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## Christian Renewal of Filipino Values

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# Christian Renewal of Filipino Values

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VITALIANO R. GOROSPE

## NEED FOR RENEWAL

**T**ODAY the need and urgency of a Christian renewal in the Philippines can hardly be questioned. Two reasons make such a renewal imperative. First, the sad state of present-day morality and religion in the Philippines demands a Christian change both in the Filipino individual and in Philippine society. Secondly, the Second Vatican Council whose guiding spirit has been aptly expressed by Pope John XXIII in the word *aggiornamento*—"up-dating", "re-awakening", or modernization—calls for a Christian reform not only of the universal Church but also in particular of the Philippine Church and Philippine Catholicism.

There is no reason why Filipino attitudes and values cannot provide the matrix or potential for maximum Christian renewal and spiritual maturity of the Filipino people and especially of Filipino youth. This article is divided into three parts. The first part will try to clarify the problem of morality and religion in the Philippines. The second part will point out the role of the individual and the Catholic school in the Christian renewal of Filipino values. The third part which is the main purpose of this article will attempt to show that Filipino values, if properly understood, are not obstructive but rather potentials for the development of Christian values. There is no reason why the Filipino cannot develop and become an authentic and

mature Christian within the context of his own Philippine culture. At the outset, it must be noted that the typical Filipino characteristics or values discussed here are not peculiarly or exclusively Filipino. They are universal human traits and values found among all peoples, but receive emphasis in varying degrees in Philippine society.

#### THE PROBLEM

An "awareness" of the real moral and religious problem as it really exists in the Philippines is the first step towards a Christian solution and renewal. The problem of morality and religion in the Philippines has been described in various ways.

The problem has been characterized as a *conflict* between *individual* and *social* morality. A case in point is the recent and shocking exposure of cheating in the 1964 Law Bar examinations which involved the highest tribunal of justice in the land, the Supreme Court. Although we cannot condone the dishonesty of those who cheated and of the syndicate that made this cheating possible, we can at least try to understand their moral predicament. It would be an over-simplification of the problem to claim without qualification that the individuals in question simply do not recognize the value of honesty and integrity. Could it be that their behavior was an indictment of our society's value-system? Perhaps the emphasis of the present system of bar examinations on the wrong values, the social pressure from one's family, the social expectations of the community as a whole, make it extremely difficult for the individual to be honest and moral. After all *social* morality is a necessary condition for *individual* morality to flourish.

The problem of Philippine morality has also been described as a *conflict* between *home* values and *school* values and/or *school* values and *community* values.<sup>1</sup> The school inculcates values which are industrial, scientific, and democratic, while the home fosters values which are agricultural, pre-scientific and pre-democratic. The Church and the Catholic

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<sup>1</sup> Jaime Bulatao, S.J., "The Conflict of Values in Home and School," *The Guidance and Personnel Journal*, (Manila: Philippine Guidance and Personnel Association, 1965).

school inculcate Christian attitudes and values, while the home, reflecting the prevailing social values of tradition and Filipino society, inculcates attitudes and values that may still be pagan or diametrically opposed to Christianity. What actually happens when such a conflict exists between the two? There is no doubt that the home and the community will win over the school. Another indication of the existing conflict between *school* values and *home* and *community* values was found in a study made of the criteria for occupational evaluation among Manila College students.<sup>2</sup> While on the one hand, the ideal of service is highly valued in school, on the other hand, social acceptance, income, and power are the primary criteria of occupational evaluation in the home and in the community. For if College students value prestige and material gain more than service, it is because this is the prevailing value-system of the home and the society in which they live. This poses a problem both for the Catholic student and the Catholic educator. Why is the student *not changing* his values in a *Christian* way? Why is the Catholic educator *not communicating* Christian ideals and values to the young?

What is the *effect* of the existing conflict between individual and social morality, between school values on the one hand and home and community values on the other? The effect has also been called by different names. In school, it has been called "on the campus" and "off the campus" morality. Consider these examples:

"On campus", a College girl knows that it is wrong to be immodest. Reluctantly, she models for the school fashion show according to the convent-school's strict norms of modesty. But "off the campus" she does not hesitate to wear a strapless or plunging neckline at a party or a daring bikini for a beauty contest.

A College boy is out with the gang on Saturday night. The party he is attending is a flop—very few pretty girls, a mediocre combo. A member of the gang proposes a trip to Pasay. "On the campus" the student knows that promiscuity

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<sup>2</sup> John F. Doherty, S.J., "Criteria for Occupational Evaluation," *Philippine Sociological Review* XIII (April, 1965), 78-84.

is morally wrong. But "off the campus", he is afraid to offend the *barkada*. What will they say about his *pakikisama*, his manliness? Reluctantly, he goes with the gang. Besides, he tells himself, what is wrong with "staying in the car"?

A student is driving 90 kilometers-per-hour on a 40KPH road. A motorcycle policeman apprehends him for speeding. The officer starts giving the usual hints about "*Ang lagay, e...*". "On the campus", the student knows that he should not bribe the officer. But it takes too much time and trouble to get back his license. And "off the campus", it occurs to him that "everybody is doing it".

In Philippine society, the effect of the conflict has always been called the "double-standard" morality and recently has been referred to as "split-level Christianity". A good example of the "double-standard" is the fact that Philippine society condemns divorce and still frowns on the unfaithful Filipina wife, but has come to accept the "querida system" as the lesser of two evils and because 'men are like that'. Some Filipino Catholics see no inconsistency in the Christian practice of asking the parish priest to bless the cornerstone of their new home and at the same time in the pagan superstitious practice of shedding goat's blood and throwing coins for the sake of good luck. Fr. Bulatao calls this phenomenon "split-level Christianity" which is the "co-existence within the same person of two or more sets of thought and behavior systems which are inconsistent with each other". One characteristic of split-level type of Christianity is the conviction of the fitness of two objectively inconsistent thought and behavior systems without the feeling of hypocrisy or guilt. For instance, one learns the commandment "Thou shalt not commit adultery," and yet there is only a minimum of shame and often hardly any feelings of guilt in having a *querida*. Or a man might agree with the pastor that drunkenness is a sin and yet he will take part in a drunken party after the day's work with complete assurance that he is merely taking part in adult games. He rationalizes his double standard behavior by claiming that it is the pastor's "job to remind people not to

drink; it is our job to finish our work in the field".<sup>3</sup> Fr. Bulatao in his study gives many other concrete examples of "split-level Christianity".<sup>4</sup> The Catholic businessman who on a combined business and pleasure trip to Hong Kong sleeps with a different girl almost nightly and goes to Holy Communion every morning is an extreme example which seems to have surpassed the split level element and entered into out-and-out hypocrisy since the contradiction has become conscious.

#### FILIPINO NORM OF MORALITY

Another way of looking at the problem of morality in the Philippines is to consider the actual and prevailing norms of right and wrong among Filipinos. It is quite obvious that there is often a conflict between what they *say* as Christians and what they *do* as Filipinos; between their *actual* Filipino behavior and their *ideal* Christian behavior; in short, between what *is* and what *ought* to be.

One norm of morality in the Philippines is based on "group-centeredness" or "group-thinking". One's in-group determines for the individual what is right or wrong. The individual who has not yet attained moral independence and maturity will ask: "What will my family, or my relatives and friends, or my *barkada* think or say?" "What will other people say" usually determines Filipino moral behaviour; it is "conscience from the outside". For instance, parents tell their daughter who is being courted: "*Iha*, please entertain your boy friend at home. Do not go outside. What will the neighbors say? *Nakakahiya naman*." Shame or *hiya* makes the parents and the girl conform to the social expectations of the neighbors lest they become the object of *chismis* or gossip. Here again there is a conflict between *individual* and *social* morality, between *internal* and *external* morality. The

<sup>3</sup> Fr. Bulatao explains this phenomenon as "split-level Christianity". Cf. F. L. Jocano, "Conversion and the Patterning of Christian Experience in Malitbog, Central Panay, Philippines," *Philippine Sociological Review* XIII (April, 1965), Case Study No. 12, p. 112.

