

# ***Pakikisáma* in Dialogue with Aquinas' *Amicitia*, i.e., Charity in Friendship**

*Wilhelm Boñon, OP\**

University of Santo Tomas, Manila, Philippines

**Abstract:** *Pakikisáma* is a Filipino term that describes the value of social harmony and the ability to get along with others. Usually, we consider *pakikisáma* as a form of Filipino value, but can we also treat it as a virtue? This paper presents the dynamic interplay between the Filipino virtue of *pakikisáma* and Aquinas' concept of charity within the context of friendship, i.e., *amicitia*. The paper aims to forge a compelling dialogue that uncovers the profound connection between these two virtues. By scrutinizing the nature of *pakikisáma* within the framework of Aquinas' virtue ethics, this exploration aims to discern whether this deeply ingrained Filipino value aligns with the criteria of virtue, thus enriching our understanding of *pakikisáma*. This paper seeks to unravel the rich connection between these seemingly disparate yet interconnected virtues.

**Keywords:** Thomas Aquinas, *Amicitia*, Charity, Virtue, Filipino Virtues, *Pakikisama*

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\*Wilhelm B. Boñon, O.P. can be contacted at [wilhelm.bonon.eccle@ust.edu.ph](mailto:wilhelm.bonon.eccle@ust.edu.ph).

## Introduction

In the intricate interplay of culture and philosophy, the Filipino virtue of *pakikisáma* finds a thought-provoking dialogue partner in Aquinas' concept of charity, particularly within the context of friendship, i.e., *amicitia*. Aquinas' virtue ethics provides invaluable guidance and structure to those who wish to understand virtue more fully, facilitating a more systematic and coherent understanding of Filipino virtues.

In this paper, we delve into the dialogue between Aquinas' concept of charity and the Filipino virtue of *pakikisáma*, illuminating the profound connection between them. The paper shall discuss the nature of *pakikisáma*: Although *pakikisáma* is considered a cultural value for Filipinos, when in dialogue with Aquinas, can it be considered a virtue? This paper discovers how the virtue of charity in Aquinas' virtue ethics can facilitate a more systematic and coherent understanding of the Filipino virtue of *pakikisáma*.

### ***Pakikisáma's Etymological Meaning***

Filipino values or virtues should always be associated with interpersonal relationships. One of these so called Filipino virtues is called *pakikisáma*. *Pakikisáma* is a Filipino term that describes the value of social harmony and the ability to get along with others. It is a cultural trait in the Philippines that emphasizes the importance of maintaining good relationships with others and showing respect and consideration for others.

*Pakikisáma* also entails harmony among groups. The term is also used to describe the Filipino way of building relationships with others. It involves showing empathy, kindness, and respect towards other individuals and adapting to different social situations and environments. One can hear this word in the Philippines contextualized in organizations, workplaces, and in friendships. Most working companies and organizations in the Philippines hold team-building activities to foster fellowship among their members. It is a valued trait in Filipino society and is often seen as the key to success in personal and professional relationships.

The word *pakikisáma* is sometimes translated with the English word "camaraderie," but this word waters down the rich meaning of the Filipino expression. To understand the nuance of *pakikisáma*, it is critical to look at the word's etymology. The root of this word in Filipino is *sáma* which means to "go along with," which is linked with the words *kasáma* or *sámahan*. *Kasáma* can be translated as companion,

partner, associate, or colleague. It refers to a person who is with you in a particular activity or journey or someone you share an experience with. *Kasáma* can also refer to a group of people who are together in a particular place or situation, such as colleagues at work, classmates in school, or members of a team. The prefix *ka-* derives from the word *kápuwâ* which literally denotes a fellow human person or a companion.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the word *sámahan* is a Filipino term that translates to “company” or “association” in English. It refers to a group of people who come together for a specific purpose or shared interest, such as a social organization, club, or team. *Sámahan* can also refer to a person’s companions or friends, or the act of keeping someone company. The words *kasáma* and *sámahan* are often used in the context of Filipino culture to describe the importance of building strong relationships and social connections with others.

In *pakikisáma*, the prefix *pakiki* is added to the word *sáma*. The prefix *paki* when added to *sama* becomes the word *pakisama* as a request or an appeal to oblige.<sup>2</sup> The prefix *pakiki*, meanwhile, conveys a sense of mutual involvement and cooperation, emphasizing the importance of working together and participating in activities as a group.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Pakikisáma* in Filipino society**

*Pakikisáma* is considered in this paper as a trait that is “analogous” to a virtue as it is understood by Western philosophers. As Reyes would say, when we treat Filipino values as virtues, we would upgrade their status. They would not just be about cultural valuing but would now be “consider[ed] moral standards such as good and evil, right and wrong. It treats not only what people want but what is genuinely good for them.”<sup>4</sup> For Aquinas, virtue is an operative habit (*habitus operativus*) in a power of the soul (*potentia animae*) which produces good works (*boni operativus*).<sup>5</sup> Filipino values can be considered analogous “virtues” as they are also considered operative habits that produce good works in relation to *loób*. Reyes explains that the “*loób* is the ‘holistic and relational will’ of a person.”<sup>6</sup> And so, for Reyes, “just as

<sup>1</sup> Cleofas, Jacklyn. “An Account of Virtue and Solidarity from Pakikipagkápuwâ” *QUEST: Studies on Religion & Culture in Asia* [Online], Volume 1 (31 May 2016), 79.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Jeremiah Reyes, “In Defense of Hiya as a Filipino Virtue.” *Asian Philosophy* 26, no. 1, (2016), 25.

