

## Introduction to the *Kritike* Special Issue on German Philosophy

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***Anton Heinrich L. Rennesland and Paolo A. Bolaños***

### German Philosophy in the University of Santo Tomas

It is ironic that the Department of Philosophy of the University of Santo Tomas, which was only formally established in May 2010 as an offshoot of the defunct Department of Humanities of the Faculty of Arts and Letters, runs the oldest philosophy program in the Philippines. The *Facultad de Filosofia y Letras*, founded in 1896 and was renamed Faculty of Arts and Letters in 1964, is the first liberal arts college in the country and offered the first civil degree in philosophy. The UST Department of Philosophy to date remains the flagship academic department of the Faculty of Arts and Letters. Now on its sixteenth year, as it continues the tradition of teaching “philosophy and letters” to its students, the UST Department of Philosophy prides itself on teaching and research strengths in Thomism, Filipino philosophy, Oriental philosophy, East-West comparative philosophy, French philosophy, German philosophy, social and political philosophy, critical theory, critical pedagogy, philosophy for children, as well as budding interest in areas, such as, feminism and gender studies, philosophy and psychology, philosophy of ageing, philosophy of the city, and bioethics. Without question, despite the evolution of teaching and research interests among the faculty members,<sup>1</sup> the study of the writings of Thomas Aquinas—the eponym of the university—is a longstanding strength, not only in the Department of Philosophy, but also in the Ecclesiastical Faculty of Philosophy.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The development of these teaching and research interests organically occurred thanks to the influx of Filipino scholars who studied overseas in the 1960s. Cf. Marella Ada Mancenido-Bolaños, Gian Carla D. Agbisit, and Jessie Joshua Z. Lino, “Introduction to the *Kritike* Special Issue on French Philosophy,” in *Kritike*, 18:4 (February 2025), 1–9, <<https://doi.org/10.25138/18.4.ed>>.

<sup>2</sup> A detailed discussion of Thomism in the country and its academic study in the university is found in Felix F. delos Reyes, Jr., O.P., “The University of Santo Tomas and the Emergence of Thomism in the Far East,” in *Philippiniana Sacra*, LX:181 (January–April 2025), 11–

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The professionalization of academic units was made possible through the efforts of the Office of the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs during the time of its former head, Clarita D. Carillo. This meant the establishment of university-wide academic departments that will manage both general education and professional courses. When the Department of Philosophy was established in May 2010, with Alfredo P. Co as its first chair, the various philosophy teachers erstwhile hired by college deans were brought together under one professional academic unit. Co was succeeded by Paolo A. Bolaños as chair in June 2011 the following year.<sup>3</sup> It was during the watch of Bolaños when the department finally revised its Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy curriculum, offered at the Faculty of Arts and Letters, and the philosophy Master's and Doctorate programs, offered at the Graduate School. It is important to note, moreover, that during this period, the department also consciously fortified its efforts in research and publication. The research culture cultivated over the course of a decade and a half has made the UST Department of Philosophy one of the most prolific academic units in the university in terms of research outputs. Perhaps, it is important to mention here that enhancements in the undergraduate and graduate curricula include emphasis on philosophical trends, such as German and French critical theory, feminism, Filipino philosophy, and philosophy of education (especially, critical pedagogy and philosophy for children). It is not accidental that because of Bolaños' background in Friedrich Nietzsche and Frankfurt School critical theory the study of German philosophy was given more attention. This is evidenced by the fact that more students have chosen to write their theses on German philosophers. This strength in German philosophy remains up to the present. But while this is the case, it is, nevertheless, interesting to inquire whether the study of German philosophy could, indeed, be considered a legacy (or one of the legacies) in the University of Santo Tomas.

Perhaps, a good starting point for recounting legacy is to revisit the initial attempts of Thomasian academics in exploring the works of philosophical traditions beyond Scholasticism and Thomism. One of the early engagements with German philosophy by a Thomasian is Salvador Roxas Gonzales' "What is Communism?" (1956), where Gonzales provides a textbook account and critique of Karl Marx's communistic ideas.<sup>4</sup> It was, however, Emerita S. Quito who caused a shock wave within the silo of

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33, <<https://doi.org/10.55997/1001pslx181a1>>. Conversely, insights on the link between Thomism in the university and its impact on Philippine society are articulated in Jovito V. Cariño, "For the Love of (Local) Wisdom: University, Thomism, and Filipino Thought," in *Kritike*, 18:1 (March 2024), 88–114, <<https://doi.org/10.25138/18.1.a4>>.