<sup>4</sup> Jaime Bulatao, S.J., "Split-Level Christianity," (Article to be published.)

norm of morality *should* be internalized so that the mature individual *should* form his own moral "conscience from the inside".

Another norm of morality in the Philippines is characterized by the "Don't-be-caught" attitude based on shame or fear of the authority figure. The authority figure may be a parent, teacher, priest, or policeman. As one law student puts it: "What's wrong with cheating in the bar examinations as long as you do not get caught?" During the war, it is told that a prison official of Muntinlupa addressed himself to the new prisoners thus: "Here there are no Ten Commandments. You can obey or break the rules as you please. But God help you if you get caught." This norm of moral behavior also gives rise to a conflict in the individual between the "don'ts" of the authority figure and what "everybody else does" in the latter's absence. As long as a policeman is on duty, Filipino drivers will obey traffic rules, but if there is no policeman, then everyone tries to make *puslit* or get ahead of the others, often causing a traffic jam.

We find in the Filipino whose norm of moral behavior is purely external a split between the ideal Christian norm of morality and the actual Filipino norm of morality. He will put on the externals of Christian moral behavior in front of the authority figure while at the same time follow in "real life" an inconsistent moral behavior when the latter is "at a distance". To be caught by the authority figure brings about shame or *hiya*, an emotional catastrophe to be avoided at all costs. Hence, the individual, in order not to be caught, must try as much as possible to keep the authority figure "at a distance".

The problem for the Filipino individual is to be "aware" that two inconsistent norms of morality are allowed to co-exist in his personality and life and therefore he must overcome this split if he is to become a mature Christian Filipino.

#### ATTITUDES TOWARD THE PROBLEM

What can be done about the problem of morality in the Philippines? In this respect, the question of attitudes, whether

on the part of the individual or on that of society as a whole, is quite relevant. The solution to a problem depends to a great extent on one's awareness of the problem and his attitude towards it. Let us consider the various attitudes that the Filipino individual or Philippine society can take towards the problem of morality and religion. The worst possible attitude is not to be aware of the problem at all. The person who is not aware that he has cancer or heart trouble will not see the doctor. Another wrong attitude is complacency, when one is aware but is not concerned. The individual who feels secure and comfortable with the *status quo* sees no need for change. Some individuals see the problem but it is too frightening. Hence they are afraid to make a decision and initiate change because it is painful and difficult. This is the attitude of timidity. Others try to escape from their real problems. They skirt confrontation with the real issue in their lives and hence raise up pseudo problems as a camouflage. Finally, a very common attitude is rationalization. People who know they are doing wrong but do not want to change easily find excuses like "*ako'y tao lamang*" (I'm but human), "*ganyan lamang ang buhay*" (life is like that), "*bahala na*" (come what may) or "everybody is doing it". In this age of "passing the buck," another excuse for shirking personal responsibility is the Filipinism, "I am not the one". All these attitudes of mind are wrong and without the proper attitude there can be no solution to the problem. Filipinos will make no progress toward a Christian solution until they realize that the problem is serious and urgent.

#### THE CHRISTIAN SOLUTION

The problem is far more complex than our statement of it and demands a multi-faceted solution. This topic is so broad that we must limit ourselves to a discussion of the role of the individual College student, the role of the Catholic College in Christian moral education, and the potential of Filipino values for Christian renewal.

#### THE INDIVIDUAL

What is the important role of the individual Filipino College student in Christian renewal? Let us recall that his



vocation like that of every Christian is to develop to Christian maturity as soon as possible. Christian maturity means a personal and total commitment to Christ and His values. Christianity cannot be taught because, in the last analysis, the individual is free to accept or reject Christ. A "lived" Christianity for the individual involves *understanding*, *acceptance*, and *commitment*. An individual can understand or be informed about the Christian religion without becoming a Christian. Or he can accept Christianity as something good for someone else but not for himself. Only when the individual makes Christianity his way of life and follows Christ has he made a Christian commitment. There are so many so-called Filipino Catholics who really have never committed themselves to Christianity.

We cannot understand Christian commitment without saying a word about Christian responsibility.<sup>5</sup> First of all, to be responsible means to be able to respond freely on one's own independently of others; to be able to think and decide for oneself and therefore answerable or accountable for one's actions. In this sense, to be responsible is identical with accepting one's status as a free independent individual, with being a person. Secondly, to be responsible means to freely commit oneself and achieve some personal identity; to act freely and decisively to become the kind of person one wants to be. In this sense, only the committed individual merits the name of an authentic person. Finally, to be responsible is to be able to act in response to the human situation in a Christian way, that is, to answer the call of love from another person, ultimately from the Absolute Person, God, Who revealed Himself in Christ. Only in this sense of a personal and total response to Christ's invitation of love can we speak of Christian commitment.

The Filipino individual College student cannot make a personal and total commitment to Christ unless he has first learned to be responsible. He must learn to think for himself and make his own decisions independently of others. He must

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<sup>5</sup> Robert O. Johann, S.J., "Responsible Parenthood: A Philosophical View," Address to the American Catholic Theological Society, June, 1965.

learn to make free and conscious choices, to criticize his social experience, evaluate his own motivation, form his own moral conscience, and internalize morality and religion. Only by cultivating the habit of personal reflection and critical self-evaluation, only by interiorizing moral and religious values will the individual achieve Christian maturity.

It is well for the individual Filipino College student of today to be aware that some of the traditional values of the Filipino family system and their influence in economics, politics, education, morality and religion, if they remain uncriticized and unchallenged in the face of modern changes in Philippine society, militate against the moral independence and religious maturity of the individual. The social patterns of the traditional Filipino family system such as the child-rearing patterns, the husband-wife relationship, the extended Filipino family system, besides contributing to a double-standard morality and a split-level type of religion, make it extremely difficult for the Filipino individual to develop self-reliance, independence, and creativity.<sup>6</sup> The Filipino College student should regard modernization and its scientific, industrial, and democratic values as a challenge and catalyst towards personal independence and maturity.

To be independent as an individual is not the same thing as to be a blind conformist or a disillusioned rebel. On the one hand, a conformist simply conforms to traditional social customs which have ceased to function in a rapidly changing Philippine society. He accepts uncritically patterns of the traditional Filipino way of life even though they have become dysfunctional in the context of progress and change. For instance, a conformist will go through a marriage ceremony with a partner whom he does not love and with whom he will never be successfully married because of family pressure and *hiya*. According to two members of the Matrimonial Tribunal of Manila, the ecclesiastical courts are clogged with marriage cases of many young men and women seeking a declaration of nullity

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<sup>6</sup> Mary Hollnsteiner, "Modernization and the Challenge to the Filipino Family," *The Filipino Christian Family in a Changing Society* (Manila: Christian Family Movement, 1965), 10-20.

and consequent dissolution because "they were forced by their parents or families to marry against their will". Thus the conformist becomes a victim of a social system instead of becoming independent and using it for his own personal development.

On the other hand, the rebel is a socially immature individual who wants the right to make his own decisions but refuses to assume the responsibility for the consequences of his decision. For him, being independent means being different from everybody else, being against everything without being for anything. A rebel wants to be free *from* all restraints, social, traditional, or otherwise, without knowing what to be free *for*. In the Philippines, disobedience takes the extreme form of rebellion in the case of elopement. A young couple wishing to get married against the will of their parents feel that, if they run away and live together for a night or so, their parents will be forced to have them married before a priest because of *hiya*. What will the neighbors say? Often the parish priest is "used" to marry two immature people who are not ready for marriage because of a social convention sanctioned by *hiya*. The rebels, in this case the partners who have eloped, think that they are being independent when as a matter of fact, they are victims of a social system against which they are trying to revolt.