<sup>5</sup> *Summa Theologiae I-II*, q. 55, a. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Reyes, “In Defense of Hiya as a Filipino Virtue.” 22.

Aquinas described virtue as a habit of a power of the soul, such as the reason or the will, we can also describe the Filipino virtues as a habit of the *loób*.<sup>7</sup>

Like the other Filipino virtues, *pakikisáma* has ambivalent interpretations – it can either be taken either positively or negatively. Some psychologists and philosophers have different ways of interpreting *pakikisáma*. Jocano is more positive in his interpretation:

Pakikisáma refers to the commonly shared expectations, desires, or requests to get along with someone if necessary for the group's good. It is derived from the root word *sáma*, meaning “to accompany, to go along with.” “Getting along with” does not mean blind conformity to traditional ways because one can refuse to do so. Rather, it is a willingness to subordinate one's own interest in favor of others, in the spirit of harmony, friendship, cooperation, and deference to majority decision so that group goals can be easily achieved.<sup>8</sup>

One must take note of Jocano's interpretation of *pakikisáma*, negating the interpretation that this Filipino virtue is just a practice of blind conformity to traditional ways. It is primarily a virtue of getting along with others for the sake of the good of the group. It reveals itself primarily when someone considers what is the best course of action in consideration of his group or his friend. It is aligning one's action for the sake of the good of the community or group. According to the *Komisyon ng Wikang Filipino* (KWF), the official regulating body of the Filipino language and a government institution charged with developing, preserving, and promoting the various local Philippine languages, *pakikisáma* means *pakikibagay sa ugali ng iba, pakikipagkápuwâ-tao; pagpapakita ng kabutihan sa kápuwâ*, which can be translated to English as “adapting to others' attitudes, treating others with kindness; showing goodness to others.”<sup>9</sup> Once again, the KWF presents the positive meaning of this virtue, that is, the commission highlights *pakikisáma* as showing goodness to others in the group. Saito refers to this virtue as “an interpersonal relationship where people are friendly with each other.”<sup>10</sup> To have *pakikisáma* involves avoiding causing harm to others, being a responsible and positive member of one's family and peers, and fostering positive relationships with those around them. *Pakikisáma* also requires a willingness to share the same opinions and decisions with the group, to conform to

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Jeremiah Reyes, “Loób and Kapwa: An Introduction to a Filipino Virtue Ethics,” *Asian Philosophy* 25, no. 2 (March 2015): pp. 148-171, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09552367.2015.1043173>, 174.

<sup>9</sup> *Komisyon ng Wikang Filipino* (KWF). *Diksiyonáryo ng Wikang Filipino*.

<sup>10</sup> Saito, Isamo. “Pakikisama: A Filipino Trait,” 1.

its standards and expectations, to empathize with others, to be accommodating, and to extend help and sympathy in times of need and sorrow.

As do the other Filipino virtues, *pakikisáma* can also become vicious. When treated negatively, it could lead to negative behaviors of just going along with the group merely to have a good and smooth relationship with others, ignoring the morality of a decision or action. In this vicious sense, *pakikisáma* becomes conformity to whatever the majority wants for the sake of being non-confrontational and avoiding hurting somebody in the process. In this sense, *pakikisáma* becomes a mere emotional response due to peer-pressure. This is connected to how Virgilio Enriquez, a Filipino psychologist, defines *pakikisáma* as “yielding to the leader or majority.”<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, Franck Lynch considers *pakikisáma* as sometimes synonymous with smooth interpersonal relations: Lynch simplifies it to mean “giving in” or “following the lead or suggestion of another” – or in a word, concession.<sup>12</sup> It is giving in to the leader’s or majority’s wishes to achieve a unanimous group decision. Being a hold-out and going against the group’s consensus is generally frowned upon by Filipinos. In Filipino culture, *pakikisáma* could have the negative side of letting others do corrupt practices or wrong actions for the sake of peace and a smooth relationship with each other. No one wants to be the *walang pakisáma* (no camaraderie) or the *KJ* (killjoy) of the group. A killjoy is a person who deliberately spoils the enjoyment of others through non-conformity. Filipinos use these terms to call out people who do not want to follow the majority or the one who rats out those who made mistakes and thereby endangers the group’s image. For example, a worker in a company or government discovers that a colleague is stealing office supplies or company property. The worker reports his colleague’s behavior to the manager or HR department, leading to an investigation and potential disciplinary action. The colleague who was caught stealing might view the whistleblower as a “killjoy” or *walang pakisáma* for betraying her trust and causing her to face the consequences for her actions. The other employees may also view the whistleblower as someone who is not a team player and who is willing to undermine his colleagues for personal gain or to show off his loyalty to the company. Significantly, in Filipino culture, it is not good to be labeled as *walang pakisáma*. Instead, everyone wants to be the *magaling makisáma* or “good in relationships.” However, this negative way of doing *pakikisáma*, as Jocano would argue, goes against the true meaning of this Filipino virtue, which is not about blindly following the majority of the group but it is about building and maintaining positive relationships through social adeptness and cooperation. As Reyes would say,

