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Jumpstarting Ethno-Philosophy in Context: Ethics Discourse on *Gawis ya Ngawi*

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ABSTRACT

*Ethnicity relates to the descriptive evaluation of culture, and when examined through a philosophical lens, it becomes ethno-philosophy. Any attempt to understand the complexities of human existence is an ongoing endeavor. Any notion of goodness and badness must emanate from a cultural milieu. Scrutinizing these concepts must be rooted in existentialism, as all experiences are continually interpreted lived experiences.. The phenomena of *Gawis ya Ngawi* from linguistic Kankanaey terms refer to mean good and bad. In context, the Kankanaey term “*Gawis*” literally expresses good things in life or well-being of the person and “*Ngawi*” illustrates the opposite dimensions of life; however, such distinctions evoke query regarding ethical discourse. This paper analyzes the nuances of the interpreted experiences of *Gawis ya Ngawi* and presents its possible ethical discourses within hermeneutics of appreciation and few implications in linguistic interpretations. Jumpstarting to interpret culture via ethical discourse opens up the need of*

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contextualization. In the realm of human existence is human culture, a topic where philosophy continues to respect especially speaking about indigeneity. In philosophy, indigeneity promotes cultural reverence. This respect for cultural uniqueness necessitates a balance between philosophy and culture, continually redefining the relationship. Philosophy's primary goal is to manifest the rich traditions of cultures within the context of lived experiences. Ethno-philosophy, as an understanding of culture, centers on clarifying meanings, exploring ethical dimensions, and interpreting language etymologies.

Keywords: *Ipugaw, seg-ang (care), hermeneutics of appreciation*

1. Introduction

Postmodern culture has grown increasingly intricate. In today's world, individuals seek popularity through social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, empowered by the internet. Almost every move by an individual is captured by CCTV or any electrically innovative images. They are regularly used to promote oneself – all for the sake of human adventures; nonetheless, “we still can create ourselves as something unified and only to realize that we have a messy, fragmented sequence of experiences” (Baggini 2013, 32). Despite technological advancements, the essence remains: the individual holds greater significance than using social platforms. Such neutral versions of self-image and self-engaged promotions are a glimpse of a greater reality, i.e., reflexivity of culture brought about by secularization (McLuhan 2013, 196).

In fact, the “conception of the good has been secularized that conduct of one's life is seeking to defend an individual's freedom of conscience” (Maclaure and Taylor 2011, 21). In other words, self-promotion and self-image, especially in terms of knowledge, has become the gauge of humanity and legitimation. In our postmodern condition, “knowledge has become computerized such that the

acquisition of knowledge is no longer the training of the mind (*bildung*), even of the individuals, becoming obsolete and will become even more so. Knowledge has become a commodity to be produced and consumed. Knowledge is to be produced in order to be sold. Knowledge ceases as an end in itself, it loses its own value” (Lyotard 1997, 4-5) and such loss of value still affirms a relativistic culture (Stenmark et al. 2018, 23).

To engage in self-promotion or self-image-building has become superfluous since human identities and cultural values are being challenged with trending fads on social media resulting in possible loss of self-identity. It assumes that the more pictures of oneself are engraved in media culture, the greater the possibility of human identity. But a created identity based on media culture is not enough due to passing of time. In other words, the memory of past events are forgotten and can only be recalled due to their importance in the simultaneity of significance. The art of questioning is then important for persons to take into consideration. And, when people forget their culture, there is a greater tendency to lose sight of its significance. With the influences of mass media, it is difficult to recapture the sense of our culture in shaping our identity. The fact is that “we are indeed less unified, coherent, consistent and enduring than we usually suppose, but we are still real and individual” (Baggini 2013, 36). It is then in adaptation and flexibility of human experiences that makes society changes (Joas 2008, 33) yet maintaining our cultural identity.

If culture is secondary to human nature, then it requires continuous academic discussions or meaningful conversations. While people are controlled by time, where time goes hand in hand with distance, the distance of memory for people is proportionally detrimental to its loss of identity. The truth is that “there is an interplay of articulation of experiences with meaning attached to it. It is impossible to impart cultural values if one fails to articulate them in keeping with time” (Joas 2008, 33). It further shows that the more the person studies his/her culture, the better his/her human identity is being enhanced. When we speak about the existence of our culture, our nature and morality continue to be preserved. Therefore, the less

discourse on culture occurs, the lower the possibility of promoting and preserving identity.