Now what are some of the signs of a morally independent and religiously mature individual?<sup>7</sup> One of them is the ability to differentiate. A baby begins to grow up when it can distinguish between a doll and a mother. An individual is religiously mature if he can differentiate between a *functional* and an *experiential* or "lived" type of religion. Some Filipino Catholics use God or religion as a means to their own personal satisfaction or ends such as to gain social acceptance or prestige, to enhance their business, or further their political ambitions. They are religiously immature. For the religiously mature Filipino Catholic, religion becomes a matter of personal and total commitment to Christ, not a matter of social conformity

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<sup>7</sup> John F. Doherty, S.J., "Sociology and Religion: Religious Maturity," *Philippine Studies* XII (October, 1964), 681-698.

sanctioned by *hiya*. In other words, Christian morality is not utilitarian, not a means to one's own selfish ends, nor ego-centered, but God or Christ-centered.

Another sign of religious maturity is interiorization. The individual Filipino Catholic is religiously mature when the Catholic Faith has become personally for him a religion of interior faith and love rather than a religion of merely external rituals which often verges on the fanatical as happens in the "Black Nazarene" procession of Quiapo fame. Mere externalism in religion is typified by the devotee of San Roque who wipes San Roque's dog, by the jeepney driver who mechanically makes the sign of the cross when passing in front of a church and in the next breath curses another jeepney driver with the ejaculation "*Putres*". During the Hukbulahap crisis, it is told that at the height of the killing and pillaging in San Pablo City, some of the Huks did not forget to take off their hat or genuflect in front of the Church. Examples of mere externalism in religion here in the Philippines can be multiplied without number.

Finally, a sign of religious maturity is personalism as opposed to moralism. For a mature Filipino Catholic, religion should be a matter of personal loyalty to the person of Christ and to Christian values, not a matter of externally observing a set of moral rules or of social conformity to practices that have lost their original Christian meaning and function. It is sad to say that the conjugal bond in a changing Philippines is not as strong as it appears to be. Many married couples stay together not from internal personal conviction and motivation but from external social compulsion. They remain together not because they are personally committed to marriage as a stable and permanent "way of life", not because of their vows of love and fidelity, not because marriage is a sacrament symbolic of the union of Christ and His Church, nor a vocation of mutual personal sanctification, but mainly because of social and economic pressure.<sup>8</sup> The widespread problem of marital infidelity

<sup>8</sup> Frank Lynch, S.J., "The Conjugal Bond Where the Philippines Changes," *Philippine Sociological Review* VIII (July-October, 1960), 48-51.

in the Philippines stems largely from a moralism of external respectability rather than a personalism of interior love and fidelity.

In conclusion, it can be said that the individual Filipino College student has become morally and religiously mature when he has *integrated* in his life Christian and Filipino values.

#### THE SCHOOL

Let us begin by quoting the Second Vatican Council on the role of the Catholic school in Christian education:

The presence of the Church in the field of education is shown in a special manner by the Catholic school. No less than other schools does the Catholic school pursue cultural goals and the human formation of youth. But its proper function is to create for the school community a special atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity, to help youth grow according to the new creatures they were made through Baptism as they develop their own personalities, and finally to order the whole of human culture to the news of salvation so that the knowledge the students gradually acquire of the world, life and man is illumined by faith. So indeed the Catholic school, while it is open, as it must be, to the situation of the contemporary world, leads its students to promote efficaciously the good of the earthly city and also prepares them for service in the spread of the Kingdom of God, so that by leading an exemplary apostolic life they become, as it were, a saving leaven in the human community. (Declaration of the Second Vatican Council on Christian Education).

Although the Catholic University or College is only one of the agencies of Christian moral and religious education, its traditional role and function today is being challenged by modern changes in Philippine society. A serious rethinking of the role of the Catholic school in the Christian formation of Filipino youth in the spirit of "*aggiornamento*" or renewal is urgently demanded by the exigencies and conditions of the present time. Let us discuss two areas in the Catholic College curriculum where renewal is possible, namely, the role of the behavioral sciences and the re-vitalization of Catholic philosophy and theology.

It is only in the post-war era that the role and importance of the behavioral sciences like sociology, anthropology, and psychology in the Christian renewal of Filipino values have

been recognized. These sciences are assuming a role in Catholic education which they never enjoyed in the past and this is a welcome change. The genuine understanding of Filipino attitudes and values as well as the much needed "social awareness" of present day problems relevant to our Philippine culture can only come from the study and research being done by the behavioral sciences.<sup>9</sup> How can we possibly integrate Christian and Filipino values unless we have a genuine understanding of both? The relevance of the social sciences to Christian moral education cannot be over-emphasized and there is great need for further study and continued research in an extremely important field that has for so long been neglected. If Catholic philosophy and theology in our schools fail to take into account the valuable findings of the behavioral sciences, they will continue to be irrelevant and meaningless to the average Filipino student of today. After all, the *Christian* solution to the problem of morality and religion in the Philippines is based on the *human* solution; for the supernatural is built on the natural and grace perfects nature. The existing conflict or split between Christian and Filipino values partly comes from a misunderstanding of the one or the other or of both values.

Equally important in the Christian renewal of Filipino values is the need of re-vitalizing Catholic philosophy and theology in the Catholic University or College. The growing lack of interest among Filipino students in these subjects which are part of the core curriculum of a Catholic liberal arts College is perhaps a good indication of the need of serious re-thinking and re-vitalization of our philosophy and theology

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<sup>9</sup> To mention only the research being done by the Institute of Philippine Culture of the Ateneo de Manila University and the Research Institute of Mindanao Culture of Xavier University, Cagayan de Oro City, and the studies contributed by the Philippine Sociological Association. The Ateneo de Manila University, under the direction of Fr. John F. Doherty, S.J., and with the assistance of Miss Maria Teresa Colayco, is preparing a more complete study and bibliography on the *values of College students* from the Spanish period to the present. Cf. also the bibliography in John J. Carroll, S.J., *Changing Patterns of Social Structure in the Philippines 1896-1963* (Delhi, India: Unesco Research Centre, 1963).

courses. The complaint has been that the content of these courses have become irrelevant to the Filipino student and his native culture. Moreover, it has been said so often that the authoritarian method of teaching in Catholic schools has not helped but hindered the development of self-reliance, independence, and creativity demanded by modern changes and by the goal of Christian renewal.

It must be pointed out that the role of philosophy in the Catholic College is to develop in the individual habits of personal reflection so that he can gain some insight into what it means to be a "human person in the world". Concretely, philosophy should help the Filipino College student reflect on what it means to be *this* Filipino individual in the Philippines today. It should help him understand himself and others so that he can make his life meaningful in contemporary Philippine society. Now the traditional Catholic philosophy that has been taught in the past in an authoritarian manner and on a purely conceptual level is no longer adequate to fulfill this task. The original and authentic philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas is still valid and relevant today as it was in the thirteenth century, but the outmoded textbook and "essentialistic" approach to "Thomism" still being taught in most Catholic colleges and seminaries can no longer provide a human and meaningful answer to concrete problems and realities of our day. The day of scholastic philosophy found in College textbooks and manuals is over.

A second point to be noted about scholastic philosophy in general and about Thomistic philosophy in particular is that, being human formulations or systems of reality, they are necessarily imperfect and limited. No human formulation of reality, no philosophical explanation of human experience can say: "I have grasped the whole of reality and crystalized it in an expression or system that exhausts all its meaning". Reality is too rich and is constantly changing to be captured in any set of categories. Hence there is need today of a more dynamic and more existential philosophy inspired by the Neo-Thomist revival of the authentic thought of St. Thomas which is not a "closed system" but remains "open" to the valid insights of other philosophies and in particular to the contribu-

tion of contemporary phenomenology and existentialism.<sup>10</sup> A shift in emphasis from the traditional systematic courses in philosophy now obtaining in the Catholic College to the history of ideas which might even include Indian and Chinese philosophy as well as to the contemporary philosophy of intersubjectivity is much to be desired. If philosophy is to become relevant and meaningful to the average Filipino College student of today, a re-examination of the philosophy curricula in the Catholic College is imperative.