<sup>11</sup> Reyes, “Loób and Kapwa: An Introduction to a Filipino Virtue Ethics,” 174.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

“a positive and responsible pakikisama knows how to discern if something really is for the welfare of the group, and knows how to refuse if it leads to their disadvantage.”<sup>13</sup> Citing Jocano, Reyes adds, “Pakikisama means to get along if it is necessary for the good of the group.”<sup>14</sup>

When considered in relation to the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition, the treatment of *pakikisáma* can be understood within the account of how there is a “unity of the virtues” according to Aquinas. *Pakikisáma* is then only a virtue when it is informed by the higher virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. *Pakikisáma* is only a virtue when the common good it privileges is a true common good and not a counterfeit or false good. When *pakikisáma* is done in relation to a counterfeit or false good, it then becomes a vice.

If we look at the phrase *marunong siyang makisáma* which is roughly translated into English as “that person knows how to get along,” this phrase is often used to describe someone who is socially adept and able to interact with others in a friendly and cooperative manner. In Filipino culture, being able to *makisáma* is highly valued as it fosters social harmony and cooperation. It is essential to correct the negative connotation of *pakikisáma* as someone who just conforms to majority, thus promoting a herd mentality. Filipinos should rediscover the true meaning of *pakikisáma*, which emphasizes the importance of positive relationships and social harmony which can be used for nation building and cooperation.

Without this Filipino virtue of *pakikisáma*, the person is perceived to be a selfish person who is only concerned about what is best for him or what is favorable to him. This person’s actions are governed by his selfish interests, and he forgets the benefit of working together for a common goal. Not having *pakikisáma* can lead to the person being viewed as uncooperative. This could result in the person’s social isolation or exclusion from certain groups or activities. Imagine a Filipino attending a party or a gathering where the food is limited, and he notices that some people have not eaten yet or have not had enough to eat. In this situation, a person who values *pakikisáma* would likely exhibit the values of sharing and moderation to ensure that everyone gets a fair share; politeness by declining to take additional servings even if offered, not to deprive others of their share; and empathy by being empathetic to the needs of others and to those who may be feeling hungry or left out. This behavior of the person who has *pakikisáma* contributes to maintaining social harmony and a positive atmosphere during the gathering. On the other hand, if the person chooses

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<sup>13</sup> Reyes, “Loób and Kapwa: An Introduction to a Filipino Virtue Ethics,” 175.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

not to practice *pakikisáma* in this situation, the person might prioritize his own needs and desires, taking larger portions or ignoring the needs of others, which could lead to tension or discomfort among the guests. Therefore, Filipino virtue of *pakikisama* moderate his desire for more food by thinking of the needs of the others.

### ***Pakikisáma* in the Context of Filipino Relationships**

To better understand how Filipinos act in *pakikisáma*, one must understand how Filipinos see their relationships with one another. Here, we interrogate the Filipino words, *kabayan* or *kababayan*, and *kapatid* to understand how Filipinos value their relationships, leading to their prioritizing the virtue of *pakikisáma*.

The terms, *kabayan* and *kababayan*, refer to a relationship that is based on geography and location. It may just be a shallow type of relationship, where two people who do not know each other are superficially connected because of a common knowledge or a common experience of their common hometown.<sup>15</sup> A good example of this relationship is the relationship between Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) living abroad. They call their fellow Filipinos *kabayan* to make a sort of connection with the other. If you call someone a *kabayan* abroad, this generates a feeling of being at home and being able to trust the other. In Pangasinan, one of the regions of the Philippines, *kabayan* is expressed creatively as *kabaléyan*, which has a deeper meaning for the Pangasinan-speaking locals. It takes its roots from *baléy*, with the accent on the second syllable, which can mean the “shell” of the egg of seashells or the “amniotic sac.”<sup>16</sup> The amniotic sac is a bag full of fluid inside a woman’s womb where the unborn baby develops and grows. People recognize relationships with the other by identifying that they are related not only geographically but also personally because they have the same roots. They are family. They treat each other as brothers and sisters. Their belonging to the same town means that they have a personal connection to the other and it is this common origin that capacitates a deeper kind of relationship.