<sup>3</sup> The Department of Philosophy has had four different chairs since its establishment: Prof. Em. Dr. Alfredo P. Co (2010-2011), Prof. Dr. Paolo A. Bolaños (2011-2019), Prof. Dr. Jovito V. Cariño (2019-2022), and Prof. Dr. Marella Ada M. Bolaños (2022-present)

<sup>4</sup> Salvador Roxas Gonzales, "What is Communism?," in *Unitas*, 29:2 (1956), 360-365.

Scholasticism and Thomism in UST when she returned from the *Univerité de Fribourg* in 1965. Armed with newly acquired knowledge in existentialism and phenomenology, Quito was the lone intrepid soul discussing in her classes and in public forums the ideas of German thinkers, like GWF Hegel, Karl Marx, Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, and even Herbert Marcuse. In 1967, she delivered an inaugural address which was later published as a monograph, titled *A New Concept of Philosophy*, where she proposes an alternative philosophical praxis inspired by Husserl, Heidegger, and Jaspers.<sup>5</sup> In 1970, Quito's *Herbert Marcuse and Contemporary Society* was published by the UST Press.<sup>6</sup> Quito was also responsible for mentoring talented students in UST during the 60s to early 70s—students who became renowned Filipino philosophers in their own right, namely, Magdalena Villaba, Alfredo P. Co, Josephine Pasricha, and Romualdo E. Abulad. Among these, Pasricha and Abulad could be considered to have continued the legacy of German philosophy in UST. Pasricha taught aesthetics and hermeneutics in the Faculty of Arts and Letters, where the ideas of Friedrich Schleiermacher, Wilhelm Dilthey, and Hans-Georg Gadamer were extensively discussed. Meanwhile, Abulad, after returning from his postdoctoral studies in *Universität Hamburg* in 1981, became the most prolific Filipino Kantian scholar. To date, the number of essays he wrote on Immanuel Kant is still unparalleled. Abulad also published on Friedrich Nietzsche, Heidegger, and George Simmel.<sup>7</sup> His graduate courses on Kant, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, and Gadamer were sought after by graduate students. There is no doubt that in UST, the foremost Kantian scholar was Abulad, who did not only introduced Kant but also had a peculiar way of reading Kant. Abulad presented Kant as a critical philosopher whose wealth of conceptual tools could be used to critique Philippine society.<sup>8</sup> This served as an inspiration for gathering the articles included in this special issue of *Kritike*—German philosophy against the backdrop of social issues.

Going back to the question regarding the place of German philosophy in UST, it is one thing to study and write on thinkers that belong

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<sup>5</sup> Emerita S Quito, *A New Concept of Philosophy*, in *A Life of Philosophy: Festschrift in Honor of Emerita S. Quito* (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1990), 5-39.

<sup>6</sup> Emerita S. Quito, *Marcuse and Contemporary Society* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Press, 1970).

<sup>7</sup> See Paolo A. Bolaños, "Introduction to the Special Tribute Section: Abulad, Philosophy, and Intellectual Generosity," in *Kritike*, 13:2 (December 2019), 1–15, <<https://doi.org/10.25138/13.2.e.1>>

<sup>8</sup> This is identified throughout the writings of Abulad, especially in his discussions on Philippine society. A good example is Romualdo E. Abulad, "Filipino Postmodernity: *Quo Vadis?*," in *Kritike*, 13:2 (December 2019), 37–59, <<https://doi.org/10.25138/13.2.a.2>>. A discussion of this view of Abulad is better illustrated in Fleurdeliz R. Altez-Albela, "Abulad's Postmodern Eyes," in *Kritike*, 13:2 (December 2019), 60–64, <<https://doi.org/10.25138/13.2.a.3>>.

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to the tradition, yet another to keep this very tradition alive. This becomes a pernicious question when the identity of this type of philosophizing is tied simply to the question of nationality—since Nietzsche despised being German, Kant was East Prussian (not specifically German), Arendt was stripped off her German citizenship (because of her Jewish ancestry leading toward the Second World War), and Marx died stateless. Alongside this, just reading the very appellation of a “German” way of philosophizing is enough to send shivers down a person’s (particularly a German) spine, especially in light of the “German guilt.”<sup>9</sup> Moreover, it might be awkwardly presumptuous to claim that a philosophical tradition honed by the complexity and depth of the German language itself is being declared a strength, let alone a legacy, of a philosophy department in the Philippines, where only very few read, speak, or understand the German language. Nevertheless, notwithstanding these limitations, the viability of a tradition that is alive may perhaps be articulated by an active discourse of critical philosophizing—a discourse that utilizes the conceptual tools from German philosophy as a viable critique of contemporary society. Perhaps, we could learn from the story of the Frankfurt School tradition, whose relevance persists because of sustained discussions.<sup>10</sup> If German philosophy is, indeed, a strength of the UST Department of Philosophy, then it will manifest precisely as the critique of the affairs of society. Although, quite frankly, this is an endeavor that is yet to be fully realized.<sup>11</sup> Above all, benefitting from the