Culture-talk is an anthropocentric-talk. An Igorot, anthropologist, and a bishop said that “to do field work and getting a PhD degree helped me to better understand my culture. It made me feel the pulse and heartbeat of our people, our peasant farmers especially in a way, theorizing in the academy that had not been done” (Claver 2011, 7). Prescriptively, the more we talk about our cultural praxis, lifestyles, frameworks, ideals, and concepts, the more our culture becomes universally accepted and idealized. Even in a personal testimony of life, it is important to empathize and generalize our (cultural) values (Joas 2008, 34). It is then essential to speak of culture as the basis of doing philosophy. Philosophy becomes alive not only as a text to be read and interpreted; instead, it is already an object-subject of interpretation. Let us now elaborate on the fundamental function of ethno-philosophy.

1.1. Fundamental Function of Ethno-philosophy

Why talk about ethno-philosophy? The term *ethno* speaks of the core of life, natural, cultural, and the moral aspects of the community and *philosophy* is the seeking of wisdom; thus, ethno-philosophy is the seeking of wisdom in the core of life of a community. The discourse of ethno-philosophy then starts and ends in the natural, cultural, and moral aspect of a communal life. *Natural* because it is a glimpse of what is given either as a heritage, traditional, or already normal. An example is the practice of socialization and social contract – conversational or business transaction. *Cultural* because as a way of life, it had been tested by (contemporaneous) time and change. An example is the worldview on land, air, and living together, and so on. *Moral* because the discourse is about patterns of human behavior as acceptable to that community without prejudice to the moral perspectives of other cultures. An example is the view of goodness and badness, truth, beauty, and wise inclusiveness of human virtues.

Why philosophize on lived-experiences? Ethno-philosophizing is an endless endeavor of checking and balancing the nature and realms of philosophy from cultural perspectives. Our “lived (religious)

experience is mediated by culture whether communal or individual” (Joas 2008, 99). It is not only about historical investigation of facts about cultures, but also paving how such cultures can be idealized, revitalized, or even scrutinized. In the process of scrutiny of cultures, lived-experiences are intertwined reality of the process of scrutinizing. A lived-experience is one of the basis of the reality of nature, culture, and morality. In other words, one cannot interpret nature without morality, and one cannot understand morality without nature. The symbiosis of the three aspects of ethno-philosophy brought by nature, culture, and morality gives birth to idealization of society.

Why the need to interpret lived-experiences in a context of linguistic terms of *gawis ya ngawi*? Language is part of nature, culture, and morality. As nature is immersed in language so is culture, for it is one way to understand it. Morality is illuminated in language as language also invokes its real value and meaning. Any lived-experience must be linguistic so that it optimizes the possibility of acceptance. An acceptance of linguistic terms can be the beginning of idealizing nature, culture, and morality. Any linguistic terms must be contextual and thus such context must elaborate the meaning of the text in that terms.

As emerging philosophies in the context of culture, studying the Igorot worldview requires commitment in refocusing on cultural studies. The dream is “to unite Igorots worldwide” (Botengan 2011, xvii). Here, Igorot is a Kankanaey term to refer to the western part of Northern Luzon called the “*Applais*” that *literally* means ‘People in the Mountains.’ It was then said that an Igorot is a Kankanaey and a Kankanaey is an Igorot (Botengan 2011). Cultural studies do not only belong to the realms of sociological, ethnographical nor anthropological mindset and interpretations but also belong to philosophical investigations. Studying people is studying their culture as well. As culture is a way of life, so is philosophy, and both are never in a vacuum but rather intertwined with language, arts, mindset, or world-views. In other words, they are but always fused within a particular milieu. And, as culture possesses philosophical underpin-nings, ethno-philosophical research is enriched to make culture continue to develop using rational discourses.

The context of ‘*gawis ya ngawi*’ translated literally as ‘good and bad’ in English somehow does not capture the exact meaning of the terms. This is the reason why ethno-philosophy suggests a non-discriminatory and a non-defeating context of the terms. Clearly, an interpreter may say, “Why should I be concerned about something I don’t understand?” True enough, such a claim is acceptable, but the claim also opens up another claim of saying, “If I am concerned about those things I already understand, what is the point of learning?” The second claim is a better proof of advancing knowledge, and advancing knowledge requires understanding which starts from simple terms. This goes to show that education truly starts from alphabetization to terminologies, from terminologies to sentences then paragraphs to complex essays and literary writings.

Gawis ya ngawi are powerful Kankanaey (De los Reyes and De los Reyes 2003) terms for authenticity and inauthenticity of human existence. Human existence for a Kankanaey is natural, cultural, and moral. The term ‘*gawis*’ evokes social relationships, which normally start with authenticity in the ‘self’. The sociality issue of the Kankanaey people is the idea of ‘*makilampok*’ (to socially engage), which is normally an evidence of sharing and solidarity. For most Kankanaey people, ‘to be with’ is the essential nature of humanity. This means, attending a social gathering in festivities like marriage celebrations like ‘*kanyaw*’ or the community affairs of thanksgiving for a fruitful harvest, profit, or success, is a natural, cultural, and moral obligation for support and show of solidarity.