The terms, *kapatid* and *utol*, are also related and can help us to understand *pakikisáma*. The Filipino term for “brother/sister” is *kapatid*. The *ka-* is a prefix to denote sharing, while *patid* means a “snap,” as on a rope. Therefore, *kapatid* means that we share one umbilical cord emphasizing how we share our life and aspirations. While *utol* is usually used among friends, this is derived from the term *kaputol ng*

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Mary Help of Christians Theology Seminary (MHCTS), “The Age of Pananabangan,” *Lucis*, December 2015, 7.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 7.

*pusod* which is literally translated “to cut off from the navel” or “to cut from the umbilical cord.” This phrase emphasizes a close relationship by highlighting that we share our mother’s umbilical cord. This is related to the Ilocano word *kabagis* which also relates to the *bagis* or intestine or the umbilical cord. Once again, it showcases the relationship of your friend or companion as connected to you as a brother or a sister. These terms all reflect the importance of social relationships and harmony in Filipino culture.

As a *kabayan*, *kababayan*, or *kapatid*, a Filipino is expected to have *pakikisáma*. There are a lot of terms in the Philippines that show our desire to find a connection with the other. Filipinos value relationships and relationships determine how a Filipino acts. When one finds a connection, it is easier to have *pakikisáma*. These terms emphasized blood relations and kinship, an emphasis that survives until today. The combined result of both connectivity and kinship is best seen in how the native Filipinos see the spirits of the departed ancestors. This remained a very powerful and living force in the life of the natives. As Reyes would point out, this connection to each person is deeply connected to Filipino animism that “emphasized the connectivity of all things.”<sup>17</sup> We are all connected to the same origin, to the same roots. We are all connected even to creation, which is why we are all brothers and sisters. Ancient Filipinos saw the other as part of the tribe or clan. As one belonging to one and the same clan, they expected that one will work towards the good of the group by cooperation and fellowship, minding the needs and feelings of others.

### ***Pakikisáma* and Other Filipino virtues**

As they are in the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition, the virtues are all interconnected in the Filipino worldview. *Pakikisáma* is interconnected with other virtues which connect the *loób*, one’s relational will, with that of the *kápuwâ* or *kapwa*, which is the other understood as one’s shared self. Here, we will reflect upon how *pakikisáma* can be understood in relation with the other Filipino virtues.

#### *Pakikisáma and Pakikipagkápuwâ*

The word *kápuwâ* in the early Tagalog-Spanish dictionaries, “formerly written as ‘capoua,’ was defined as *igual* (equal), *ambos* (both), *entrambos* (both) and *ambos á dos igualmente*, which means ‘both two equally.’”<sup>18</sup> Enriquez emphasizes the unique meaning of *kapwa* as opposed to the simple translation of it as “others.”

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>18</sup> Reyes, “Loób and Kapwa: An Introduction to a Filipino Virtue Ethics,” 97.



In Filipino, it does not simply pertain to “others” but to the unity of the “self” and “others.”<sup>19</sup> The English “others” is actually used in opposition to the “self,” and implies the recognition of the self as a separate identity. *Kapwa* is a recognition of shared identity, an inner self shared with others.<sup>20</sup> Katrin De Guia says that the *kapwa* is a shared self that extends the *I* to include the *other*.<sup>21</sup> *Kapwa* recognizes shared identity, an inner self shared with others.<sup>22</sup> Jocano also emphasizes this unique expression of *kapuwa*: “the term *kapuwa* means ‘of the same nature,’ ‘of equal status,’ ‘a partnership,’ and ‘a shared orientation.’”<sup>23</sup>

For Filipinos the *kápuwâ*-orientation is normative.<sup>24</sup> *Pakikisáma* will not happen if a Filipino does not know how to have *pakikipagkápuwâ*. Without *pakikipagkápuwâ*, there is no *pakikisáma*. This core Filipino value is about treating the other as yourself, and seeing the other as an equal person. A Filipino lives and moves with his co-equals. No one is above anyone else, and each person has equal dignity with the other. Thus, *pakikipagkapuwa* is a core trait of Filipinos. It roughly means to be related to others. It underlines our being connected to each other. Thus, a Filipino expects that the other treats him the same as he treats others. There is what we call an expectation of reciprocity among Filipinos. All shall treat the other as an equal, i.e., as his *kapwa*. If one does not return this treatment, he is called *walang pakikisáma* or *walang pakikipagkápuwâ*. If treated positively, *pakikisáma* becomes a key to success and camaraderie among friends, family, and organizations. But how does one keep it as a virtue? The answer to this is *pakikipagkápuwâ*. The limits and boundaries of *pakikisáma* are established by *pakikipagkápuwâ*, which is the virtue to treat the other as a shared-self.