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<sup>9</sup> See Karl Jaspers, *Die Schuldfrage. Von der politischen Haftung Deutschlands* (München: Pieper, 1987). However, the question of “guilt” was not something only discussed after the Second World War but also was a topic after the previous one. See Max Weber, “Zum Thema der »Kriegsschuld«,” in *Frankfurter Zeitung* (17 January 1919), <<http://www.zeno.org/Soziologie/M/Weber,+Max/Schriften+zur+Politik/Zum+Thema+der+%C2%BBKriegsschuld%C2%AB#N3284>>. On the topic of German guilt, an interesting debate emerged between Peter Sloterdijk and Jürgen Habermas, the former taking a more progressive position of going beyond the topic’s taboo. See Norman Schultz, “The Controversy about Sloterdijk’s “Rules for the Human Zoo”: Between Continental-Analytic Philosophy and Tropological Thinking,” in *Philosophy Today*, 64:1 (Winter 2020), 221–238, <<https://doi.org/10.5840/philtoday2020413329>> and Eric Brown, “The Dilemmas of German Bioethics,” in *The New Atlantis*, 5 (Spring 2004), 37–53, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/43152100>>.

<sup>10</sup> See Mark Peacock, “Philosophical Rumblings in the German Republic: Der Philosophenstreit,” in *Philosophy Now*, 26 (2000), <[https://philosophynow.org/issues/26/Philosophical\\_Rumblings\\_in\\_the\\_German\\_Republic\\_Der\\_Philosophenstreit](https://philosophynow.org/issues/26/Philosophical_Rumblings_in_the_German_Republic_Der_Philosophenstreit)>.

<sup>11</sup> However, one must acknowledge the efforts already undertaken by some of the department’s members: Rene Luis Tadle, “[OPINION] UST and the scourge of clericalism,” in *Rappler* (28 February 2024), <<https://www.rappler.com/voices/imho/opinion-university-santo-tomas-scourge-clericalism/>>; Rene Luis Tadle, “[OPINION] Who is missing from EDCOM 2? The voices of teachers, students, and parents,” in *Rappler* (7 June 2023), <<https://www.rappler.com/voices/thought-leaders/opinion-who-missing-edcom-voices-teachers-students-parents/>>; Jovito V. Cariño, “[OPINION] Kung bakit mas radikal ang magmahal,” in *Rappler* (15 May 2022), <<https://www.rappler.com/voices/thought-leaders/opinion-why-loving-more-radical/>>; Aguas, Jove Jim S. Aguas, Paolo A. Bolaños, and

influence of Abulad, the cry of this specific tradition ought to be the recognition of philosophy as a way of critically theorizing society.<sup>12</sup> And precisely this is what this issue optimistically puts forward. This special issue is an articulation of how the tradition identified as German philosophy finds its place in the University of Santo Tomas, not simply as a stated research thrust but as a lived experience of discourse. Given this, what this special issue is hopeful about is the possibility of further discourses as a testament to this type of philosophizing that is a mainstay in the UST Department of Philosophy.

### Continental Philosophy Symposium II: Deutsche Philosophie

Last 12-13 November 2024, the UST Department of Philosophy organized a two-day symposium on German Philosophy with the theme “Reframing Enlightenment in an Alienated World” as the second of a multi-year symposium on continental philosophy. The 2024 symposium sought to feature members of the department whose research interests are related to German philosophy (following the 2023 symposium on French philosophy), with a particular bent on social critique. The legacy of Abulad, as already intimated above, was the inspiration of the theme. Serendipitously, the year 2024 also marked the 240<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of Kant’s “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?” and the 180<sup>th</sup> year of Marx’s *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. These two important texts might seem unrelated, yet both contribute to the development of what we call German philosophy and social critique. While Kant is commonly

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Jovito V. Cariño, “The Spectre of Terror: Philippine Democracy and the Threat of the New (Ab)normal,” in *Interfere Journal Blog* (28 August 2020), <<https://interferejournal.org/2020/08/28/the-spectre-of-terror/>>; Jovito V. Cariño, “[OPINYON] The politics of dissent,” in *Rappler* (11 June 2020), <<https://www.rappler.com/voices/thought-leaders/263492-opinion-politics-dissent-anti-terror-bill/>>; Jove Jim S. Aguas, “CRITICAL THINKING IN THIS TIME OF GLOBAL PANDEMIC,” in *Philosophia*, 21:2 (June 2020), <<https://doi.org/10.46992/pijp.21.2.c.1>>; Paolo A. Bolaños, “Speed and its impact on education,” in *Inquirer* (30 October 2019), <<https://opinion.inquirer.net/124900/speed-and-its-impact-on-education>>.