Most important of all is the renewal of theology in the Catholic College. Whereas philosophy provides the human answer to the meaning of the human person in the world, theology provides the only adequate and Christian answer to what it means to be an adopted son of God in the history of salvation. As Karl Rahner puts it, the task of philosophy is to ask questions which it cannot answer and thus prepare the way for theology. Concretely, theology should help the College student reflect on what it means to be a Filipino lay Catholic within the context of the Church in the Philippines.<sup>11</sup> The theology program of the Catholic College should first provide the *tradition* of Catholic revelation and secondly the *task* which the Church has outlined for the Filipino layman in Philippine society.<sup>12</sup> The Christian renewal of Filipino values can only be achieved by a re-evaluation and re-vitalization of College Theology in keeping with the spirit of renewal in the church today initiated by the recently concluded second Vatican Council.

#### CHRISTIAN MORAL EDUCATION

One final remark concerning the moral and religious formation of the Filipino College student of today is necessary.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph L. Roche, S.J., "The Aggiornamento in Catholic Philosophy," *Philippine Studies* XIII (April, 1965), 232-257.

<sup>11</sup> Horacio de la Costa, S.J., "The Role of the Laity in the Development of the Catholic Church in the Philippines," *The Filipino Christian Family in a changing Society* (Manila: Christian Family Movements, 1965), 1-9.

<sup>12</sup> The Ateneo College is at present re-evaluating its Theology program. Cf. The Ateneo de Manila University Bulletin, 1965-66.



Moral science in Catholic Universities and Colleges has in recent years been undergoing a process of serious re-examination. For several centuries Catholic moral teaching has been expressed largely in juridical terms. The present ongoing movement in Christian moral education is trying to de-emphasize the traditional morality of duty in the direction of an authentic morality of love.

The present Ethics and Moral Theology courses in the Catholic College are no longer adequate to fulfill the task of Christian moral education. The moral textbooks being used are conceptual, legalistic, minimalist and negative in approach. The result is that the student adopts perhaps for life an attitude of merely not disobeying the law or of avoiding mortal sin instead of centering his life on the following of Christ. The categories used in these textbooks are not only abstract but foreign to the Filipino student and thus far removed from his moral and religious experience. What is badly needed is a Christ-centered, more personalistic and developmental approach to the Christian moral life. Moral science should be adapted and made more positive and inspirational for the Filipino student.

This can be done if the central position in scholastic ethics and moral theology occupied by human nature, the natural law, and duty or obligation is taken over by the concept of the person, freedom, and love. In addition, the findings of the behavioral sciences within the context of Philippine culture must be brought to bear on Catholic moral doctrine. The foremost deficiency of traditional moral science is its inability to appeal to the heart. What is needed is a morality whose starting point, middle and end is charity, whose motivation is love. Ethics alone or Moral Theology alone divorced from Christian dogma can no longer achieve an adequate Christian moral education. The ideal is a philosophical and theological synthesis of both into a course that may be aptly termed "Christian Ethics" or "Moral Value and the Morality of the Human Person".<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Vitaliano R. Gorospe, S.J., *Moral Value and the Morality of the Human Person* (Quezon City: Ateneo Publications, 1965), Vol. I, i-viii and Chapter VI.

## THE POTENTIAL OF FILIPINO VALUES

By way of prelude, a disclaimer or two must be made. First of all, when we speak of "traditional Filipino values" such as *bahala na*, *utang na loob*, *pakikisama*, *hiya*, we do not claim that they are peculiar to the Philippines. Although these values may manifest themselves differently in the Philippines, they are universal human values. If subsequently we seem to speak of them as if they were peculiar to Filipinos, we would be guilty of a disservice. While it is true that so called Philippine values are ambivalent, one does not purify or transform them to Christian values by misinforming people about them or manipulating them. What needs to be done is to understand what Filipino values and what the alternatives of acting in accord with them really are. In short, the Catholic educator must try to understand Philippine values so that he can make Christian values relevant to the Filipino College student of today. If these values are properly understood, then the individual can make the proper decisions in crisis-situations and act in a Christian manner.

Secondly, when we speak of Filipino values as potentials for Christian renewal, we do not conceive of Philippine society as being any less or more Christian than any other society. The truth of the matter is that while in the theoretical order one could formulate some of the characteristics of a so-called Christian society, in the practical order, it is not easy to say whether a Christian society exists anywhere at present or has been in existence in the past. This does not mean that historically there have not been societies which have achieved a higher level of social development and a historical environment more conducive to Christian living and more in accord with Christian attitudes and values. Philippine society then can try to approximate more or less a Christian society.

Furthermore, in the actual concrete situation in which a unique individual finds himself, it is hard to say whether there is only one response he can make which may be called specifically Christian. We can all criticize the *barkada* killings in Ilocos at election time but are they any different from the *barkada*-killings by whites of Negroes in the United States?

If an American marine takes up arms and goes off and fights in Vietnam for America, is it because he is less identified with a *barkada*? Does he have a more authentic Christian spirit by doing so? Is it a more manifestation of "split level Christianity" for the Kalinga to go to Mass and then sacrifice a pig at a death ritual than it is for a western Christian to go to Mass or to religious services and then approve of shooting down civil rights workers in cold blood? When we speak of the mission of the Church to Christianize society, we mean that the Church should make available the Christian message to all men and bear effective witness of Christ's presence in the world by her life. In this way the Church will make available the authentic Christian experience to others, but how others will react in crisis-situations is largely an individual matter and depends on how well they have internalized the Christian message itself and not just a code of external conduct.

It has been claimed that up to now the traditional Filipino values and attitudes have not as a matter of fact been integrated with Christian values and attitudes.<sup>14</sup> Such a claim, to say the least, needs to be established. At most, this claim misses the main point of this article, namely, that Filipino values can be the potential for Christian renewal in the sense that the Filipino individual must be brought to understand what these values really are so that he can be free to make the proper decisions relevant to Christian values and in accord with the Christian way of life. One gets the impression from foreigners writing about the Philippines, from local newspaper columnists, politicians, and speakers that Filipino values as they operate in Philippine society today are generally obstructive to the development of a Christian character. We claim that Filipino values should not be discarded as altogether evil. Rather we should try to understand them properly so that we can form the Filipino Christian by showing the relevance of Christianity to Philippine values.

To claim or imply that Filipino values cannot in fact and in principle be reconciled or integrated with Christian

<sup>14</sup> Address of Fr. Francis Senden, C.I.C.M. to the CEAP Convention, Cagayan de Oro City, December, 1965.

values because the two are inherently contradictory is simply preposterous. This contention can be disclaimed for two very good reasons. First of all, it is philosophically unsound. Filipino values which are natural values, the result of at least three cultures—Malay, Spanish, and American—may be a help or a hindrance to moral and religious values. They can serve either as a screen or as a bridge to Christian values. They are ambivalent and can work either for good or evil. Secondly, the view that Filipino values are inherently anti-Christian is theologically unsound. The supernatural is built on the natural; grace does destroy but perfects nature. The mystery of the Incarnation is precisely the union of God and man in the person of Jesus Christ. Christ did not assume an abstract human nature. He was born of a Jewish mother, spoke a Jewish tongue, ate Jewish food, and lived and died in a Jewish culture. Just as there is a distinctive way of being a Spanish Catholic, an American Catholic, there must needs be a proper and distinctive way of being a Filipino Catholic. It is wrong to assume that the Filipino must first be Westernized in order to be Christianized.