### *Pakikisáma* and *Hiya*

Reyes proposes that *pakikisáma* is a part of and under the virtue of *hiya*. *Hiya* involves restraining one’s words and actions to avoid offending the other.<sup>25</sup> In making a joke or a prank, for example, one should know if the joke has gone “overboard” and ceased to be funny. This involves a sensitivity to the other person. If the hurt is

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Virgilio G. Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology: the Philippine Experience* (Diliman, Quezon City: Univ. of the Philippines Press, 1992), 52.

<sup>20</sup> Virgilio G. Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology: the Philippine Experience* (Diliman, Quezon City: Univ. of the Philippines Press, 1992), 52.

<sup>21</sup> Katrin Guia, *Kapwa: the Self in the Other: Worldviews and Lifestyles of Filipino Culture-Bearers* (Pasig City, Philippines: Anvil Publ., 2005), 28.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Cleofas, 79.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

caused, the mistake made can immediately be compensated for. *Hiya* is “a kind of conscious self-control or restraint (something similar to temperance). It connotes an active effort, such as in forcing one’s voice to be mild while angry.”<sup>26</sup> For example, Jocano says that a person who is *walang hiya* is “insensitive to the feelings of others ... and cannot be trusted as friends.”<sup>27</sup> Vicente Rafael says, “It is out of fear of being publicly shamed, of being excluded from a network of exchange *vis-a-vis* the outside, that one accedes to *utang na loób* ties.”<sup>28</sup> Or as in the example before, when one attends a gathering where there is scarcity of food, one restrains his desire to eat more in order not to hurt or offend the others who have not yet eaten, or not to embarrass the host for not having enough food. Here, *pakikisáma* can really be associated with temperance, in the sense that *pakikisáma* always require temperance, but it is a temperance in view of relationships. *Pakikisáma* makes the person recognize the virtue of *hiya*, restraining one’s words and actions to avoid making a scene, or avoid offending the other. But this does not mean that one does not confront, or one does not correct a person, *pakikisáma* is meant to help the other not to condone the other.

### *Pakikisáma* and *Pakikiramdam*

Another Filipino virtue that is closely connected to *pakikisáma* is the virtue of *pakikiramdam*. According to Reyes, *pakikiramdam* is the closest counterpart to “prudence” in Filipino virtue ethics.<sup>29</sup> However, this prudence is not just the way Western philosophers understand it. The prudent person can find “a mean between two vices, one of excess and one of deficiency.”<sup>30</sup> It involves a developed capacity to judge the mean for particular situations and concrete situations. *Pakikiramdam* is more than this:

*Pakikiramdam* is also about being able to judge a “mean,” but it is a “mean” that has to do with *kapwa* and the relationship with the *kapwa*. It is a skill in: 1) properly gauging the other person’s inner state, 2) acting in accordance with the knowledge gleaned of the other person’s inner state in order to maintain harmony in the relationship, and 3) the perpetuation of a social sanction of indirect forms of communication in order to hone the skill of *pakikiramdam*.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>27</sup> F. Landa Jocano, *Filipino Value System: a Cultural Definition* (Metro Manila, Philippines: Punlad Research House, 1997), 78.

<sup>28</sup> Vicente L. Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2011), 127.

<sup>29</sup> Reyes, “Loób and Kapwa: An Introduction to a Filipino Virtue Ethics,” 6.

<sup>30</sup> See Nichomachean Ethics II.6; Irwin trans. 1999, 25.

<sup>31</sup> Reyes, “Loób and Kapwa: An Introduction to a Filipino Virtue Ethics,” 153.

*Pakikiramdam* is a relational sensitivity wherein a Filipino sensitively gauges if he is on the verge of hurting his *kapwa*, who is the other person understood as a shared-self. “English-speaking people speak of related concepts such as empathy, sensitivity, discernment, subtlety, testing the waters/limits, sending out feelers, picking up vibes, sounding off, playing it by ear, etc.”<sup>32</sup> However, for Filipinos, *pakikiramdam* often involves a social *instinct* that is developed within the family that allows one to “feel” the inner states of family members.

Though some just translate *pakikiramdam* as empathy or sympathy towards the other, Reyes points that *pakikiramdam* is more than just empathy, as it only captures just the first idea of *pakikiramdam*. *Pakikiramdam* is more than just empathy. It is a practical concern for the other.<sup>33</sup> “In Filipino virtue ethics, the concern is not how empathy transpires—that one can empathize with another is taken for granted—but how one can do it well. *Pakikiramdam* is not a theoretical or epistemological concern but a practical concern. This is achieved through developing a high-sensitivity to non-verbal cues or indirect statements.”<sup>34</sup>

One must remember that empathy is just the first step when it comes to *pakikiramdam*. The second skill included in *pakikiramdam* involves a deftness in maneuvering and acting based on the information that is gleaned from empathy. It is also empathy-informed-action. This means that *pakikiramdam* is required to regulate the application of the other Filipino virtues in the same way that a thermostat is used to regulate heating. Just as Thomistic prudence guides the application of the other moral virtues, *pakikiramdam* also guides the dynamics of the other Filipino virtues. Reyes calls *pakikiramdam* a “relational prudence.”<sup>35</sup>