1.2. Expository Analyses on “*Gawis*”

‘*Gawis*’ represents an authentic human existence. It portrays not only good intent but more so of commitment. Such commitment involves ability to work. Commitment infuses responsibility, which calls for the coinage of two terms “response” and “ability” (Bradley and Stocker 2005). Thus, it calls for the ability to respond; and is about “doing and allowing” to which involves having reason to do something and not merely allowing it. ‘*Gawis*’ can then entail the ability to respond particularly in an environment of *obla* (work). The old adage of Kankanaey elders states, “*men-obla ka tapno gumawis nan biag mo*” (work in order to have a better life). A *kadangyan* (De los Reyes

and De los Reyes 2003, 212) (old meaning: rich person) embodies a committed worker. Similar to most of the Cordillera tribes, the Kankanaey person gives *obla* a priority over intellectual undertaking. The use of hands is the key to a successful life. A dirty hand is the most normal thing to happen to a person. In *obla*, quality of life is assured. In *obla*, commitment to human development is encouraged and can inspire the community to help one another, especially in times of need, such as *nateyan* (during wake of a dead person) and *boda, kasar* (wedding ceremonies).

‘*Gawis*’ is experienced in ‘*kapaayan-di-ipugaw*’ metaphorically embodying the worthiness of life. A worthy person is someone who uses his/her energy to help people in need. Within the ambit of natural, cultural, and moral, “*mapa-ay san ipugaw no gagawisen na nan ikkakan na ay men biag*” (a worthy person is someone who does good to live well). The person who is worthy is a natural worker, a culturally matured individual, or someone who knows where s/he came from. The facticity of ‘coming from’ involves knowledge of the people in the community and values to be achieved daily such as respect to the elderly and respect to inherited ‘*bagbaga*’ or wise saying of the old folks. Someone then is called ‘*gawis ay ipugaw*’ (De los Reyes and De los Reyes 2003) when s/he listens to the lessons of life and apply it in real life. The ‘*gawis ay ipugaw*’ (good person) is someone who is not necessarily well-known in the neighborhood but someone who is described as, ‘*adinan bubukodan nan gawis*’ (somebody cannot or should not keep the good things for himself/herself alone).

In the level of sociality, invitation is verbalized and then acted by one’s show of support to community affairs. Unwritten laws are prevalent, especially in communal celebrations. It is called ‘*gawis*’ when everyone participates in a communal affair. Someone who does not respond to community concern is ‘*tekteken*’ (so indifferent). In short, it is unwritten law that you have to get involved with communal affairs because not getting involved is not the natural tendency of a person. It is not the moral of the human person to isolate himself. An invitation is not necessarily formal as in a message through a letter or a card. In *ogogbo* (sharing of burden to finish a communal task), the individual has to come out from his/her comfort zone to help in such

community concern, problem, or issue. Invitation then is implicitly embedded in the psyche of the Kankanaey person.

Observable facts of the Kankanaey Igorot are the following: wise and intelligent, honest and industrious, noble and dignified. An Igorot person is well-proportioned, big-bodied, and strong; a craft-man who knows hunting, mining, and living with the test of the environment. A woman possesses dignity of work as a weaver, rice planter, pottery maker, and a creative cook. As a social being, the Kankanaey Igorot is neighbor-oriented, believing that the world is sacred, and that everything in it is to be respected.

1.3. The Nature of “*Ngawi*” Corollary to “*Gawis*”

Speaking of ‘*gawis*’ is speaking of its counterpart ‘*ngawi*’ which is not necessarily oppositional all the time. Imbedded in the doing the good involves converse relation where one who practice *ngawngawi* (indifferent practice) has already an idea of what is the supposed ‘*gawis*.’ Deterrent of doing the ‘*ngawi*’ is still the ‘*gawis*’ in the *semek* (consciousness) of the human person. Option to do the bad is always cultural so that natural of that which is already given becomes moral. In other words, the cultural perspective is the bias of the human person to be doing good or opting to be doing the opposite.