Natural Filipino values that are authentically human values are not inherently in opposition to Christian values. They can be made to work *for* or *against* Christianity. They can be channeled in the right or wrong direction; they can be canalized into other values that are either Christian or un-Christian depending on the attitudes of the Filipino individuals as well as Philippine society. There is no reason why Filipino values cannot be the potential or basis of Christian values provided there is a genuine understanding and integration of both values on the part of the individual and society. It is said that the Filipino is rigidly ruled by a body of beliefs and traditions and that the *ugaling Pilipino* (Filipino custom) largely determines his motivation and dominates his behavior. The fact that there exists in the Philippines today a plurality of Filipino attitudes and customs does not mean that we should accept all of them without question. We should accept and preserve whatever is positive and good and reject what is exaggerated, corrupt or evil. A Filipino value that is naturally good should be preserved, one that is indifferent or mixed should be

elevated or transformed, and one that is bad should be suppressed or sublimated. In short, there are two possible directions which natural Filipino values can take—either the way of integration or the way of disintegration; either Christianization or de-Christianization.

#### FOLK CATHOLICISM

A good example of disintegration and de-Christianization of Filipino values arising from a lack of genuine understanding and integration of both Filipino and Christian values is the phenomenon of syncretism in Philippine "folk Catholicism".<sup>15</sup> Before the coming of Christianity pagan patterns of beliefs and practices existed among the native Filipinos. With the Christianization of the Philippines, what happened to these pre-Christian patterns of Filipino belief and practice? Instead of replacing the pagan religion with the Christian religion and instead of absorbing the essence of Christianity, the Filipinos unwittingly fitted the external practices of Christianity to suit their original pagan patterns of beliefs and practices. The early Filipinos believed in *Batula*, the supreme god, who was so high and distant that to seek favors from Batula they had to pray to the lesser spirits or *anitos* who were the guardian gods (*diuata*) of Batula. Each settlement had a guardian god in whose honor pagan rituals or rice festivals were held. With the coming of Christianity, the native Filipinos substituted the Christian God for Batula, the town patronal saints for the "anitos", and the town and barrio fiestas for the pagan rice festivals. The parish priest took the place of the *baylan*. The pattern is exactly the same.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, even today especially in the rural areas we find merely the external trappings of Catholic belief and practice super-imposed on the original pattern of pre-Christian superstitions and rituals.

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<sup>15</sup> The author is indebted to Fr. Jaime Neri, S.J., a veteran missionary in Mindanao and a student of the Ateneo Graduate School, Department of Behavioral Sciences, who is now making a study of syncretism in Philippine "folk Catholicism".

<sup>16</sup> Horacio de la Costa, S.J., *Readings in Philippine History* (Manila: Bookmark, 1965), 6-7.

Among the Visayans, there is still up to this day a very strong belief in the *gaba* or curse.<sup>17</sup> Children are taught that they must never disobey their parents, show disrespect for elders, waste food, or do what is forbidden, or else the *gaba* will fall upon them. This belief persists even among many adult Catholics and their behaviour and motivation is largely determined by the *gaba*. It is told of a Catholic who occupied a high position in the land that he simply refused to punish corrupt government officials because of fear of the *gaba*. One can point out other instances of the syncretism of pagan and Christian elements in Philippine "folk Catholicism" and further research in this field would be invaluable. The main point here is that lack of genuine understanding and integration can easily lead to the corruption of a Filipino value and the disintegration of Christian value.

Similarly, the lack of understanding and integration of Filipino and Christian values shows itself in the religious outlook of many Filipinos. It has been pointed out that individualism or personalism in the Filipino has tended in the past to produce an anthropomorphic rather than a Christian attitude towards God and religion. The immature Filipino Catholic tends to treat God as a *compadre* from whom he can obtain favors or as policeman whom he can bribe by means of a novena. God is treated as an equal on a person to person basis by means of "smooth interpersonal relations". The Filipino value of "reciprocity" or "*utang na loob*" (debt of gratitude) in one's relationship to God also comes into play. Many Filipino Catholics make novenas to obtain favors from God. They feel that they have done something for God and expect Him in turn to reciprocate by granting their request. They feel that God is indebted to them and therefore if God does not answer their prayer, they sulk or make *tampo*. If ill fortune should befall them, then they consider it a punishment from God (*pinarosahan ako ng Dios*) as if God bore a grudge against

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<sup>17</sup> Agaton P. Pal, "The People's Conception of the World," *A Philippine Barrio: A Study of Social Organization in Relation to Planned Cultural Change*. (Manila: University of Manila Journal of East Asiatic Studies, 1956), Ch. VII, 449-455.

them for making *tampo*. The thing to do then is to talk it over with God on a person to person basis (*pakikiusapan*). Exactly the same personalistic religious attitude obtains with respect to the *santos* or patronal saints with whom one has "connections" (whom do I know). One can approach the *santo* much like a *suki* with whom one can bargain familiarly.

It would seem then that Filipino individualism or personalism makes the Filipino cut down God to his size which is a very un-Christian attitude. The task of the Filipino individual and Philippine society is one of synthesis and re-integration so that Christianity can permeate and transform Filipino values into Christian values. Again a genuine understanding of the origins, determinants, and potentials of Filipino values as well as that of the essentials, not merely the externals, of Christianity is a necessary condition for the Christian renewal of Filipino values.

#### FILIPINO VALUES IN GENERAL

Let us now consider in general the potential of some Filipino values for good or evil and how they can be made to work *for* us instead of *against* us. In the Filipino scale of values resulting from the close family kinship system, three traditional values hold a primacy, namely: (1) *authoritarianism*, (2) *personalism*, and (3) *small group centeredness*.

The primacy of the Filipino family, both nuclear and extended, in Filipino motivation and behavior has both its advantages and disadvantages. It is true that the patterns of dependence fostered by the traditional Filipino family develops in the individual attitudes of passive acceptance, lack of self-confidence and initiative, but family closeness and loyalty also helps much to the permanence of marriage and the stability of the family which is the basic unit of society. Although family solidarity militates against national identity and unity, the problems arising here in the Philippines from divorce and broken homes are not as wide-spread and serious as in other countries like the United States. But divorce is not the only evil affecting the Filipino family. It would be quite revealing

to gather statistics on the number of "forced" marriages, illegitimate pregnancies, abortions in the Philippines, not to mention the evils of marital infidelity and the "querida" system.

In extolling the Filipino family and its family values, one should not conclude that the Filipino Christian has no higher loyalty than to his family, or that the Filipino citizen, no higher loyalty than to his country. The Filipino family should not be an end in itself and it should be preparing the young for higher loyalties and responsibilities. The *tayo-tayo* (just us) attitude, which usually means "my family first" or "my party first" has led to many an abuse like nepotism and graft in business and politics but it can also contribute to family togetherness and security. For instance, if Filipino husbands had the correct "my family first" attitude, they would spend much more of their recreation with their family rather than with their business associates, golf partners, or male friends. However, as it now operates, the *tayo-tayo* attitude does not in fact lead to a Christian value and this is precisely where the problem lies. We must try to find out why this value, although it can, actually does not operate in the direction of a Christian value.

A very significant factor in the Filipino's value-system is the authority figure which likewise has both its negative and positive aspects. It is very important for the individual to be approved by those in authority—parents, teachers, parish, priest, the company boss, or the party in power. There is an almost automatic projection toward the authority figure whenever an individual decision has to be made—will the policeman catch me if I overspeed? Will the parish priest get angry if I wear a sleeveless dress? Is this the answer the teacher wants? Will my parents approve of the boy I am going to marry? Is it all right with the boss if I exceed my expense account? Will my father allow me to take up law? If the authority figure disapproves then either no decision or a compromise is made. Parents often misuse their authority to manipulate their children for their own selfish interests. They tell their children that they only have their success and happiness at heart when really they are more interested in the family's



name and reputation. Yet parental authority can be used wisely to help children make intelligent choices. It is commonplace in the Philippines for public officials to abuse their authority for their own personal advantage and self-aggrandisement instead of serving the public interest and the common good of the country. What sins and corrupt practices have been committed in the name of public authority here in the Philippines! Yet public authority can be used as an apostolate of sacrifice and service. Christ washing the feet of the apostles should be a symbol of public service for all government officials.

