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From Colonial to Liberation Psychology, by Enriquez

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From Colonial to Liberation Psychology. The Philippine Experience.

By Virgilio G. Enriquez. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1992. xvi, 169 pages.

Critical analysts who adhere to the mimetic theory consider a work of art as a mirror of the world around them. However, some mirrors can create an image not entirely proper to reality, as we see in amusement parks and fun houses. This optical illusion, though, is obvious to anyone who knows what he sees; an amusing distortion of reality—an elongated face, a protruding behind, and an obtuse profile. *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology* makes us aware of the distortion, or inability and inappropriateness, of a psychology imported from alien ground and transferred to the Philippine setting.

The structure of the book can be divided into three parts. The first discusses the historical background of psychology in the Philippines. The second discusses the Filipino language and the use of indigenous terms in Philippine psychology. The final section calls for liberation from a colonial psychology.

The psychology in Philippine universities come mostly from the United States, France and, Germany. Many of the best Philippine psychology professors studied in the United States. Hence, from the historical sketch, we get a sense of our being ultra Skinner, ultra Freud, ultra Jung, and ultra Piaget. Therefore, foreign concepts are brought to our shores to analyze the mind and soul of Filipinos. Should we not then change the apple into the papaya?

Kapwa, *pakikiramdam*, *kagandahang-loob*, and other Filipino terms—cannot be adequately translated by the English language. Moreover, language portrays a characteristic or quality often found only in their respective countries. English will picture an American as being able to express the independence of individuals, for example. Filipino will picture the Filipino with a shared inner self, the *kapwa*.

Finally, imported psychology sometimes has misunderstood the Filipino. *Hiya*, *pakikisama*, and *utang na loob* are seen as adverse traits, when a foreign lens is used to analyze them. This foreign lens makes us unable to see our sense of dignity, brotherhood, and good natured gratitude in these traits.

Enriquez is an avowed nationalist. And, nationalists, too, can have detached and objective analyses of American intervention. I salute this indigenous psychology for creating a path for the future Filipino psychologist. People interested in the social sciences will find a treasure trove of insights here and a challenge to reappraise western concepts blindly sown in Philippine soil.

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