt to think collaboratively with these two Filipino philosophers, building upon and not negating their work.

CREATING SPACES FOR P4WC WITHIN FILIPINO PHILOSOPHY

Filipino children have always been 'outsiders' to academic philosophy in the Philippines. While other*ed* voices have increasingly gained recognition in recent decades, this is not generally the case for children. Beyond academia, however, we find the opposite scenario. One lingering trope that many Filipinos use to describe anyone who questions, bickers, or talks back at someone deemed an authority is *pilosopo*. Emerita Quito notes, almost forty years ago, that "on the popular or grassroots level, the term 'philosophy' is virtually unknown, but the term 'pilosopo' is a pejorative name for anyone who argues lengthily, whether rightly or wrongly."[2] In fact, this term has been around since 1887, when the fictional character *Pilosopong Tasyo* was first introduced.[3] Today, this moniker is also sometimes attributed to those who deviously excuse their wrongdoing, which is commonly known as *palusot*. Unfortunately, such a label is extended to children as well. Expressions like, *Pilosopo kang bata ka! Huwag kang sasagot, huwag kang pilosopo! Namimilosopo ka na naman!* are utterances directed particularly at children in various contexts, at home or even in schools. These expressions reinforce the negative stereotype of a Filipino child (or youth) as a philosopher in the pejorative

[2] Emerita S. Quito, *The State of Philosophy in the Philippines* (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1983), 9-10.

[3] In Jose Rizal's Noli Me Tangere, Don Anastasio is referred to as 'Filosofo Tasio' in two senses: either a sage or a lunatic (el loco). The well-educated consider him a sage, while the majority of townspeople know him as a crazy fool "on account of his peculiar ideas and his eccentric manner of dealing with others." See José Rizal, *The Social Cancer: A Complete English Version of Noli Me Tangere*, trans. Charles Derbyshire (World Book Company, 1912; Project Gutenberg, 2007) https://www.gutenberg.org/files/6737/6737-h/6737-h.htm

sense (i.e., *pilosopo*), particularly when they ask seemingly endless questions about topics they find perplexing or make observations that appear to challenge adult authority. While the label *pilosopo* reveals more about the speaker than the child, it has nevertheless permeated our popular culture, negatively impacting the general perception of Filipino children's natural curiosity and ability to think independently. Furthermore, many Filipino parents are hesitant to allow their children to ponder philosophical issues, as such thoughts are commonly viewed as subversive or anti-religion. Thus, due to a widespread misunderstanding of what philosophy is and its potential benefits for children, any attempt to introduce philosophy to young Filipinos is likely to be met with some resistance.

P4wC is one of the few, if not the only progressive pedagogical approach that takes seriously the connection between children, childhood, and philosophy.[4] Its fundamental assumption is that children have the natural ability to think philosophically.[5] As newcomers to the world, they are naturally disposed to wonder – a fundamental disposition in philosophizing. The earliest proponent of Philosophy of Childhood, Gareth Matthews, emphasizes that the philosophical comments and questions of children "have a freshness and inventiveness that is hard for even the most imaginative adult to match."[6] Their intuitive logic, unrestrained yet by rules and formal categories, allows them to offer unique perspectives that, according to Lone, help us to "think about philosophical questions – about justice, ethics, friendship, etc., – in new and fresh ways."[7]

[4] C.f. David Kennedy and Walter Omar Kohan, "Childhood, education and philosophy: a matter of time," in *The Routledge International Handbook of Philosophy for Children*, eds. Maughn Rollins Gregory, Joanna Haynes and Karin Murris (New York, Routledge, 2017), 46-52.

[5] C.f. Lipman, Matthew, *Philosophy Goes to School* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988).

[6] Gareth Matthews, *Philosophy of Childhood* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 17.

[7] Jana Mohr Lone, "Philosophical Thinking in Childhood," in *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Childhood and Children*, eds. Anca Gheaus, Gideon Calder and Jurgen de Wispelaere (New York: Routledge, 2019), 62.

P4wC operationalizes philosophy as an inquiry-based dialogue in which anyone, regardless of age or academic background can participate, thereby challenging the prevalent notion that philosophy is only suitable for adults with philosophical training. By emphasizing the *practice* of philosophy over the *study* of philosophy, anyone, including children is empowered to explore philosophically perplexing questions. Its primary methodology, the Community of Inquiry (or COI), is an intellectually and emotionally safe space where children can freely inquire about questions arising from their various contexts and experiences.