Ngawi is a mood of inauthentic existence. The *ngawi* attitude is observed in a person’s lack of sense of community. “*Nan adina gekken nan makilampok et ngawi nan nemnem na*” (someone who does not share his time with others/sensitive to community life is someone who has bad intent). The ‘*ngawi ay ipugaw*’ is someone who does not work. “*Nan adi bumikas*” (someone who does not use his ability to work) is in the mood of inauthenticity. To be lazy at work is bad for a Kankanaey. “*Nan adi bumadang*” (someone who never learns to help) is also an indicator of an inauthentic Kankanaey. If someone is ‘*kaleleget da*’ (rejected or hated), the Kankanaey becomes ‘*ngawi*.’ “*Nan adi makwani*” (someone who is unable to learn lessons in life) is someone who epitomizes ‘*ngawi ay nemnem*’ (bad intent/consciousness). The bad consciousness is the inability to comprehend life lessons, despite receiving continuous guidance and wise advice from various sources such as community elders, respected individuals,

and formal authorities like teachers, politicians, parents, or religious leaders in the community.

If *gawis* is to be worthy, then *ngawi* is to be unworthy despite being espoused by the *gawis ay nemnem*. '*Nan adi mapa-ay ay ipugaw et san adi bumikas, adi men obla, adi makilampok, ya egay nanemneman*' (the unworthy person is the person who does not work hard enough, who does not mingle communally, and who has never learned lessons in life). The mood of *ngawi* is transitory and temporal in nature. *Ngawi* is a moral-director, an already glimpsed of *gawis*. Since no one continues to be in the mood of *ngawi* all the time, it entails a framework of mind, i.e., to be aware of moral responsibility of check and balance. Not all that which can be considered *ngawi* in real life continuously be considered really bad. The morality of responsibility takes over the mistakes of the person in his/her past. The irresponsibility is the real issue in the mood of the *ngawi*. Clearly enough, reparation and appropriate justice of *gawis* overcome the temporality of the *ngawi*.

To sum, the *gawis* is *Makilampok* (sociality), *Men obla* (committed to work), *Maki badang* (supportive), *Maki ogogbo* (solidarity), *Anapen na mengawisan di biag*, (seeking for a quality of life), *Mapaay* (worthy of goal), and *Nanemneman* (Response-ability). The *ngawi* on the other hand is characterized by *Adi makilampok* (no sense of community), *Adi men obla* (does not work), *Adi bumadang* (does not help), *Adi bumikas* (lazy), *Kaleleget da* (hated/rejected), *Adi makwani* (unable to learn), *Adi mapaay* (is not beneficial), and *Egay nanemneman* (unable to learn life-lessons).

2. Ethical Implications of *Gawis ya Ngawi*

2.1. The Necessity of Ethical Discourse in Ethno-philosophy

Why is ethical discourse essential in ethno-philosophy? Ethical discourse happens for a particular reason, that is, to elucidate on the value of nature, culture, and morality. In the elucidation process, it is not merely to expose the already natural practice in a culture, say the distinction between *gawis ya ngawi*, but more so of alleviating a sense

of ignorance. Ignorance is treatable by virtue of openness to other views which happen in a cultural milieu. Nothing exists in a vacuum. As ethics grapple with the issue of human act as if seemingly universalized ideals to impose what is necessary for people to a uniformed act or *telos*, it forgets of what *ethos* really is. The *telos* of *ethos* is culturally bound; and, not until such time that we espouse such *telos* of culture, it would never progress.

In other words, “What I am as a self, my identity, is essentially defined by the way things have significance for me, and the issue of my identity is worked out, only through a language of interpretation which I have come to accept as a valid articulation of these issues” (Centeno 2007, 123). In other words, the ethics of culture and nature must be revealed so as to progress doing philosophy. As philosophy progresses, it is bounded by nature, culture, and morality.

The naturalness of *gawis ya ngawi* resides in the conjunctive nature “*ya*” (and). If *gawis* as an attitude develops in the person as the deterrent of *ngawi*, then they supplement each other. The cultural dimension of *gawis* proposes an illumination of what ethics is all about. Here, the *ethos* of *gawis* is fully understood not only in the context of the Kankanaey people, but of its idealization in a broader sense. The impact of *gawis* to another cultural view is a coordinate of reason in context. Thus, an Ilocano can be challenged to be adaptive to the way of a Kankanaey Igorot, without sacrificing his/her cultural norms. This would explain “why the dominant cultural attitude towards nature has two defining traits; first, it values nature primarily as a nourishing, livable, enjoyable environment for human beings, and devalues human nature when it proves to be a hostile, disobedient, malnourishing environment for human beings” (Heiseg 2003, 34).

The morality of *gawis ya ngawi* is not a delineated view as if an ethical program is already designed; instead, it is a perspective of ‘understand-*ing* the wider sense’ of what really good and bad is conjunctively. The *gawis* must be seen in its broadest context as the *ngawi* collapsed by the overthrow of *gawis*. The *cultus* of *gawis* is in its applications and how it is used often by those who knew the concept. It is neither the immorality of the *ngawi* that determines the possibility of knowledge about what is bad but instead its clarity of

repulsion and rejection by those who know the meaning of the term and its impact personally and communally. Sociologically, the mitigation of “moral duty of the human persons are assured over and above merely economic-profit oriented attitude within the community” (Heiseg 2003).