<sup>12</sup> This may be articulated as a critical form of theorizing society articulated in Ranilo B. Hermida, “Towards a Critical Theory of Philippine Society,” in *Kritike*, 12:3 (April 2019), 22–42, <<https://doi.org/10.25138/12.3.a2>>. This article is part of special issue published by the journal as a result of the first *Kritike* Conference on 1–2 December 2017 in celebration of the journal’s 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. With the theme “Critical Theory at the Margins,” the conference and the succeeding special issue sought to critically reflect on Philippine society. See Paolo A. Bolaños, “Introduction to the *Kritike* Special Issue: Critical Theory at the Margins,” in *Kritike*, 12:3 (April 2019), 22–42, <<https://doi.org/10.25138/12.3.ed>>. After this, the journal spearheaded the 2<sup>nd</sup> *Kritike* conference on the theme “From Wisdom’s Special Workshop to Factories of Knowledge: The Place of University in Culture and Society” last February 2021. See “Kritike hosts online conference on place of university in culture, society,” in *Academia* (25 March 2021), <<https://www.ust.edu.ph/kritike-hosts-online-conference-on-place-of-university-in-culture-society/>>.

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associated with transcendental philosophy in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, his essay on the Enlightenment profoundly shaped the way the concept of Enlightenment has been construed in Western philosophy—something that Marx, himself, was influenced by and later on criticized. Meanwhile, while Marx is remembered as the author of *Das Kapital*, his critique of alienated labor in the 1844 manuscripts is the basis for his critique of society. Thus, reframing the question of Enlightenment today requires a reassessment of our own respective degrees of alienation or social discontent. The extent to which we find ourselves alienated in today's advanced societies renders us "enlightened false consciousnesses": the greater the degree of self-consciousness, the greater the realization of experiences of alienation. Tying Kant's critical inquiry with Marx's political insight underscores both a theoretical and social approach to what critique is.

In the following, with the exception of one article and two book reviews, selected papers presented in the German philosophy symposium are featured. Noticeable in the featured articles is the diversity of responses to the symposium theme. Nevertheless, the question of Enlightenment—that is to say, of modern life—is tackled by each author, ranging from discussions on the theoretical engagements with philosophical themes to alternative readings of select theorists or themes, to more pronounced political inquiries beyond the confines of Europe.

This special issue begins with Ramon Guillermo's "*Kretinismus: Kaliwanagan at ang Wasak na Utak ng Indio*," the keynote lecture in the symposium. Guillermo gives form to the theme of the symposium by bringing together the Enlightenment and the deplorable state of being a Filipino. He contextualizes the role of the Filipino's consciousness vis-à-vis Kant and Marx. His contextualization brings the Western tradition closer to our locality in the Philippines, providing tensions between a colonial past and a quasi-colonized present. Such a presentation Guillermo does by pointing out our use of language as a representation of thinking—or perhaps our difficulty to bear the Enlightenment task of thinking for ourselves without reference to another (language).

The following three articles demonstrate a more theoretical approach to German philosophy—more specifically, on the themes of normativity, language, and ethics. Roland Theuas D.S. Pada's "Normativity as Autopoiesis" offers a Luhmannian reading of Honneth's recognition theory that sheds light on systems and how systems overlap. Pada argues that normative systems are autopoietic.

Meanwhile, "Language and the Recovery of Experience: The Role of the Body in Nietzsche and Adorno" by Paolo A. Bolaños is an attempt to articulate an ethics of thinking based on the insights of Friedrich Nietzsche and Theodor Adorno regarding the dialectical relation between language and

experience. Bolaños emphasizes the materialist origin of human reason by revisiting the role of the body in the development of human rationality.

For his part, Anton Heinrich L. Rennesland offers, in “Nietzsche’s Ethics of Danger,” an reinterpretation of Nietzsche’s ethics by providing new translations of some keywords in *Gay Science* 341. Rennesland juxtaposes the centrality of danger and even of vulnerability to the importance of affirmation in Gilles Deleuze’s reading of Nietzsche. This entails an alternative reading of the eternal return passage and framing Nietzsche’s ethical challenge in the context of *Redlichkeit*.