However, tapping into children's philosophical potential does not happen through a wholesale and "cold appropriation" of P4wC's theory, methods, and activities in the locale.[8] In 2009, Zosimo Lee, one of the Filipino philosophers who first introduced P4wC in the Philippines, writes

> [t]he implantation of Philosophy for Children in the Philippines is an instance where the local response has to come from within the intellectual and academic traditions in the country (the practice cannot just be imposed from the outside). At the same time Filipino culture has to respond to, or accommodate, the impetus from outside. Filipino culture is syncretistic on the surface, but it actually indigenizes whatever comes from the "outside" and integrates these foreign dimensions into the cultural mix that is uniquely Filipino. There are active accommodations, modifications, rejections, and acceptances.[9]

[8] Gina Opiniano, et al. "Philosophy of Education in a New Key: A Collective Writing Project on the State of Filipino Philosophy of Education," in *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, vol. 54, no. 8 (2022), 3.

[9] Zosimo Lee, "Philosophy for Children in the Philippines" in *Children Philosophize Worldwide: Theoretical and Practical Concepts* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009), 583.

Facilitating philosophical dialogues in the locale requires sensitivity to children's context and culture, which necessitates a thoughtful and reflective appropriation of P4wC's theory and practice. This sometimes involves 'indigenizing' its assumptions and goals to make them culture-enabling and responsive.[10] Nonetheless, P4wC is not merely a pedagogical approach. With its emphasis on the connections between children and philosophy, it also presents an invitation to reconsider our taken for granted assumptions about what Filipino philosophy is, its relationship to the public, and our implicit notions of who can and cannot engage in philosophical inquiry. Such an invitation is I believe directly addressed to Filipino philosophers and scholars, encouraging them to question traditional ways of doing philosophy in the Philippines and look for new ways to enrich them.

THE EXCLUSION OF CHILDREN FROM FILIPINO GRASSROOTS PHILOSOPHY

Emerita Quito identified two distinct levels of understanding philosophy in the Philippines, that is, academic and popular or grassroots.[11] The academic climate in the 1980s, according to her, did not produce any "real philosophers in the strict sense" because most were "mentors or professors of Thomistic philosophy and other philosophical trends."[12] But while there was no discernible philosophy that could be considered Filipino at that time, there has always been an abundance of folk philosophy, both articulated and unarticulated, palpable in the people's general attitude towards life. For her, "this concerted effort to acquire wisdom which is manifest on the popular or grassroots level constitutes the folk spirit of the

[10] C.f., Peter Paul E. Elicor, "I am Keeping my Cultural Hat On: Exploring a 'Culture-Enabling' Philosophy for/with Children Practice," in *Childhood & Philosophy*, Vol. 17, March 2021, 1-18.

[11] Quito, *The State of Philosophy in the Philippines*, 9.

[12] Ibid. 9.

Filipino."[13] However, the problem was that such folk spirit, though already consisting of germinal philosophical views about the world and humanity's place in it, had remained un-intellectualized and un-elevated to the level of rational discourse. Thus, from her historical standpoint, the Filipino volksgeist is yet to "emerge as a formalized philosophy on the academic level."[14]

The concept of grassroots philosophy sparked a new approach to doing philosophy in the Philippines during the last three decades of the twentieth century. This approach, commonly known as the cultural-anthropological approach or ethno-philosophy, was used and popularized by a number of notable Filipino philosophers. Leonardo Mercado, for instance, sought to articulate an interpretation of Filipino identity and worldview through an analysis of the dominant Philippine languages; and Florentino Timbreza extracted philosophical ideas from the oral and written literature in various regions.[15] Meanwhile, several Filipino philosophers have critically engaged with indigenous beliefs, language, knowledge and practices.[16] Demeterio notes that Quito "expected more from the grassroots," as it can lend Filipino philosophers "folk concepts, categories, theories and methods that they may appropriate and use in formally and academically constructing a manifestation of Filipino philosophy in the strict sense."[17]

At this point, it may be well to pause and ask: who exactly comprises the grassroots? For Quito and those who followed the cultural-

[13] Ibid. 10.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Cf. Leonardo N. Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy* (Tacloban City: Divine Word University Publications, 1993). See also Florentino Timbreza, *Pag-unawa sa Pilosopiyang Filipino. Sariling Wika at Pilosopiyang Filipino* (Quezon City: C&E Publishing, Inc., 2008).