Authoritarianism is not the same thing as authority. One can be authoritarian even if he has no authority whatsoever. A person who is authoritarian demands blind obedience at the expense of individual liberty. An authoritarian mother can dictatorially and peremptorily so dominate the life of her daughter that she is not even allowed to choose her future husband. An authoritarian teacher by absolutely demanding that his students always give the answer in the book may not realize that they are being deprived of the opportunity to think and decide for themselves. As such authoritarianism sacrifices or mutilates self-dependence and personal development and maturity. A person in authority who realizes that authoritarianism is a disvalue and detrimental to personal development can be led more easily to understand the meaning and proper use of authority.

The Christian meaning of authority is one of *service*. Authority is not the power to coerce. Its function is to serve personal freedom so that the individual can develop to Christian maturity and to serve the common good so that society can achieve its national aspirations and goals. Now the present day conflict between authority and freedom, between authoritarianism and personalism is largely due to the lack of communication between those who possess or exercise authority and those who are subject to authority. It must be added that the possibility of communication should take into account the degree of maturity and responsibility of the subjects involved. Parents should not perpetuate imaginary and false reasons for their

commands like *mumu*, *bombay*, or *aswang*. Rather than merely impose, they should bring a child to see that what they want him to do is what he should do for his own good and that of the family. Today the liberal ideas many Filipino College students learn from school come into open conflict with the traditional ideas of their conservative parents. One way of striking a happy balance between tradition and progress is communication between parents and children by means of frank discussion. One of the greatest obstacles to individual Christian maturity is the authoritarianism of the traditional Filipino family and of the Church in the Philippines and yet the Christian exercise of authority as service can be a very potent force for Christian renewal of Filipino values.

It has also been shown that the individualism or personalism and the small group centeredness of the Filipino personality has hindered rather than helped towards nation-building and towards the growth of the Mystical Body of Christ or the Church in the Philippines. It has been pointed out that we Filipinos are sadly lacking in "social consciousness" of the common good. That is why our homes are immaculately clean and our public toilets are foul and dirty. That is why we do nothing about the problem of garbage collection or rutted roads as long as it does not affect our family and home. The Filipino electorate is typically individualistic in its motivation and voting pattern. The question the candidate must answer, if he is to get the vote of the Filipino, is not "What is in it for the country?" but "What is in it *for me*, or my family, or my party"? Politics in the Philippines usually means "my party first and my country second". Because of authoritarianism and individualism, communication between father and son is almost non-existent. Due to small-group centeredness or thinking, Filipino students tend to form their own gang or barkada and anyone outside the group including their parents are considered strangers and must be kept at a distance. Many Filipino Catholics regard the Mass as a matter of personal devotion rather than community worship. That is why they would rather recite the rosary than participate in the *Missa Recitata*. For the most part Filipino Catholics confess individual not social sins. It is rare for a society matron to confess

that she has squandered superfluous wealth on jewelry instead of providing employment for her *kababayan* or countrymen. The *tayo-tayo* mentality has led to graft and corruption in the government. Unlike the Japanese, we Filipinos still lack the national discipline and sacrifice necessary for socio-economic development and growth. Although we are one nation with one Christian faith, regionalism and factionalism are still strong and a collective sense of the Christian community and the "people of God" is sadly lacking.

If in the past the *ako* (I) or *kami* (us) mentality has had harmful effects on national and Christian unity and growth, personalism and small-group centeredness can also be a great potential for Christian values. In discussing the role of the individual in Christian renewal, we pointed out the necessity and importance of genuine personalism. An authentic individualism is a bridge to the understanding and realization of the Christian meaning of person, freedom, and love. In the dogma of the Trinity we find the mystery of three Persons who freely love one another and the Trinitarian life is precisely the perfect model of Christian love of God and neighbor. Christian individualism should help us Filipinos love and trust one another as unique persons and make us realize that our Catholic faith is not a matter of duty or conformity to social expectations but a matter of a free and personal response of love to Christ. Christian personalism should help the Filipino husband treat his wife not as a servant but as another person and companion; it should make the Filipino family realize that maids and the household help are also other human persons made to the image of God. We Filipinos must learn to work with one another but we cannot do so unless we trust one another and we can only be "open" to one another if we treat each other as unique persons. There is no reason why Filipino personalism cannot lead to Christian dialogue or the "I"-*"You"* relationship of person to person. The "I"—*"You"* dialogal relationship in turn can serve as a bridge to Christian personal commitment. It is characteristic of the Filipino to foster "smooth interpersonal relations". Although it is not identical with personalism, SIR is actually a behavior mechanism by which an individual is prevented

from relating himself to another authentically as a person. This does not imply that it is not a good value. On the contrary, it helps and facilitates ordinary social relations and can structure a situation where interpersonal or "I"- "You" relationships can develop.

Small group centeredness can not only work for evil but also for good. In the Philippines, this attitude and value gets things done. Many civic and community projects as well as Catholic action works have been accomplished by small groups. The Christian value of social justice and charity demands concerted action and group activity. Again there is no reason why our in-group cannot be made to work for us instead of against us. We have heard of the huge success of the *cursillos* or mission retreats and the conversions that have been the result of the workings of grace and of small group dynamics. In the task of nation-building, the small group can play a very important role as a vehicle of change, of mutual trust, and individual responsibility by means of group discussion.<sup>18</sup> The small alliance group closes the gap between the old closed family group and the new impersonal big group of labor, business, and politics. For example, in the College authoritarian ways of teaching can be changed by a new learning situation and a problem-solving approach which is feasible only in small group discussions. The Filipino innovator will succeed in initiating social change only if he bands together with a new in-group which will provide him with the social approval he needs. Likewise the Catholic layman by means of a new barkada can help introduce needed reforms in the Church. The hope of the future lies in the vision of a new Church and a new Philippines which should inspire and urge the new Filipino lay apostle to transcend his "closed" family and "small" group-thinking and act in the direction of a much "larger" group which is truly universal and Catholic, namely, nationhood and the future Church in the Philippines.

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<sup>18</sup> Jaime Bulatao, S.J., "Psychotherapeutic Attitudes and Techniques in Nation Building," *Science Review* (National Science Development Board) VI (1965), 3-7.

## PARTICULAR FILIPINO VALUES

Let us now consider in particular a few other concrete examples of how Filipino values can either work *against* or *for* Christian values.

*Bahala na.* An example of the *bahala na* attitude is that of the typical Filipino tenant who on the occasion of a town fiesta does not care if he spends all its earnings for the sake of "*mabuting pakikisama*". So what, if he does not have any savings left to pay his long standing debts, to provide for the needs of his household, to buy seeds and fertilizer for the next planting season, to improve his lot and provide for the future of his family? After all, if worse comes to worst he can always bargain with his landlord, borrow more money from the Chinese middleman, even though he be in perpetual debt. Who cares? or so what? *Bahala na.* Another example of the *bahala na* attitude is that of the student who has a choice between studying for an examination and going to the movie. Having made up his mind to do the latter, he says to himself "Why bother about studying for the exam? Who cares if I flunk the test? Perhaps I can make it up in the next exam. Who knows if the teacher might call off the scheduled test? *Bahala na.* These are instances of the negative use of the *bahala na* attitude which is tantamount to the Filipino *ningas kugon* or *mañana* habit, failings which show a lack of a sense of responsibility and of a false trust in Providence.