The succeeding articles engage with various German thinkers against the backdrop of pressing social and political issues, such as, populism, the culture of positivity, feminism, violence, and life in the post-truth era. Jovito V. Cariño’s “Tungkol sa Intelektwalismo at Demokrasya: Isang Alternatibong Pagbása sa Pilosopiya ni Edith Stein” levels a critique against the tendency of the notion of Enlightenment evinced by Kant to regress to a dangerous kind of liberalist populism. Against this populism, Cariño proposes that Edith Stein’s theory of empathy is a viable alternative to the culture of populism. Cariño claims that Stein’s political stance, while associated with the Catholic Church’s mystical tradition, offers a return to one’s community against the problem of anti-intellectualism in contemporary democracy.

In “Byung-Chul Han’s Theory of Negative Politics,” Raniel S.M. Reyes brings to light the pathological condition of contemporary society via Byung-Chul Han’s critical assessment of the “culture of positivity” and the violence within the continental philosophical tradition, symptomatic of neoliberalism’s total violent structure in the guise of positivity and affirmation. Reyes highlights Han’s “negative politics” in opposition to society’s cult of positivity.

The article “A Feminist Re-reading of Hannah Arendt’s notion of Space of Appearances” by Kriedge Chlaire C. Alba provides a feminist re-reading of Arendt’s space of appearances as that which makes the public realm authentic in relation to feminist discourse. Despite views of Arendt’s philosophy in relation to the contrary, Alba situates in this essay how the insights of Arendt are indeed viable for feminism.

Allison Cruyff V F. Ladero’s “Herbert Marcuse’s Visit to Israel: Rethinking Israel’s Military Aggression in Palestine” posits Marcuse’s view of Israel and how it may make sense of the longstanding Israeli occupation in Palestine. Ladero explains the geopolitical situation of the area and Marcuse’s critical insights of Israeli occupation. This allows him to analyze the plight of the Palestinians tied to the possibilities for radical resistance in the face of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Ladero emphasizes that Marcuse’s notion of radical imagination invokes not a praise of Israel’s activities but a sensibility of Palestinian suffering.

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In Ian Pacquing's "Emotions as Freedom: Automodern Life in the Post-Truth Era," although not directly dealing with a German philosopher, the legacy of the Frankfurt School is carried on, particularly in problematizing the relationship between the contemporary (postmodern) society and subjectivity. Pacquing draws on Robert Samuels theory of automodernity, enacting a critical theory inspired by but goes beyond the usual concerns of the Frankfurt School. Pacquing ventures in providing an alternative framework to understand subjectivity vis-à-vis the digital sphere.

The German philosophy symposium was also an occasion to celebrate the life and legacy of Romualdo E. Abulad whose work on Kant, as pointed out above, was the inspiration for the theme of the symposium. Tribute essays were presented in the symposium and a couple of them are now included in this special issue. Maria Majorie R. Purino provides a reflection on the life and legacy of Abulad with insights from Kant, while Mariefe B. Cruz presents a reconstruction of Abulad's philosophy, particularly his contribution to the development of critical Filipino philosophy.

Finally, this edition culminates in two book reviews. Jeffry Oca's *Critical Theory at the Margins: Applying Herbert Marcuse's Model of Critical Social Theory to the Philippines* is reviewed by Allison Cruyff V F. Ladero. Based on Marcuse's critical theory, Oca's book, the winner of the best philosophy book in the 42<sup>nd</sup> National Book Awards sponsored by the National Book Development Board, is not simply a theorization, but, rather, is a tangible example of demonstrating the practical dimension of philosophy. Meanwhile, Jovito V. Cariño shares his reading of *Albert the Great and his Arabic Sources: Medieval Science between Inheritance and Emergence*, edited by Katja Krause and Richard C. Taylor. Albertus Magnus was a German Dominican friar, philosopher, and scientist. Cariño presents Albertus Magnus as part of the development of German philosophy and demonstrates how Medieval thinkers could be fecund sources of insights that could help us respond to our contemporary tribulations.

Despite the hurdles in organizing the symposium and editing this edition, we now offer to the public the *Kritike* special issue on German philosophy. We acknowledge the support of the people who helped in the success of the symposium, especially colleagues from the UST Department of Philosophy. We are also grateful to the institutional support of the UST Department of Philosophy, the Faculty of Arts and Letters, and the Research Center for Culture, Arts, and Humanities.

*Department of Philosophy  
Research Center for Culture, Arts, and Humanities  
University of Santo Tomas, The Philippines*

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