[16] Some of these are: Aurelio Agcaoili, Danilo Alterado, Jeffry Ocay and Rogelio Bayod to name a few.

[17] F.P.A Demeterio, "Status of and Directions for Filipino Philosophy in Zialcita, Timbreza, Quito, Abulad, Mabaquiao, Gripaldo and Co," in *Philosophia International Journal of Philosophy* (Philippines), Vol. 14, No. 2 (2013), 194.

anthropological approach, the grassroots, it appears, refer to those who maintain the Filipino folk spirit, embedded in the specific cultures of ordinary Filipinos and is often reflected in folklore and wise sayings. They are ordinary folks who preserve various local traditions and practices that have been passed on from previous generations. What is generally accepted is the notion that the 'Filipino volksgeist' refers to the collective mind of *all* Filipinos. However, what is not often specified is that such a collective mind pertains only to the popular consciousness of Filipino *adults*. Although the term grassroots refer to the hoi polloi, its underlying assumption in the Philippine context reveals an implicit exclusion of Filipino children.

Here we are faced with a question: Isn't it reasonable to restrict the definition of grassroots to those who can actively participate in Quito's "concerted effort to acquire wisdom"? After all, it seems realistic to assume that not everyone is capable of actively participating in this endeavor. A negative response to this question requires justification that children have something to contribute to grassroots philosophy despite their still-developing epistemic capacities. This will be discussed in the subsequent sections. On the other hand, an affirmative response implies that the concept of grassroots necessarily involves an age-based bias, embracing only those (e.g., rational Filipino adults) deemed capable of meaningfully contributing to the pursuit of truth and wisdom. When viewed in this light, the grassroots has no room for children. The popular expression, Papunta ka pa lang, pabalik na ako, cements this point. Children or young people, who are considered 'newcomers', are expected to receive wisdom from adults who, in contrast, are 'veterans' in life. Since wisdom is often associated with age and maturity, it follows that the younger and therefore less mature a person is, the less wise he or she is. Indeed, in popular Filipino culture, it is almost unthinkable – and may even be considered inappropriate – for a child to offer wisdom to an adult. By following this assumption, we are forced to accept that children are inevitably excluded from grassroots philosophy, leaving them only tangentially connected to the volksgeist. That is, they have to accumulate years of experience first

before they are recognized and allowed meaningful participation in philosophical inquiries, which are still generally limited within the Filipino 'adult world'.

CHILDREN AS DIALOGUE PARTNERS IN FILIPINO PHILOSOPHY

In many parts of the world, the concept of grassroots does not exclude children. P4wC for instance is considered one of the growing movements in the contemporary grassroots philosophy scene, which encourages non-specialists to engage in philosophical practice.[18] Matthew Lipman envisioned the Community of Inquiry as an avenue where participation in the grassroots level is encouraged through a dialogical process that avoids the "noxious extreme of rampant individualism and collectivism."[19] In this sense, P4wC is more than just an educational program that helps children discover and develop their abilities for philosophical thinking; it also allows them to express their ideas and questions and be recognized as legitimate voices in the community. Put differently, P4wC acknowledges children as integral members of the grassroots as they, too, can be active participants in social transformation.

From the foregoing, one may wonder why P4wC has not gained sufficient traction and support in the Philippines since its introduction nearly three decades ago. Several factors may have contributed to this, including the prohibitive bureaucracy in public schools, the lack of institutional support, the paucity of local studies about the program, the deficiencies of the prevailing childhood development theories influencing the practices in basic education, the lack of teacher training, and the systemic resistance against educational initiatives that challenge the status

[18] Jules Evans, *Connected Communities: Philosophical Communities - A report for the Arts and Humanities Research Council* (University of London, 2012).

[19] Matthew Lipman, *Philosophy Goes to School* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 42.

quo. In addition, there is a widespread perception that philosophy is esoteric and exclusive only to philosophically-trained adults. While these are potential reasons for the lack of public awareness of P4wC as a viable program for Filipino children, I believe what is fundamentally missing is the recognition of Filipino children's capacity to think for themselves and with others. Without this crucial assumption, Filipino children will always be deemed incapable of engaging in philosophical dialogues.