Linguists tell us that *bahala na* does not refer to the god *Bathala* nor does the expression mean "God will provide" as has been wrongly interpreted in the past. Priests often use it wrongly as equivalent to trust in divine Providence. Rather *bahala na* as it now operates in actual Filipino behavior is a kind of fatalistic resignation which really represents a withdrawal from engagement or crisis or a shirking of personal responsibility. If this is the case, then the Filipino must try to substitute in its place the Christian value of trust in God and in divine Providence. This Christian attitude of "God will provide" does not exclude a sense of personal responsibility and human providence. If we do our part to solve our human problems, God will do His part and provide for whatever is

lacking in our human effort. A Christian sense of responsibility and of trust in Divine Providence is the positive use of the *bahala na* attitude.

*Utang na loob.* Reciprocity or the debt of gratitude or honor is of primary importance in the Filipino value-system. In the Philippines *utang na loob* has in the past largely worked against the individual. Within the family, it has come to mean that children are expected to provide for their parents in their old age since they owe not only their life but also their entire education to their parents. This *utang na loob* extends to one's older brothers or sisters who have helped in rearing and educating their younger brothers or sisters. The worst thing that can be said of the child who does not pay this debt of gratitude is that he is an "ingrate" (*walang utang na loob*) or that he is without shame (*walang hiya*). A constant factor in the motivations of College students is *utang na loob*. They apply themselves to their studies because they do not wish to be "*mapahiya*" to their parents. *Utang na loob* permeates and influences all facets of the Filipino way of life—business, education, politics, morality and religion—and has been blamed for almost all the evils of Philippine society such as the "*lagay*" system (bribery and extortion), graft and corruption in politics and in the government, smuggling, and so forth. For example, if the Filipino voter is willing to sell his vote to return a favor done to him by an unworthy candidate, *utang na loob* is to blame.

Up to now it seems that the popularization and propaganda use of *utang na loob* have created the impression that this Filipino attitude or value is something bad in itself and is one of the causes of present-day evils in the Philippines. Foreign as well as local writers who give a stereotyped description of the Filipino and his values too often tend to stress the negative aspects and harmful effects of Philippine values. For instance, H. Spence in his book, *For Every Tear a Victory*, writes devastatingly about Filipino values. Perhaps *utang na loob* may seem evil relative to another culture, but is it necessarily so, given the Filipino personality and psychology within the context of his own culture? The Filipino's own experience of *utang*

na loob is a very human and very positive experience and can be the basis of the Christian value of gratitude, loyalty, and fidelity. The experience of an undying debt of gratitude and reciprocity to one's parents and elders even when they are wrong and have failed us, of a sense of loyalty to the person, not the corrupt practices, of a government official who saved one's life during the Japanese occupation, or, all things being equal, to vote for an Ilocano candidate because one is an Ilocano, need not necessarily be something bad to be ashamed of or ignored. It is told of a *Subano* chief that he expressed utang na loob in the following Visayan manner: "*Ang utang sa sapi bayran, impas dayon; apan ang utang kabobotun bayran, utang giha-pon.*" (A financial debt paid is paid; a debt of gratitude paid remains a debt.) It is this very human and positive element in utang na loob which has hitherto been neglected. Perhaps a more phenomenological and existential approach to utang na loob will shed some light on the positive relevance of this Filipino value to the Christian value of charity as gratitude.

*Pakikisama.* Likewise this Filipino value of "belongingness" and loyalty to one's in-group, of "being a good sport", has acquired a pejorative meaning and its positive aspects have been lost sight of. For instance, a *sabungero* who wins in a cockfight is expected by his group to spend all the money he won on his bet so that he can give a "blow out" to the whole group. If he refuses or tries to save some of that money for his family, he is called "*mayabang*" (proud) or *kuripot* (stingy). In other words, he is regarded as a very bad sport (*masamang pakikisama*). So he yields to social pressure even to the point of being in debt again or dead drunk on *basi* or *tuba* just in order to have *mabuting pakikisama*. This example will suffice to show the wrong understanding and use of pakikisama.

To be secure the individual needs a sense of belongingness to a group of one's own kind and the price of security is loyalty to one's in-group. To belong to a group demands a spirit of cooperation, an attitude of give and take, a sensitivity to the feelings of others. These positive aspects of pakikisama are better expressed by the word *bayanihan* or togetherness. It is the true spirit of pakikisama that has given us one the eighth

wonders of the world, the rice terraces of Banawe. It is interesting to note that the great pyramids of Egypt were built at the expense of human dignity and freedom. Hundreds of thousands of slaves worked and died in order to satisfy the selfish ambition of the Pharaohs. But the Banawe rice terraces will not only remain a wonder of the world but a lasting monument to human dignity and freedom since they were built so that human beings could be free from hunger and want and maintain their dignity and creativity. It is the spirit of *bayanihan* that gave us our native songs and folk dances and that inspired the Bayanihan Philippine Dance Troupe famous the world over.

Pakikisama can become a positive value, if it is modified to apply not only to one's small group but to the larger community to which one really owes a deeper *utang na loob*. It makes the individual realize his *oneness* with the community and his personal commitment and loyalty to the community in return for a debt that he can never repay. For his own good is so bound up with the good of the community that without group identity he really has no self-identity. This is what Fr. Eugene Moran, S.J. means by "community development", namely, that the individual does not come as an outsider to improve the community but rather becomes part of the community and gets himself involved with the community interests, convinced that only by developing the community can he develop his own personality. The positive value inherent in the Filipino concept of *pakikisama* can be reoriented not only towards nation-building but also towards the renewal of the Church in the Philippines. The Christian meaning of morality and religion as a "community" or "fellowship" with God, of the Mass as the public worship of the "people of God" and the "Mystical Body of Christ", of the Christian values of social charity and social justice, and of the spirit of Christian unity and "ecumenism" can be understood better and "lived" in practice in terms of one's own actual experience of *pakikisama* properly modified.

*Hiya*. Perhaps the strongest motivation in the behavior of the Filipino is "hiya" or "shame". Fr. Bulatao has already



written capably about the "hiya" system in Philippine culture from the psychological point of view.<sup>19</sup> Suffice it to say that hiya is not of itself a value that is wrong and necessarily to be rejected. It is best to quote Fr. Bulatao's summary:

To sum up, hiya may be defined as a painful emotion arising from a relationship with an authority figure or with society, inhibiting self-assertion in a situation perceived as dangerous to one's ego. *Walang hiya* is the absence of this inhibition, such that the finer feelings of others are given offense. Hiya is conceived as rooted in the undivided ego, which depends upon its primary group as its normal mode of operation rather than upon its individual self. In the present state of affairs, until new, perhaps more interior, controls are developed, the culture has need of hiya to keep the culture from suddenly breaking apart. Meanwhile, there is need of a third type of individual who transcends the level of hiya, and is a mature, individuated person, sensitive to the feelings of others yet autonomous in his own right.<sup>20</sup>

In other words, hiya can become a vice or a virtue. The Filipino who is *walang hiya* lacks certain inhibitions and is insensitive to the feelings of others whereas the Filipina who is *mahiyain* (shy) or *mahinhin* (modest) could be a prude or could develop the value of self respect and decency. The false adulation of a poorly understood value like mahiyain or mahinhin has done a great deal of harm for the cause of Christianity. In the past perhaps some nuns have played on this value to such an extent that the new bride is afraid to undress before her husband or even go to bed with him on their honeymoon. A false sense of mahiyain or mahinhin, accounts for the fact that in some instances a Filipina will go about the house in a slip in front of her father and brothers but will not do the same thing in front of her husband after she is married. In both cases mahiyain or mahinhin has developed into the disvalue of prudishness. However, the natural sense of shame could develop into the Christian value of chastity whose splendor is modesty. The direction which mahiyain or mahinhin will take depends largely on the individual's proper understanding of the value and his choice of alternative courses of action as well as on proper home and school training. The Filipino hiya then, when modified, can

<sup>19</sup> Jaime Bulatao, S.J., "Hiya" *Philippine Studies* XII (July, 1964), 424-438.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 438.

be a potential for the Christian values of chastity and modesty, self-respect and decency, and sensitivity to the feelings of others as persons. It can be the natural basis of the Christian virtue of temperance and prudence. As an external social control or sanction, it should be complemented by the interior Christian motivation of love. The Filipino who has transcended the level of *hiya* is what we mean by the mature and responsible Christian.