To better understand this account of *pakikiramdam*, let us use an example. Maria is a team leader at a company, and she is tasked with managing a team of designers and developers who are working on a big project. One day, she notices that one of her team members, Juan, seems stressed and overwhelmed. Instead of ignoring his situation, Maria uses her *pakikiramdam* to understand what he is going through and to act accordingly. Maria takes the time to talk to Juan and listen to his concerns. She offers to help him prioritize his work and suggests some strategies for managing his stress. She also encourages Juan to take a break and go for a walk or do something that he enjoys to recharge. By demonstrating *pakikiramdam*, Maria is able to build trust and empathy with Juan. She shows that she cares about his well-

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 154.

being and not just his productivity. She reveals that she is willing to help him when he needs it. This, in turn, helps to foster a positive and supportive workplace culture, where everyone feels valued and supported.

To conclude, if one wants to act with *pakikisáma*, he also needs to use *pakikiramdam* to gauge if he needs to offer a helping hand to a person who needs it at an appropriate time and place. *Pakikiramdam* allows one to “read” the other’s feelings, acknowledging that as a *kapwa*, both you and the other have a shared identity that needs to be nurtured in order to flourish.

### *Pakikisáma and Bayanihan*

The Filipino virtues of *pakikisáma* and *bayanihan* are interconnected, as both highlight the importance of collaboration to achieve shared objectives. *Bayanihan* is all about the willingness to extend a helping hand and to provide support to those in need. This requires a strong sense of community and collective responsibility, which is bolstered by the practice of *pakikisáma*. By being attuned to another’s emotions and necessities, individuals can better understand how to assist and uplift their fellow community members, which is vital to the success of *bayanihan*. *Bayanihan* recognizes the need of others because they belong to you. They are part of your community; they are your family or friends; they are neighbors. *Pakikisáma* makes a person decide to offer a helping hand without expecting anything in return.

Similarly, *pakikisáma* refers to the ability to harmoniously coexist with others, which is crucial for a successful *bayanihan*. In order to work well together, individuals must be able to communicate, respect each other’s ideas, and trust one another. *Pakikisáma* promotes social harmony and empathy, which are fundamental to achieving these prerequisites.

## **Aquinas Virtue of Charity and His Account of *Amicitia*, i.e., Charity in Friendship**

St. Thomas Aquinas’s treatment of the subject of friendship is found in the second part of his *Summa Theologiae*, within his discussion of charity. In his treatment of charity, Aquinas underscores our relationship with God and our neighbor as friends.<sup>36</sup> He defines the supernatural gift of charity as a “certain kind of friendship” with God. For Aquinas, the perfection of the Christian life “consists simply in charity,

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<sup>36</sup> See *ST II-II* q. 23 a.1.

but in the other virtues relatively. It follows that the perfection of charity is paramount in relation to the perfection of the other virtues.”<sup>37</sup>

Charity is, among the theological virtues, “first, because their object is God inasmuch as they direct us aright to God: secondly, because they are infused in us by God alone: thirdly, because these virtues are not made known to us, save by Divine revelation” (*ST I-II.62.1. corpus*). Charity is the form of all virtues, both theological and moral virtues, because it gives direction to them all. Through charity, the other virtues find their ultimate direction towards God. According to Aquinas, the absence of charity leaves us incapable of aligning our actions and virtues with our ultimate purpose, which is union with God. Charity, in this context, serves as the essential conduit through which our actions are oriented towards achieving communion with God.

For Aquinas, charity first and foremost represents a profound friendship with God, fostering a deep sense of communion. It is through charity that we can establish and nurture a relationship with the divine. It is crucial to recognize, however, that this charity is not a product of our own making. Rather, it is a divine gift bestowed upon us through God’s grace. In other words, charity is wholly dependent on the grace that God extends to us. It is, therefore, not something that can be cultivated through human effort alone. This supernatural and infused virtue enables us to engage in a profound connection with the divine, transcending our natural capabilities. According to DeBroeck, “while ordinary human friendships might be grounded in blood relation, a common interest, or a love of virtue, the human-divine friendship that is charity is, for Thomas, grounded entirely by a *communicatio* given by God.”<sup>38</sup>

For Aquinas, charity is primarily friendship with God or communion with God. While this is true, it is not entirely limited to our relationship with God. Our friendship and communion with God includes our relationship with the other, especially with our neighbor. Aquinas’s conception of charity is not simply that it is a private and spiritual relationship with God. Rather, it is a way of life that is characterized by an array of practices that draw us out of ourselves and more fully into the world. Aquinas shows charity as “a certain kind of friendship of man to God that is based upon the sharing in eternal beatitude.”<sup>39</sup> This definition has several important implications. First, it means that charity is not simply a feeling or emotion. Rather, it

<sup>37</sup> Meghan J. Clark, “Love of God and Neighbor: Living Charity in Aquinas’ Ethics,” *New Blackfriars* 92, no. 1040 (2011), 416; See also *ST II-II. q. 184. 1.a.2.*

<sup>38</sup> DeBroeck, Mary Grace. ““No Greater Love”: Friendship as a Soteriological Theme in the Thought of Thomas Aquinas and Bernard Lonergan.”