Another possible reason is the reductive view of grassroots philosophy. In his analysis of Filipino Philosophy's status and directions, Demeterio suggests that folk/grassroots philosophy "should no longer be referred to as a philosophical discourse" since it is "not philosophy as such but the collective mentality of the Filipino people."[20] I concur that folk philosophy, insofar as it is reduced to an inventory of a supposedly distinct Filipino worldview via folklores and traditional wise sayings, may not qualify as a philosophical enterprise. I disagree, however, that grassroots philosophy should be disregarded because it is intertwined with folk philosophy, as this is equivalent to throwing out the baby with the bathwater. As suggested earlier, children are an important part of the grassroots, and they can bring fresh perspectives to philosophical problems taken from their unique standpoint. Filipino children can construct a sense of who they are and can also make meaning of their reality in their interactions with others.[21] Given the opportunity and conducive environment, they can demonstrate the thinking (and emotional) skills that are essential in philosophical dialogues. Thus, I argue that we should maintain the concept of grassroots philosophy while challenging its

[20] F.P.A. Demeterio III, "Assessing the Developmental Potentials of Some Twelve Discourses of Filipino Philosophy," in *Philippiniana Sacra*, Vol. XLIX, No. 147 (May-August, 2014), 191. See also, Demeterio, "Status of and Directions for Filipino Philosophy in Zialcita, Timbreza, Quito, Abulad, Mabaquiao, Gripaldo and Co," 211.

[21] Some useful references in this area are the ff: Gareth Matthews, *Philosophy of Childhood* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994); Sheila Greene & Elizabeth Nixon, Children as Agents in *Their Worlds: A Psychological-Relational Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2020); Michael S. Cummings, *Children's Voices in Politics* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2020).

underlying assumption that only 'adult folks' should be included, thus making room for children as dialogue partners.

Applying Lee's advice of "active accommodations, modifications, rejections, and acceptances" to the notion of grassroots, we find an obvious implication: treating P4wC as a mode of doing grassroots philosophy rejects the cultural-anthropological approach where the goal is to extract a uniquely Filipino thought and identity. Aligned with how P4wC is practiced in most countries, children are introduced to philosophy to habituate them in philosophical thinking and dialogue where they are encouraged to offer their perspectives on certain topics and questions they find perplexing regardless of their nationality or culture. This means that unlike those who follow the cultural-anthropological approach, a Filipino philosopher who practices P4wC does not engage with children for the purpose of eliciting a 'unique' Filipino worldview and identity. To simplify, the discovery of a hidden weltanschauung is not the aim of philosophical discussions with children.

In sum, if we expand Quito's notion of the grassroots, we find a conceptual space where we can position Filipino children as epistemic agents whose questions and musings have philosophical value even if they are done naively or without self-consciousness that they are actually doing philosophy already.[22]

[22] One common argument against the idea that children can do philosophy is that even if they ask philosophical-sounding questions, they do so naively or without knowing what they are doing. That is, children cannot be considered philosophers if their thinking is not self-consciously philosophical, as is the case with adult philosophers. According to Burdick-Shepherd and Cammarano, "It is possible to philosophize naively. We all found ourselves around a late-night table, enjoying seemingly empty talk that, in the clarity of the morning, we (or perhaps a friend) recognize as the beginning of a new understanding and experience, or even of a philosophical paper. Indeed, such naivety is the way all newcomers come to a tradition." C.f. Stephanie Burdick-Shepherd and Critstina Cammarano's "Gareth B. Matthews on the child as philosopher" in Gareth B. Matthews, *The Child's Philosopher*, eds. Maughn Rollins Gregory & Megan Jane Laverty (London: Routledge, 2022), 94.

DOING PHILOSOPHY AS AN INDEPENDENT PURSUIT

In this section, I draw attention to an implicit assumption that undergirds a particular manner of doing Filipino philosophy. To illustrate this, I will provide a review of Gripaldo's proposal on how to become a genuine philosopher, as its underlying assumption provides a contrast of what I intend to emphasize.[23] My aim here is to highlight the role of the Community of Inquiry and the kind of disposition fostered by it. In my opinion, Gripaldo's ways of becoming a genuine Filipino philosopher reflect a shared notion by many Filipinos concerning what philosophical thinking is, a notion P4wC can challenge.