Every culture possesses a metaphysical and epistemological dimension, making it impossible to discuss metaphysics in isolation from cultural context.. The decline of metaphysics marks the emergence of ethics, always situated within specific cultural contexts. Ethics, in its continuous relevance, is inherently rooted in a specific cultural milieu. In essence, to understand ethics, one must traverse the terrain of culture, particularly within the framework of *gawis ya ngawi*. The epistemology of *gawis ya ngawi* is simple: the consciousness of goodness is inversely proportional to the knowledge of badness. Thus, learning to be *gawis* flows from its corollary counterpart in a bigger elongated picture of *ngawi*. This means that the more the person thinks in a bad manner, the greater the possibility of espousing the potency of goodness.

Why the need to interpret *gawis ya ngawi* as a possible ethical discourse? What is natural, cultural, and moral is ethical. Since *gawis* speaks of a consciousness of sociality, commitment to work and worthiness, responsibility of self and community, love and care for self and community, then it is an ethical discourse. On the other hand, if *ngawi* espoused by practices of laziness and unable to mingle with community members, and consciousness of inability to learn life-lessons, unresponsive and questionable commitment to worthiness of life, irresponsibility in caring and loving the self and community, then *ngawi* necessitates dealing with such practices and consciousness with utmost care. Since *ngawi* is the transitory and temporal mood of human existence then it must be viewed to be leveraging into recapturing one’s goodness once again.

An ethical discourse is a discussion of possible ideals and reality of life. If so, then *gawis ya ngawi* as a discourse of reality in a cultural milieu is already an ethical discourse. The ideal of *gawis* and reality of *ngawi* elicit continuous scrutiny in an academic discussion. However, no amount of academic discourses will hamper how the

terms are used to mold the character of a *Kankanaey ipugaw* or individual human person. Possible nuances in how the terms *gawis ya ngawi* can be used by other cultures but the meaning can have nuances too, but the reality of ideality of the terms continue to be studied. Indeed, the tribal people or so called Igorots of the Cordillera known as Indigenous Peoples or IPs is the emphasis on the awareness or the Self referred - “people in the mountain,” as traders, miners, hunters, woodworkers (De los Reyes and De los Reyes 2003, 209).

There is a need to fulfill an inadequacy of ethics (Enoch 2005, 766), which necessitates a discourse that requires the ability to understand the nature of any practice. Idealization of any usual cultural practice that promotes human identity is still needed in a multicultural setting. This is not to say that ethnocentrism is espoused where the only basis of one’s appraisal or evaluation of another culture, is based on one’s own culture, that is, the Kankanaey culture. Thus, any idealization of one’s culture is of necessity for human survival. In other words, the use of gongs in the Cordillera region espouses preservation of cultural heritage, which can truly affect the present generation to the next. This is not only true in cultural rituals but also in trying to continue redefining the meaning of becoming human in the process of idealization.

One particular example where *gawis* as idealization is expressed by an Igorot migrant who attested, the “Igorot bridge to success to North America is the fact that they are bound together by the bond of kinship and oneness, forged by their historical experience underlying cultural similarities and the spell of their shared beautiful homeland” (Bacdayan 2011, 25).

As an ethical person, it is important to choose the *gawis*, not to be persuaded by the *ngawi*. A choice of *gawis* is a better option to desire to live a happy life. To thwart the *ngawi* is to choose the influence of the *gawis* attitude. In fact, “the nuances of experiences tell us to transcend mere sociological facts and give way to a theological or yet natural dimension of life, which in most cases, could not be totally being determined” (Berger 1997, 70). Let us now understand the necessity of the hermeneutic of appreciation on *Gawis ys Ngawi* as an ethical discourse.

2.2. Hermeneutic of Appreciation on *Gawis ya Ngawi* as Ethical Discourse

Ethno-philosophy indicates a value of hermeneutic of appreciation. By hermeneutic we mean the science of interpretation which if applied to the virtue of *appreciation*, extracted insights or pure thoughts could be generated from such a particular bias of experience; thus, the use of hermeneutic of appreciation (Centeno 2007, 123). Here, the *ipugaw* espouses *sega-ang* or care. *Seg-ang* is the character of the *ipugaw*. Care is built within the grace of the human person which is always temporal and resolute (Haar 1993, 27). The true nature of a human person is care and not even love. Love emanates from care for care is the original goodness of the person. In such a way, we can only manifest our real love when we recognize our ability to care. The nature of the *ipugaw* is *seg-ang* as original goodness. The authentic *ipugaw* is someone who has '*gawis nan semek na*' or true to himself, *ma-id kaistoryaan na* or someone whom no one can say anything negative about him/her. The true *ipugaw* is '*wada anawen na*' of someone who cares for life. The authentic *ipugaw* also espouse the '*wedweda nan kina ipugaw*' or someone who gives priority to his identity. Someone who is '*men-obla si sumyaan di biag*' or who works for a quality of life, is a priority of an authentic *ipugaw*. The true and real *ipugaw* must be '*makilampok*' or sociable or with a sense of neighborliness, and someone who looks into the need of the community '*og-ogbo*' symbolizing one's solidarity and commitment to community life.

