

A Review of
**Martin Heidegger's
 Being and Time
 and Manuel Silos's
 Biyaya ng Lupa**
 by Edward Delos Santos Cabagnot

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From the book Cover of *Martin Heidegger's Being and Time* and Manuel Silos's *Biyaya ng Lupa* (2018).
 Courtesy of UP Press.

Edward Delos Santos Cabagnot's *Martin Heidegger's Being and Time and Manuel Silos's Biyaya ng Lupa* (2018) might be the first of its kind published in the Philippines.¹ It is a work that deals exclusively with cinema and philosophy, focusing on the basic tenets of Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927) with Manuel Silos's film *Biyaya ng Lupa* (1959) serving as its space of critical analysis.

Cabagnot is not so much interested in looking at the intimate link between philosophy and cinema but is rather keen on showing that such relation between entirely different fields can be situated in everydayness. True to Heideggerian spirit, Cabagnot explicates this intersection from his personal point of view, his everyday experiences. Indeed, there is a conscious effort on the part of Cabagnot to bridge the world of philosophy and cinema with sensitivity, self-aware of the cultural disparity between his philosopher-interlocutor and the world of his film-in-focus. It is not surprising that Cabagnot has gone to lengths to make sure that Heidegger's thought translates to its Asian philosophical and experiential counterparts. That is why, he emphasizes that Heidegger's philosophy can be read vis-à-vis Asian philosophies like Zen Buddhism through a set of multicultural lens.

The book is as a great new addition to the long list of literature on Philippine cinema and can be a useful starting point for Filipino scholars who want to do the same thing—a close reading of a film using the philosophical principles and ideas of a philosopher. With its clarity and accessible textual language, the book can actually work as a reading material for undergraduate and graduate students who want to learn film-philosophy.

Cabagnot's playful approach to making accessible the arcane and difficult philosophical language of Heidegger to its readers is admirable, making the book a good introductory text to those who have not yet read Heidegger, or only acquainted with Heidegger from a distance. Cabagnot refers to vast amounts of extant materials from both the primary and secondary literature not only on Heidegger but also on the whole gamut of Heideggerian scholars like Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida, and Michael Zimmerman, among others.

Cabagnot's focus in the book is to trace Dasein's latitudinal traverse between philosophy and film. His explication of Dasein builds on its foundation from Heidegger's original text, *Being and Time*, appropriating it and bearing its image of thought to suit his film philosophical agenda of creating a pluralized image of Dasein. This pluralized image of Dasein is not without consent from Heidegger, which Cabagnot took on prior to assembling his own idea.² At the onset of the book, the author's use of Dasein already functions both in its metafilmic and extrafilmic constitution. It is metafilmic in a sense that it bears a seal of transmutability. It takes the shape of any filmic character or persona in *Biyaya ng Lupa* and in other filmic references that Cabagnot sees suitable.

Cabagnot's Dasein, both in its inauthentic and authentic form, manifests as a pliant generality that also lives beyond the film. When he discusses the ethics of care, temporality, and death, his notion of Dasein bears the extrafilmic image of the general consensus. The Dasein of "They," of Being-with-Others, most emphasized in his discussion of Dasein's authenticity versus inauthenticity, is Cabagnot's correlative image of the vacuous

dominant social strata involving the world beyond the filmic space of *Biyaya ng Lupa*, marking the author's self-awareness of the world-at-large, the everydayness of the world, beyond the walls of film-philosophy.

Cabagnot finds it meaningful to interrogate the interrelationship of the concept of Dasein, Manuel Silos's *Biyaya ng Lupa*, and the world-at-large as contiguous layers. His playful digressions and fluid representational politics make the book enjoyable to read if taken lightly, but Cabagnot's playfulness also hinders him from fully explicating the deep but conflicted interrelationship between philosophy and film in the book.

One thing that Cabagnot does not discuss is the notion of *mediality*, or the dissimilarity between a philosophical medium and a filmic medium. Gilles Deleuze has made it clear in his essay "*What is a Creative Act?*" that a filmic image is entirely in a different constitutional plane than a philosophical image.³ The former, the filmic image, not only carries narrative information, which Cabagnot finds useful in his filmic analyses, but also non-narratological and non-linguistic percepts that are independent of the work of art itself. The latter, the philosophical image, is a non-imaginal universality that functions trans-historically, usually rendered legible in textual form. This instance of taking for granted the nuance of the division between the filmic image and the philosophical image can be attributed to the lack of self-conscious effort on the part of the author in dealing with these conceptual issues prior to writing the project.

Aside from this, Cabagnot also depends predominantly on large chunks of, and often decontextualized, direct quotes and passages from philosophical texts. This writing strategy has endangered his position as an interlocutor between his philosopher, Heidegger, and his film of choice, *Biyaya ng Lupa*. This practice of uncritical film-philosophical writing is a manifestation of the writer's unself-conscious effort to constitute an original reading of both materials. Although he discussed some, if not all of the main tenets of Heideggerian philosophy with playful clarity, he missed the opportunity to write a book that critically engages with the intricacies of both the film and the philosophy. In other words, what Cabagnot has produced is an aggregate of annotations that young readers can read to acquaint themselves with the philosophy of Heidegger and the film of Manuel Silos.

As a whole, Cabagnot's book is a highly recommended secondary literature for beginners in film-philosophy and for those who want to get acquainted with the basic knowledge on Heidegger through film. It is also one of the few exemplary books in the history of Filipino Cinema Studies that focuses on a close analysis of a single film.

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¹ Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2018.

² Ibid., 25.

³ In *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews, 1975 - 1995*, trans. D. Lapoujade, A. Hodges, and M. Taormina (New York: Semiotext[e], 2004), 313-314.