Gripaldo observes that in the Philippines, there are many teachers of philosophy and only a few Filipino philosophers. He believes that those who choose to remain teachers have not philosophized on their own as they are content at being an expert of the works of a chosen philosopher or field of specialization. However, mastering a philosophical topic, for him, does not make one a philosopher since what is required is originality of thought. What we need, Gripaldo argues, are "philosophical innovations that are distinctively the product of profound philosophical minds, something that will separate one's thoughts from the thoughts of others before him or her."[24] An independent mind, therefore, is an important quality that distinguishes Filipino philosophers from scholars.

According to Gripaldo, there are three ways to become a genuine philosopher: a) innovate by transforming a previous philosophical position to a much-improved position, b) reject an old philosophical thought and create a new path to philosophizing, or c) review old philosophical questions and offer new insights.[25] With these ways, the journey towards

[23] Let me hasten to add that 'it is not my intention to cast Gripaldo's works in a bad light as this would not be a fair characterization of his enormous contributions to Filipino philosophy.

[24] Rolando Gripaldo, *The Making of a Filipino Philosopher and Other Essays* (Mandaluyong City: National Book Store, 2009).

[25] Ibid.

authentic philosophizing is characterized by a steep intellectual rigor. Each way demands profound introspection, meticulous attention, relentless questioning, and silent dialogues within oneself. From Gripaldo's view, only a few have reached the stature of a philosopher as these ways are by no means simple nor immediately attainable. Looking closely, one will notice that these ways are predicated on the idea that the philosophizing is a discrete mental activity that should be undertaken independently.

Gripaldo's ways encapsulate perfectly what is expected of an academic philosopher who, in addition to other responsibilities within and outside academia, is expected to withdraw into one's mind in order to make room for philosophizing. While this is essential, I think the assumption that philosophizing is an independent pursuit needs to be reconsidered. What I mean by 'independent pursuit' does not refer to an activity conducted in complete isolation or with complete disregard for the works and ideas of others, both of which are obviously impossible and unphilosophical. Rather, it refers to a disposition that reduces philosophizing as a wholly private and isolated activity. Many will hardly see this as a problem as this is a common practice in academic philosophy today. What I wish to emphasize is that this practice undermines the communal and collaborative aspect not only of the process that constitutes philosophical thinking, but also of the philosophical enterprise in general.

P4WC AND THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY

In engaging with children through philosophical dialogues, *thinking for oneself* is complemented and expanded by *thinking with others*. Whereas an adult philosopher does the mental activity of philosophizing single-handedly, children or 'little philosophers', on the other hand, collaboratively perform the various thinking moves necessary for philosophical inquiry. This distribution of thinking moves, which has some semblance to the essence of *bayanihan*, is where the communal dimension

of P4wC comes to the fore. According to Murris, through the COI children think together like

> 'one big head', building on each other's ideas. The goal of philosophical enquiry with children transcends the thinking of any one individual. The insights acquired could never have been reached by the individuals alone.[26]

This means that the kind of philosophical thinking fostered by P4wC is achieved through the synergy of the individual members in the COI. Lipman explains that the COI "is very much like a team where there are certain people who are good at passing and others good at running. And they depend on each other; they know they can count on each other."[27] In this regard, the value of thinking with others stems from the recognition that a child, though able to think for herself, needs other co-equal inquirers to sustain and perhaps most importantly, enjoy philosophical thinking.

A range of assumptions supports the importance of thinking with others. In Lipman's model, engaging in philosophical dialogues with children is predicated on a representational epistemology maintaining that knowledge about the world is represented by ideas obtained through discursive reasoning. Following Dewey, P4wC maintains that knowledge is a continuous process obtained through inquiry, which entails "creative inhibition that is enacted in and through the world."[28] In the context of the COI, children undertake this process through dialogical inquiry. Its structure supports children's exercise of philosophical thinking, consisting of "[an] appreciation of ideas, logical arguments, and conceptual systems"

[26] Karin Murris, "Can Children Do Philosophy?" in *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (2000), 264.

[27] "*Philosophy for Children | Matthew Lipman*," YouTube video, 56:00, posted by Pascal Lacroix (29 March 2010), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lp-8lI8h7gg>.

[28] Aaron Stoller, "Dewey's Creative Ontology," in *Journal of Thought*, Vol. 52, No. 3-4 (2018), 48.

and also "a manifest facility in manipulating philosophical concepts."[29] Of course, a philosophically-trained adult can do all these things independently, but in P4wC, children do them as a community. Hence, philosophical thinking in a COI is not solely an independent experience, but rather shared.