No specific laws govern the practice of *gawis* or penalize *ngawi*. These concepts have evolved as social constructs over time, subject to ongoing evaluation and assessment by those who understand their proper application. Individuals from various walks of life, including politicians, students, farmers, and even street sweepers in Baguio City, who grasp the meanings of these terms, can expect scrutiny within the framework of Kankanaey ethics. Therefore, the human persona, or *ipugaw*, is believed to be nurtured by a sense of care known as *seg-ang*, which forms the core of human ethos.

Let us also realize that in as much as there is no direct parallelism of any cultural pragmatics, the unique cultural bearings to

human experience may be universalized in terms of reasonable social exchanges. In other words, we live and move and have our beings, not in vacuum, but always within the ‘cultural context’ which involves ethical discourses contrary to any other cultural pragmatics which explains why it is always exciting to learn the cultures of others, especially among us in Asia full of unpopular adventurous traits, belief systems, and ways of life.

3. Relevance of *Gawis ya Ngawi* on Linguistic Interpretations

Interpretation on the value of any cultural worldview and practice and in this case, *gawis ya ngawi*, is challenging. As an exploration using ethno-philosophy, hermeneutics of relevance is necessary to provide clarity in portraying a way of life. It can be a breakthrough on relevance to understand that reflection of life is a reflection of faith. And the reflection is done according to how people think and express themselves, that is, according to cultural mental categories and ways of thinking on their own. Shouldn’t indigenized philosophies then be the usual mode of reflection everywhere (Claver 2009, 25)? As such, language becomes the house of our being (Polt 1995, 145).

Let us now illustrate the possibility of interpreting the meaning of *gawis* as relevant to the meaning of “salvation.” The message of “salvation” has been interpreted across various cultural contexts throughout history, spanning different languages such as Greek, Latin, German, French, and Spanish, and even reaching the Filipino culture. In this context, it can be meaningfully interpreted through the Kankanaey practice of *gawis*. Salvation is dynamically equivalent to *gawis*, which is also similar to the idea of ‘*kaginhawaaan sa buhay*,’ or wellness in life. In living a prosperous life, the Kankanaey expresses a deep joy, “*makagapu ta gawis nan inkana ay matago*” (It is because s/he lived a good life). Thus, from an affirmative proposition, salvation is a liberation from poverty expressed in Filipino as “*kaalwanan sa buhay*” (well-being in life). In being able to enjoy the wellness of life by way of hospitality and of being optimistic (Montemayor 1993, 212), we experience *ginhawa*, which is also dynamically interpreted in *gawis* when there is the enjoyment of solidarity in the community.

The meaning of dynamic equivalence in any cultural practice has a death-dealing element and at the same time a life-giving element. It is expected that the death element of a cultural practice is to be addressed and critically rectified while the life-giving element of any cultural practice will have to be promoted and enhanced. There is a need to return to ethics from such ambivalence (Butler 2000, 27). An example is the Filipino practice of “*utang na loob.*” While we can be indebted to a person forever just because he had done a favor for us is itself a negative practice and while it can also speak of the positive side of “*loob*” as *kabutihan o kagandahang-loob*” (inner self or inner goodness) stressing the reality that social phenomena stressing plural characteristic of reality (Mercado 2006, 201). We now discuss how it could also be possible to enjoin cultural nuances of understanding such interpretations in the context of a Kankanaey way of life.

The universality of ethics is particularized in cultural context. In a way, we can appreciate ethics when we understand our cultural practices. The practice of *gawis ya ngawi* presupposes ethics in action. Faith is closely related to ethics as ethics critically clarifies faith in action. The Kankanaey practice of *gawis ya ngawi* as an expression of a people’s faith to oneself and others can be said to be the seed of faith. Since faith is also a humane endeavor for the pursuit of good acts (*gawis*) and dispel of bad behaviors (*ngawi*) then there is no reason not to talk about what makes ethics explicit in culture. Any argument between a profane and the sacred, holy and the unholy, or matter and spirit, and thus of being dualistic would entail elaborations. If an experience is an interpreted experience then it must be a human experience. And any human experience is hermeneutically reflective of practical philosophy (Palmer 2007, 227). The practicality of philosophy is evidenced with an interpreted experience. The interpreted experience of *gawis ya ngawi*, being a human experience leads to a deeper interpretation assuming that anything considered as *kaginhawaan ng buhay* is dynamically equivalent to the Kankanaey concept and practice of *gawis* which indicates well-being in the Kankanaey context.

