

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

Filipino Religious Psychology

Review Author: Vicente Marasigan, S.J.

Philippine Studies vol. 26, no. 3 (1978) 324–325

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies@admu.edu.ph.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>
Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

FILIPINO RELIGIOUS PSYCHOLOGY. Edited by Leonardo N. Mercado. Tacloban City: Divine Word Publications, 1977. 224 pages.

This book is a collection of 14 papers read at a conference in Tacloban City, 13–15 January 1977, together with the discussions generated by these papers at the open forums. It is divided into three parts: (1) Therapy, (2) Devotions, and (3) Leadership. Each part is subdivided into four sections treating of particular aspects of each of the three themes. The book begins with a keynote speech on "ASC" (altered states of consciousness) and ends with a retrospect on "Filipino religious psychology."

The objective of the book may be gleaned from the last two sentences of the editor's retrospect: "To most of us, it was rediscovery of our roots and made us appreciate deeper our cultural heritage. We hope this appreciation will continue." The need for rediscovering roots arises from an awareness of alienation common to peoples emerging from colonization. Like this reviewer, the fourteen contributors, in varying degrees, are aware of a certain amount of cultural alienation presently inherent in their educational background. This awareness includes a vague dissatisfaction with the present levels of technocracy, and may now be seeking progress along lines that used to be dismissed by the educated elite as mystical, intuitive, magical, fanatic, and superstitious; in short, as "unscientific." The scientific attitude is manifest in the professional backgrounds of the contributors: psychology, medicine, sociology, philosophy, theology, anthropology, and history. The underlying dissatisfaction may be due to the fragmentation endemic in overspecialization in any one of these disciplines. The contributors are open to an interdisciplinary approach to Filipino religiosity — at least in hope, if not in achievement — some more than others.

In this wide diversity of individual approaches, attitudes, and specializations, Father Mercado undertakes the task of trying to discern some unity of insight that may serve as a rational basis for decisions. In the present state of indigenous theology, this is a pioneering task and therefore very difficult. It is to Mercado's credit that he has boldly risen to the challenge.

Some important details of structure and content of the book deserve special attention. Synthesis is attempted at two levels. The twelve core papers are synthesized by three whose syntheses are in turn synthesized by the editor. From the contents of this two-level synthesis, at least five important elements emerge: holistic treatment of the spiritual and physical components of personality, communitarian preferences, interpersonal relationships, incarnated experience, and concerned paternalism. This fifth element is seen to derive its efficacy from utilization of emotional contagion, belief in spirits, increasing coercion, and different combinations of mass mystification and selective enlightenment.

These are valuable insights. Although they are not new, they are strongly

confirmatory of older intuitions, and may have something to contribute to the emerging ecclesiology of post-Vatican II thinking. The ecclesial thrust toward basic Christian communities has for some time been in the process of being incarnated in marginated groups of simple and poor Christian peoples. The process is one of trial and error. A negative view of this trial-and-error process would be to concentrate only on the errors and to ignore the underlying phenomenon that people *have been trying*. The contributors of this book, especially the editor, have reversed this negative tendency of earlier decades. By and large, their observations and recommendations are vibrant with positive thinking but with one minor exception:

Father Mercado seems pleased with the latter Bulatao, as distinct from the earlier Bulatao, because his keynote speech on ASC suggests a theological conversion. But this is precisely where negativity sneaks in. For example, who exactly were those "theologians" who supposedly raised an outcry against the 1628 science of blood-circulation for endangering the devotion to the Sacred Heart? Is Bulatao referring to the discussions of the 1675 revelations to St. Margaret Mary? Or does he know of some theological "outcry" after 1628 or perhaps "much later"? In the absence of evidence, this would look more like a bit of mythologizing. As a rhetorical device, this is harmless enough, but any unconscious tendency to "reify" such a myth would not promote, and can even damage Bulatao's credibility as a scientist. This would be unfortunate, because ASC is an important and fascinating theme, and because Father Bulatao is eminently capable of *constructive* theological reflection. He has discovered for us at least two important areas: the parapsychic underpinnings of Filipino rituals, and the Filipino facility for ASC in religious experiences.

This brings us to the title of the book: *Filipino Religious Psychology*. Contrary to first impression, this book is mainly about religion, not psychology, although psychology plays an important part. The editor's own concluding retrospect clearly places religion above psychology as his area of interest. But for an alternative title that would express this nuance more neatly, this reviewer, is at a loss.

This is a good book.

Vicente Marasigan, S.J.

PHILIPPINE LABOR MOVEMENT IN TRANSITION. By Elias T. Ramos. Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1976. 118 pages.

The study under consideration constitutes part of the M.A. thesis presented by its author to the Industrial Relations Research Institute, University of Wisconsin in 1972. In it, he proposes to test against Philippine experience the theory of Adolf Sturmthal that collective bargaining will be ineffective under conditions of widespread unemployment for a labor movement which includes many