Juxtaposed with Gripaldo's view, it seems that there is not much room for the possibility of becoming a genuine philosopher by listening and thinking with children. One may even argue that this is not a task of a philosopher nor a scholar of philosophy, but of a basic education teacher. Is this a possible reason why P4wC has not caught the attention and interest of many Filipino philosophers? Given that many philosophers in the country today are mostly professors holding positions in the tertiary level, it is not entirely inaccurate to assume that our collective notion of a legitimate philosopher is narrowly reduced to the figure of an academic. While academic philosophers play a vital role in expanding the frontiers of knowledge, a cause for worry here is the reality that academic philosophy breeds elitism and exclusion of the public. These reinforce the notion that philosophy, according to Lockrobin, is "something that is done on behalf of the public or done to them."[30] Oftentimes, this happens when philosophers think for those who are non-philosophically trained, such as children, instead of thinking with them.

From the foregoing, if we expand Gripaldo's idea that philosophy is an independent pursuit – and append that doing philosophy can also be practiced interdependently – we find another conceptual space where we can locate the importance of dialogue and community, two essential features in P4wC.

[29] Matthew Lipman, Ann Margaret Sharp, and Frederick Oscanyan, *Philosophy in the Classroom*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), 41.

[30] Grace Lockrobin, "Relocation and Repopulation: Why Community Philosophy Matters," in *Philosophy and Community Theories, Practices and Possibilities*, eds. Amanda Fulford, Grace Lockrobin & Richard Smith (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 33.

PHILOSOPHIZING WITH CHILDREN AS A FORM OF PUBLIC PHILOSOPHY

Engaging with children through philosophical dialogues is a form of public philosophy. Philosophers who practice P4wC actively engage with non-specialists in non-academic venues. Following Marinoff, doing public philosophy is a return to the marketplace where philosophy came, that is, "ordinary citizens who are sincerely concerned about the meanings of words and the exercise of reason."[31] Here I interpret the term 'citizens' to include not only an elite few, but also children who, despite their lack of knowledge of academic philosophy, have the disposition and cognitive capacity to think and explore some of the most fundamental philosophical questions and problems. Moreover, P4wC contributes to making philosophy relevant outside the limited circle of university students, teachers, and philosophers. After all, it is not harmful to include children in this circle to introduce them to the value of an examined life at an early age. What I think is harmful is shielding children from inconvenient questions due to the belief that they are barely capable of understanding them or, out of fear that they will become subversives or atheists.

Furthermore, P4wC as public philosophy aims to develop reasonableness, reflective thinking, and collaborative inquiry - practices that are essential in a democracy. The procedures in the dialogical inquiry acclimatize children in the process of democratic deliberation, equipping them with the necessary skills for their civic participation later on. In this way, the COI serves as a small-scale version of a functioning democracy at the basic education level. In this sense, choosing P4wC as one way of doing philosophy in the country is like placing a wager: one hopes that exposing children to philosophy will, in due course, help shape a generation of discerning Filipino youth who will be more reflective on socio-political issues, more involved in policymaking, more active in questioning the

[31] Lou Marinoff, *Philosophical Practice* (San Diego: Academic Press, 2002), 12.

status quo, and more critical in utilizing social media, among others. All of these rest on the assumption that the quality of Filipino children's thinking today will define the type of citizens they will be in the future. In summary, P4wC is one of the many ways to invest in nation-building.

One more question may be raised: Are we not spreading ourselves too thin by getting involved with Filipino children through philosophy? Just like any serious educational endeavor, P4wC demands time, attention, and resources. Will this not get in the way of one's primary duties (e.g., teaching college courses, mentoring graduate students, doing administrative work, conducting research, etc.)? I think the invitation here is to shatter the prevailing notion that philosophy is merely a private academic career. Of course, each Filipino philosopher has his/her preferred manner of living out the profession, and it goes without saying that it is unreasonable to hope, much less expect, from Filipino philosophers to actively engage in philosophical dialogues with children. For those who are not inclined to practice P4wC, an alternative would be to engage in the field of philosophy of childhood. Reflecting on Gareth Matthews' legacy, Gregory and Laverty note that writing about childhood "from within one or more subdiscipline", such as Epistemology, Metaphysics or Ethics, is one of the "ways in which Philosophy of childhood is conceived within professional philosophy."[32] An example would be an investigation of a particular experience of some Filipino children, such as the cultural challenges in expressing their right to freely express their views according to their age and maturity (UNCRC Art. 12), using the theory of Epistemic Injustice. Finally, it would be advantageous to acknowledge P4wC as one of the viable ways of doing philosophy in the Philippines and perhaps support the initiatives undertaken and sustained by a few Filipino P4wC practitioners.[33]