In fact, the Kankanaey people who converted to the Christian faith by the American Protestants in the 1960s and British Anglicans, the Belgian Catholic missionaries or the Augustinian monks (1935)

(Depre 1955, 3-4) had in fact implicitly been practicing *gawis ya ngawi* as a norm. The expression, “*layden nan adi kaila nan gawis ngem kaliliget na nan ngawi*” (The sacred approves the good and discredits the bad) is an example of contextualizing the faith which also requires continuous triangular interpretation on linguistic meaning.

3.1. Relevance on Linguistic Interpretations: “*Gawis*” Reflective on Salvation and “*Ginhawa*”

At this juncture, it is important to consider three meanings, that is, in this reflection on the meaning of English dynamic sense of “*salvation*,” “*ginhawa*” reflecting Filipino sense and with Kankanaey concept of “*gawis*.” that reflects the role of parents in the upbringing of the Igorot sense of identity “rooted in my culture as valuable and so important, to be passed on to the next generation where my sense of belonging and responsibility” (Pooten 2011, 51).

If “*ginhawa*” is the dynamic equivalence of “*salvation*” within the dialogue of Judeo-Christian Tradition with Filipino culture then “*ginhawa*” vis-a-vis “*gawis*” in Kankanaey, are interrelated. It is said to be related since salvation as “*gawis*” can be seen in “*ginhawa*,” which necessitates explanation in diverse Filipino cultural traits, worldview, or practice. So, the three relations of “*salvation-ginhawa-gawis*” then become dynamically interrelated. For instance, “*salvation*” in English context connotes the feeling of being liberated from sin thus receiving absolute grace; on the other hand, to enjoy life as a Christian Filipino demands the sense of “*ginhawa*” as “*matiwasa na buhay*” same as well-being. Thus, the concept of “*gawis*” in Kankanaey context is liberation or salvation from being in an inauthentic mood of existence.

From a positive interpretation of *gawis*, *ginhawa*, and *salvation*, there also involves its negative or the opposing counterpart such as a need to triangulate ‘*Ngawi*’ as Kankanaey concept of bad, “*Kasalanan*” for majority of Filipinos, and ‘*Damnation*’ as universal English concept. Let us interpret the opposing counterpart.

3.2. Linguistic Interpretations of “Ngawi” Relevant to the Concepts of Damnation and “Kasalanan”

Upon interpreting *gawis* reflective of *ginhawa*, let us then interpret *ngawi* in its relevance to “damnation” (opposed to salvation/liberation), which is co-equally resembling “*masama* or *kasamaan*” (bad) in Filipino parlance. This reflects “*ngawi*” in the Kankanaey context. An example here is about being “damned” to “sin,” a destruction of relationship to a divine being which similarly reflects to “*masama*” o “*kasalanan*” as “*pandaraya sa sarili, sa kapwa, at sa Diyos*” (lying to oneself, others, and to the Sacred). This is also dynamically similar to the Kankanaey concept of “*ngawi*” as a renunciation of good. It is normally expressed in a statement, “*ngawin nan nemnem ya semek na*” (the person has bad thoughts and bad intent towards others) or “*inayan nan mensapo si ngawi*” (It is damned to do the bad thing).

Filipinos normally look at ethics as a social commitment because they value social relations as a cultural norm (Montemayor 1993, 24). In fact, sinful acts are attached to what people say that destroy one’s reputation. A stained name is something shameful. This feeling of shame (Filipino: ‘*hiya*’) is triggered by “losing face or deflation of one’s *amor propio* or self-worth” (Montemayor 1993, 24). For instance, Filipinos have the tendency to agree that what is shameful is what is sinful or what other people say about one’s bad action (Filipino: *Kung ano ang nakakahiya, siya yung kasalanan* or *kung ano ang sasabihin ng mga tao sa paligid mo*). However, contemporary understanding of *sin* as “*pandaraya*” (cheating) from the majority of Filipinos becomes a clearer expression of “*kasalanan*.” Greater weight in understanding the social dimension of *sin* as “*pandaraya*” such as cheating during election is considered to be a ‘structured sin.’