From another standpoint, namely, that of conflict as the condition for growth and creativity, traditional Filipino values can be regarded as the potential for Christian values. The conflict between traditional and modern Filipino values can be the catalyst for change and progress, provided the former are properly understood and modified in accord with the latter. On this point let us quote Fr. Bulatao again:

By way of illustration one can take the *bahala na* attitude of the Filipino who is caught between two opposing pressures. The old folks look on *bahala na* as a renunciation of responsibility, an escape from duty. Yet the *bahala na* attitude provided it is modified in such a way that it is done deliberately and with conscious awareness of the risks involved is a very necessary attitude for progress. It implies acceptance of risk, the virtue of the entrepreneur. Without such a modified *bahala na* attitude there can be no progress. Nothing risked, nothing gained.

So too with the *utang na loob*, which is at times taken as a hindrance to the rule of law. *Utang na loob* can be a modern virtue, provided it is modified as applying not only to one person but to many persons. *Utang na loob* to the larger community can mean a loyalty to community interests, a *commitment* in return for a debt that can never be paid.

The same can be said of *hiya*, *pakikisama*, *bayanihan*. All of these have positive values, which when seen in a modern context have the power to arouse the drives of the ancient Filipino and channel them along lines responding to modern needs.

Such are the lines of development that one can foresee for the new Filipino. Such growth comes from conflict, but conflict wisely handled...<sup>21</sup>

In conclusion, we can say that traditional Filipino values, far from being an obstacle to nationhood and Christian renewal,

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<sup>21</sup> Jaime Bulatao, S.J., "The Conflict of Values in Home and School," *loc. cit.*, p. 53.

can be re-orientated and mobilized in the direction of a new Christian Philippines.<sup>22</sup> According to Yves Congar, O.P., one of the great theologians of the second Vatican Council, the Church, being Catholic or universal, can incarnate itself in any culture, within any race or nation, and can come to full life "from within" every people in every age.<sup>23</sup> There is no reason then why Filipino values cannot become the potential for Christian values.

#### CHANGE AND THE CHALLENGE OF THE FUTURE

In order to place this whole discussion within a broader context and a larger perspective, it is necessary to make three final qualifications. First of all, a change in the attitudes and values of the individual demands structured social changes in society. An individual or society will not change unless it is exposed to new experiences, new problems, and new challenges. Since the Filipino people are for the first time in their history being exposed to the new experience of nationhood, democracy, and industry, the challenge of change is in their hands. The Filipino individual will not change his traditional attitudes and values which need to be changed unless he is placed in new situations and challenged by new problems. But Philippine society must set up new social structures in order to make such a change possible.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, the Christian renewal of Filipino

<sup>22</sup> Horacio de la Costa, S.J. "Reorientation and Mobilization of Traditional Values in the Modernization Process of a Christian Society or Community," *Cultural Motivations to Progress and the Three Great Religions in Southeast Asia*. An International Seminar sponsored by the University of the Philippines and the Congress for Cultural Freedom, Manila, June 3-9, 1963.

<sup>23</sup> In *Chrétiens Désunis*, P. Congar had said that "catholicity is above all else the capacity of the Church's principles to assimilate, perfect, sublimiate, win and unite to God the whole of man, all men and all values." Quoted in *The Church's Mission in the World*, by Louis and Andre Rétif, (Glen Rock, N.J.: Deus Century Books, 1964), pp. 67-68.

<sup>24</sup> C. Daryll Forde, in his book *Habitat, Economy and Society* (London: Methuen, 1952) p. 472, has this to say: "On the other hand, the last two centuries have shown only too often that there are limits to the rate of cultural change, and that beyond a certain point the pressure of alien culture results in the internal collapse of the native life without assimilation of the new."

values is not possible without a new set of structured changes in the Philippine Church.

Secondly, the question of changing traditional Filipino values within the process of modernization towards the building of a Christian Philippines must be carefully and seriously re-examined. As we pointed out earlier, the Filipino need not be first Westernized in order to be Christianized. It does not necessarily follow that the Philippines must adopt the democratic form of government or be industrialized to be a Christian community or society. Hitherto, popular and stereotyped presentations of traditional Filipino values have tended to emphasize their negative aspects or treat them as disvalues. It is possible that this impression could be due to an emotional prejudice on the part of the Filipino general reader or audience. However, the question can be asked whether the lack of emphasis on the positive aspects of the Filipino values could be due to a frame of reference which is largely Western. There is a tendency among a few pseudo social scientists, foreign and Filipino, to judge one culture in terms of another culture. Could it be that traditional Filipino values have been criticized in terms of Western material goals and pragmatic standards rather than in terms of Christian ideals and values? Is this not "ethnocentrism"?

Thirdly, how general and how universal are the so-called "traditional Filipino values" which have so far been based on limited studies and on the assumption that Philippine culture as a whole is homogeneous? In the objective and scientific study of Filipino values there is danger of treating these values in too narrow a sense, that is, merely from the psychological, sociological, or anthropological point of view. A more *human* understanding of the attitudes and values of a people can come from a more basic philosophical insight into these values. As we pointed out in regard to *utang na loob*, there is need for a more phenomenological and existential approach to Filipino values. Moreover, to really understand Filipino values *sympathetically*, one must see them in the context of Philippine history. A human person cannot be known by direct conceptualization or merely in terms of scientific categories; a person

can only be known directly by love. These seems to have been a tendency among a few pseudo-social scientists to generalize and to reduce all Filipinos and their values to one level of objectification. No less than an anthropologist like Robert Redfield notes that "it is easy enough to be objective toward objects; but the human individual refuses to be only an object."<sup>25</sup>

#### RECAPITULATION

To sum up, we must read in the signs of the time, in the sad state of morality and religion in the Philippines, and as the second Vatican Council urges us, the designs of God for a Christian renewal of the Church in the Philippines. There is no reason why Filipino values cannot be the potential for this Christian renewal. Such a renewal must come about from the Filipino individual as well as from Philippine society. There is need for a re-vitalization of Catholic moral and religious education in our Universities and Colleges so that the Filipino College graduate will be personally and totally committed to Christ. Filipino values can be re-oriented and mobilized not only towards nation-building but towards a new Christian Philippines. For the Church can be made incarnate only "from within" a culture. To overcome "split-level Christianity" in the Philippines, no human model will suffice. Christian renewal of Filipino values and "lived" Christianity means, in the words of St. Paul, to put on the new man, "to put on the Lord Jesus Christ". (Romans 13/11-14).

<sup>25</sup> Robert Redfield, *The Primitive World and its Transformations* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1953).

What we are trying to say is better expressed by an authority on Cebuano rural marriage customs: "The psychologist, the educator, and the social scientist *stand the risk of losing a true view of their subject (italics mine)*, if they isolate him from his own peculiar setting,—the framework of the particular environmental influence of his family, and the broader cultural milieu to which he belongs.

There is today an increasing awareness of the need to understand the Filipino better, but no real knowledge of the Filipino mentality and way of life can be reached unless a deeper penetration is made into the community in which he was born and reared. . . .

Many difficulties present themselves in studies of this nature. Family sociology is a rather intimate field; facts are personal and self-

revealing, language and culture barriers exist. Moreover, ethnic and regional differences have become more complicated with the influx of foreign influences and the accompanying changes in outlook and in ways of living as the Filipino family makes efforts to adapt itself to the inevitable process of transition." [Mrs. Lourdes R. Quisumbing, *Marriage Customs in Rural Cebu*, San Carlos Publications (Manila: Catholic Trade School, 1965), 64-65.]