<sup>39</sup> See *ST II-II, q.23, a.1, ad*

is a virtue. Second, it means that charity is not simply a one-way relationship. Rather, it is a mutual relationship of love and friendship. Third, it means that charity is not simply a private relationship between an individual and God. Rather, it is a social relationship that draws us out of ourselves and into the world.

### ***Amicitia and Pakikisáma***

There are several practices that are characteristic of a life of charity. These practices include: (1) Love of neighbor: Aquinas argues that while charity is primarily friendship with God, charity is also extended to our neighbors, even to our enemies. One loves his neighbor in relation to God, to whom we direct primarily our friendship of charity. One cannot love God without loving neighbor.<sup>40</sup> (2) Mercy: As Clark would argue, “the interior effect of charity, which directly relates to love of neighbor, is mercy.”<sup>41</sup> Aquinas explains its relationship to charity stating, “the sum total of the Christian religion consists in mercy, as regards external works: but the inward love of charity, whereby we are united to God preponderates over both love and mercy for our neighbor.”<sup>42</sup>

(3) Beneficence: This is one of the first outward effects of Charity according to Aquinas.<sup>43</sup> It is an act of charity by which one is doing good for another. But it is not just doing good to someone, but it is an act of giving oneself in the acts that we do. In these three practices of love of neighbor, mercy, and beneficence, one can already glimpse a connection between charity and *pakikisáma*. Both virtues can help us to build strong relationships with others, to live in harmony with our communities, and to become better people.

*Amicitia* and *pakikisáma* are both ordered to social harmony. Aquinas argues that friendship is essential for our moral and spiritual development, and that it helps us to live in harmony with others. Similarly, *pakikisáma* emphasizes the importance of maintaining good relationships with others and showing respect and consideration for others. *Amicitia* and *pakikisáma* both involve mutuality. Friends are not simply people who like each other or who enjoy each other’s company. They are committed to each other’s well-being, and who are willing to make sacrifices for each other. *Pakikisáma* involves showing empathy, kindness, and respect towards others, and adapting to different social situations and environments. Aquinas argues that friendship can help us to grow in virtue and to become better people. Similarly, the

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *ST II-II, q.26, a.2, ad.*

<sup>41</sup> Clark 422.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid, cf. ST II-II, q.30, a.4, ad2.*

<sup>43</sup> See *ST II-II, q.30, a.1, ad.*

virtue of *pakikisáma* can help us to develop the other virtues of empathy, kindness, respect, and consideration for others.

Charity consists of loving your neighbor as yourself. This means showing kindness, compassion, and respect to everyone regardless of race, religion, or social status. *Pakikisáma* makes us value that in each person there is the possibility of a relationship. In the Philippines, *pakikisáma* is expressed through the practice of *bayanihan*, a community cooperation tradition. This is just one example of how love of neighbor and *pakikisáma* can be expressed in the community context. Through *pakikisáma*, a friend recognizes the burden of another without the other expressing it directly. Love of neighbor is being sensitive to the needs and feelings of others.

The commandment given by Jesus is this. “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matthew 22:37-38). Our friendship and communion with God includes our friendship and communion with our neighbor. As charity extends to one’s neighbor, it also extends to one’s community. This is true in *pakikisáma* as well. We see our community, not only as our neighbor, but as our own kin – our brothers and sisters - our *kapatid*. *Pakikisáma* underscores the connection of one to his community – a connection bound by communion in love. And as we recognize our communal relationship, we recognize the infused virtue of charity at work. *Pakikisáma* points us to our communal relationship, while Aquinas’ virtue of charity reminds us of our end when we do *pakikisáma*. That we do all this for the love of God – the object of charity. *Pakikisáma*’s end should therefore be the love of God – this must be a good guide to the way we do *pakikisáma*.

### **Particular acts of Charity and its Convergence with *Pakikisáma***

In his *Summa theologiae*, St. Thomas Aquinas follows Aristotle and develops an understanding of friendship as having particular acts. These include the following:

- (1) a friend wishes his friend to be and to live;
- (2) a friend desires good things for his friend;
- (3) a friend does good things for his friend, which constitutes beneficence;
- (4) friends are of like mind, and are thus in concord, and;
- (5) friends share in mutual delight.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> See *ST II-II q. 25 a.7*.

These five particular acts are expected also in *pakikisáma*. In *pakikisáma*, you treat the other as your friend and you wish and desire good things for your friend. Moreover, when one has *pakikisáma*, the friends share mutual delight with each other. When one has *pakikisáma*, the person values the relationship, and he acts on what could be good for his colleagues or friends.