[32] Maughn Rollins Gregory & Megan Jane Laverty, "Gareth B. Matthews, A Philosopher's Life with Children," in Gareth B. Matthews, *The Child's Philosopher*, eds. Maughn Rollins Gregory & Megan Jane Laverty (London: Routledge, 2022), 22.

[33] It may be well to note that despite the pandemic, several Filipino philosophers have spearheaded various P4wC-related activities. For instance, Dr. Rainier Ibana (AdMU), the

FINAL REMARKS

I end by drawing inspiration from Romualdo Abulad. For him, the central question of Filipino Philosophy is not its method or content but rather the level of commitment one puts in his/her work. Abulad advocates for a philosophical attitude characterized by openness and sensitivity towards one's *being-in-the-world* because "the new language of philosophy admits of anything", whether it is anthropological, descriptive, or exploratory "so long as it is grounded in the world and its situation."[34] He even cautions not to get stuck with one or any methodology but "to philosophize as one is inspired to do, without the thought that how one does it is the only way of doing Filipino philosophy."[35] He seems to be saying that we should leave to the future generation of Filipino philosophers the task of determining whether our present work means anything to Filipino Philosophy, if at all. Abulad's point is simple yet compelling: on the one hand, it reemphasizes the constant challenge of making philosophy relevant to all Filipinos, but on the other, it reminds us to maintain the level of discipline and rigor necessary for philosophizing.

As a response to Abulad's challenge, it is my hope that this paper has broadened the limiting dimensions of Filipino philosophy in order to make room for children in the way philosophy is typically practiced in the Philippines. P4wC establishes a mode of philosophizing that is more inclusive and participatory, even for young people. It makes philosophy

current president of Philosophy with Children and Youth Network for Asia and the Pacific (PCYNAP), oversees the Children's Philosophy Circle, an ongoing online philosophical dialogues with selected children from various countries in the Asia-Pacific region; Dr. Marella Ada Bolaños (UST) and her colleagues facilitate online P4wC dialogues among several Filipino children; Dr. Ruby Suazo (USC) and his students utilize P4wC as a model for outreach programs; Dr. Lumberto Mendoza, Dr. Abigail Thea Canuto, Mr. Leander Marquez (UP) and their colleagues organize online P4wC trainings and workshops; Dr. Rodrigo Abenes (PNU) initiates P4wC-related activities and trainings.

[34] Romualdo E. Abulad, "Doing Philosophy in the Philippines: Towards a More Responsive Philosophy for the 21st Century," in *Suri*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2016), 11.

[35] Ibid., 10.

accessible to those who have been considered outsiders to philosophy, and those "who might never have thought that philosophy was for people like them."[36] On the other hand, it cannot be emphasized enough that P4wC does not make philosophy or Filipino philosophy any less rigorous and less scholarly. Just as a philosopher is expected to maintain discipline and hard work in mastering a particular field of specialization, P4wC scholars and practitioners are likewise expected to sustain scholarly commitment in following its theoretical progress and keeping abreast with the new directions for practice and research. Moreover, it requires a delicate balance between academic work on the one hand, and 'public work' on the other, which does not typically involve any financial gain. In this sense, doing philosophical work with children treats philosophy as advocacy. In my opinion, contemporary Filipino philosophers should once in a while leave their proverbial ivory towers and immerse themselves in various environments where philosophy can also flourish. Such places include orphanages, prisons, rehabilitation centers, elderly homes and elementary school classrooms – in person or online.

In the Philippines, we have yet to see the breadth and depth of our children's thinking and its possible contribution to Filipino philosophy. Unless we start opening our doors to them, such potential contributions will remain unexplored.

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[36] Steve Bramall, "Understanding Philosophy in Communities: The Spaces, People, Politics and Philosophy of Community Philosophy," in *Philosophy and Community Theories, Practices and Possibilities,* eds. Amanda Fulford, Grace Lockrobin & Richard Smith (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 11.

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