The concept of ‘*ngawi*’ (bad) from among the tribes of the Kankanaey people, especially among the elders, is that there is no such thing as ‘*basol*’ or ‘*kasalanan*’ on the personal level. Instead, *ngawi* is the inability not to keep one’s word. pointed out that the “essence of being an Igorot (Kankanaey) is to keep our words (Bontoc: “*Nan kalin nan Chios Sinan kali tako*”). The Bontoc word *kali* means ‘word,

speech, language but it also means ‘*promise, vow, and oath.*’ The saying “‘my word, my bond’ (from Shakespeare) was very true – and more *bonding* – in our language in the fact that ‘word’ and ‘bond’ are expressed by one and the same word, *kali*” (Claver 2011, 124-125). The ethic of *kali* is that when one speaks, he must stand with it and vow to protect it, with responsibility, a bond to live it. Thus, it is bad to say something that one cannot do in action.

The basic opposing counterparts in interpretations then makes it necessary to connect meanings from three-words i.e., sin, *kasalanan*, and *kali (ngawi)* that clarify the importance of cultural contexts that can still be harmonized into possible dissimilar yet similar messages. As a way to understand the need for religion to be socially factual, a sociologist believes that only in the experience of self-transcendence (Joas 2008, 6-7) can our culture continue to evolve and as such, one’s identity, continuity, and sociality is preserved. Such sociological understanding of religion demands an interpretation using philosophy so as to explore more on the need to evaluate our human experience, initiated within the context of self-transcendence. In fact, he believes that faith is a sociological fact that imbues interpretation of religiosity and respect for human dignity that universalizes all our efforts to theologize guided by philosophy and culture. It is then important to consider that “dialogue of faiths requires a philosophic mind to progress religion” (Joas 2008, 33).

As a jumpstart of doing philosophy through ethno-philosophy relevant to our “methodology of history and a hermeneutic of promising becomes the crucial means of preventing the passing-by of time and making a fresh start” (Joas 2008, 34). It is said that the post secular age is “to provide reason for society to live out with what is rational despite different views and that there is a need to recognize new (post secular) rather than preserving what is old” (Joas 2008, 111). It is therefore the quest of every secular person to seek something deeper, spiritual, and mysterious. This is the quest for the appreciation of the ‘holy,’ the Sacred in our time when we are plunged into the mystery “as well as the actual acceptance of a greater power in our lives, understood as our primary mystery of life. It is first and foremost, a positive response to wonder, with awe” (Honeygosky 2009, 77). The ethics of *gawis ya ngawi* is a manifestation of

something newer even when secularization is always there to seemingly strip the relevance of the Sacred. In short, when we express ‘*gawis ay agew*’ (Have a good day!), it means a respect to something sacred in human relationships. Similarly, when we say, ‘*ngawi tay inayan sa,*’ (Do not do bad because it is dangerous!) expresses a moral responsibility affirming the natural tendency to be good.

In totality, we stipulate that the context of the natural, the moral, and the cultural, is progressive. We have to realize that in the dynamic cycle of human history, the so called natural, moral, and cultural have been subjugated by the naturally given-ness of culture as already morally embedded. Our human history is always ‘seeking the logos of culture related to life.’ Such endeavor, to me, is a holistic view of human history for all thinkers especially among philosophers of culture, the sociologists, or the anthropologists to reveal what is already given and possibly not yet interpreted. Thus, to dwell into the realm of understanding culture, we focus on how linguistic interpretations relate to what makes life moral and so natural.

4. Concluding Remarks

Despite the challenges in the complexities of human life, identity of the Self remains relevant in time. We have understood that human culture shapes human reality, a dynamic venture relevant to doing philosophy. Philosophy progresses through ethno-philosophizing with its fundamental functions attached to nature, moral, and natural, paving a way for cultural context i.e., on the ethics discourse of *gawis ya ngawi*. *Gawis* is exposed with nature of *ngawi* corollary to it, thus summarizing their dynamic relations.

The ethical implications start first with identifying the necessity of ethical discourse on *gawis ya ngawi* with its hermeneutic of appreciation emphasizing the element of care (*seg-ang*) as ethos of Kankanaey identity; and finally interpreting the ethical relevance of *gawis ya ngawi* to linguistic analyses from universal terms of “salvation-*ginhawa-gawis*” in positive sense with opposing counterpart of “damnation-*kasalanan-ngawi*.”

To sum up, there is no end to ethics discourse in jumpstarting ethno-philosophy using parameters of cultural milieu. We are always encouraged to look forward to exploring further endeavors on ethno-philosophy from any cultural traits from among varied cultures in a process of linguistic interpretations. Exploring indigenous knowledge can be explored from the context of the traditions of the *Ilocanos*, the *Cebuanos*, *i-Kalinga*, *Ibalois*, or *Itawis*, among others.

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