Aquinas also identifies the interior and exterior acts of charity. The interior acts are that of joy, peace, and mercy, while the exterior effects of charity are beneficence, alms giving, and fraternal correction. All of these are also essential for the practice of *pakikisáma*. Joy is when a man rejoices in the well-being of his friend. In simple words, joy results from us loving God. When we love God, we possess him. “God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him” (1 John 4:16). When we love God, we also possess our highest Good, which produces joy in our lives. For Aquinas, real joy considers God and the things of God as our “good.” As our neighbors are all children of God, we consider them as part of this joy. We strive to love God through loving our neighbor. By remaining in God’s love, we achieve joy. In *pakikisáma*, joy results from our considering the needs of others. Joy is considering the well-being of the other in the community.

A similar dynamic is also true with mercy. Mercy is when one looks upon another’s defeat as one’s own loss and tries to remedy it. Aquinas writes that “he who loves another looks upon another as a second self, he counts his friend’s hurt as his own, so that he grieves for his friend’s hurt as though he were hurt himself.”<sup>45</sup> He highlights that we do not simply pity our neighbor’s plight, but “we suffer our own sores” because our neighbor’s life is closely intertwined with our life.<sup>46</sup> This is what should happen in *pakikisáma*. Mercy is the practice of empathy and recognizing the plight of those who are suffering and in pain. *Pakikisáma* is about more than just getting along with others. It is about showing compassion, empathy, and understanding. It is about recognizing the suffering of others and choosing to help them. Clark adds that mercy is the “internal disposition by which motivates one to show compassion for another person, but the way in which this occurs determines whether mercy is an emotion or virtue.”<sup>47</sup> Mercy may denote grief which points to it being a part of the sensitive appetite, but it also denotes a movement of the intellectual appetite, that is, when one person’s evil is displeasing to the another. While to be a virtue, mercy must be guided by reason, mercy as a virtue has this added aspect found in the emotions.

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<sup>45</sup> See *ST II-II, q.30, a.1, ad.*

<sup>46</sup> See *ST II-II, q.30, a.1, ad 2.*

<sup>47</sup> Clark, 422.



As stated earlier, for Aquinas, the first of charity's outward effects is beneficence. Beneficence simply means doing good to someone.<sup>48</sup> If one is living charity, one must have an openness or readiness to help another in any situation. This beneficence is not just giving or donating money, but most importantly a love of friendship – a giving of oneself. Beneficence is by doing good for others; almsgiving is giving to those in need.<sup>49</sup> In *pakikisáma*, this readiness to help the other is also present. Charity and *pakikisáma* underlie the importance of giving oneself for the other – to be available and open to give help by doing good for the well-being of the other.

In sum, these acts of true friendship are present in, and yet transformed by, a friendship with God where this friendship creates an order of love that includes those one already loves as well as those with whom one does not already share a natural relationship.<sup>50</sup> *Pakikisáma* calls for a friendship that involves not only those with whom we have already shared a natural relationship, but it also involves all those who belong to the community even if they do not share an intimate relationship with us directly. Aquinas' virtue of charity provides us a roadmap to guide our understanding of *pakikisáma* better.

## Conclusion

Reading Aquinas' virtue ethics on charity as friendship help us provide a structure, facilitating a more systematic and coherent understanding of Filipino virtue of *pakikisáma*. The dialogue between Aquinas' charity and the Filipino virtue of *pakikisáma* makes us appreciate the connection of our virtues as universal. It all boils down to the love of God which makes us also love our neighbors. In loving God, we cannot but also love our neighbors. In charity, one wills the good of the beloved. In *pakikisáma*, in order to get along well with the other or with the community, one wills the good of the others and one is sensitive to their needs. In charity, one sees God in the other and at the same time recognizes that we are all brothers and sisters. In *pakikisáma*, one sees the other as a *kapwa*, an equal person who is a shared-self.

Love makes acting together with others and the ability to share one's humanity with others possible. Though these charity and *pakikisáma* come from different cultures, one Western and the other Filipino, one can see that virtues are universal. They complement each other and they shed light on each other. We hope

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 423.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> DeBroeck, 8.

that as Filipinos dig deeper into the study of their own Filipino virtues, the writings of Aquinas can help in clarifying and nurturing the structure of Filipino virtues.<sup>PS</sup>

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Et sic dicitur in libro de regibus  
quod dicitur in libro de regibus  
quod dicitur in libro de regibus

¶ La salute Regina quod dicitur

**R**egina quod dicitur  
de de misericordia. Vita  
dulcissima y esperanca nra. Dios  
te salute a ti llamamos los desle  
rrados hijos de Eva. Qui suspi  
ramos gimiendo y llorando en  
aquette valle de lagrimas. Ca  
pues abogada nra. buclue  
anosotros esios tus misericor  
diosos ojos. y despues de a.