

Defining Filipino Identity in Search for Filipino Spirituality

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*There is a Filipino Spirituality in the midst
of the spiritualities of the Filipinos.*

Embarking a discussion on Filipino Spirituality needs some fundamental clarifications. For one, the terms Filipino and Spirituality may be used with different connotations. Although the word spirituality appears to be simpler in its scope and meaning, nevertheless, there is still the need to spell out the specific connotations of the terms 'Filipino' and 'Spirituality'.

At the outset, it may be good to realize that there is indeed the mutual link and relationship between culture and spirituality. The fact is that the spirituality of a people is expressed in their specific culture. And that a specific culture manifests the concrete spirituality of a particular people.¹ Clarifying the inter-relationship of the 'cultural' Identity of the Filipino and their Spirituality is therefore also important.²

¹ Segundo Gallilea. *The Challenge of Popular Religiosity*. (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1988), 61.

² Kathryn Tanner. *Theories of Culture a New Agenda for Theology*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1997) 25-37. Tanner includes in culture everything about the group that distinguishes it from others: social habits and institutions, beliefs, values, rituals, categorical schemes and artifacts. The author would include spirituality as an encompassing concept of religious beliefs, rituals and values.

Initially, however, the term 'Filipino' seems to have undergone a lot of controversies. Although 'Filipino' is generally used to refer to the people of the Philippines, some are beginning even to question the fact of the Filipino Nation. Nay some are even questioning the very existence of the Filipino. Defining the 'Filipino' and 'who the Filipino is' is therefore crucial. It is not only our key but also the door to understand and describe Filipino Spirituality.

The Meaning of Spirituality

Spirituality carries a wide range of meanings. Ronald Rohl-heiser says it has something to do with our desires, with what we do with our desires and how we channel our desires. Depending on how we live it, spirituality is that principle of integration or disintegration in us: within our bodies, minds, souls. Simply put, spirituality is how we relate to God, others and the cosmic world. According to Ronald, therefore, everyone has to have a spirituality and that everyone does have one.³ And spirituality therefore becomes an integral part of culture and can not but take place but in a given and a concrete culture.⁴

For Gallilea, spirituality is 'the set of practices and attitudes by which persons, culture and communities express their experience of God'; for him, culture becomes an important feature of the people's concrete lived-experience of spirituality.⁵ The word spirituality, however, can also refer to

'the views, beliefs, or actions people do to obtain the non-material or 'supersensible realities'. Hence, Gallilea says, spirituality may also be attributed to pagans, Christians or to a person who may not even have any religion.⁶

³ Ronald Rolheiser. *The Holy Longing. The Search for a Christian Spirituality*. (New York: Random House, Inc., 1999), 4-19.

⁴ Tanner emphasizes social determinism in culture: how society decisively shapes the character of its members. p. 28.

⁵ *Op. cit.* Segundo Gallilea. *The Challenge of Popular Religiosity*. (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1988), 61.

⁶ Gordon Wakefield, (ed.). *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*. (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1983), 361-363.

Generally, however, spirituality is also understood as “a concrete way on how people view and relate to God.”⁷

To date, the multicultural reality of the people living in the Philippines and their being a “plural society” (who continue to posit their religious, linguistic, geographical or tribal values more central to their lives) remains. Their varied, peculiar and concrete historical experiences, particularly with the divine, is not only manifested by the presence of the different religious denominations but also by the myriads of their different spiritualities. Their awe-inspiring indigenous practices and rituals, their colorful and prolific processions, joyful and lavish fiestas, and more recently, their peaceful-unbloody revolution using their rosaries... all these make us realize that indeed there is wisdom in talking about and discussing these diverse spiritualities of the people of the Philippines.

The Need for a Paradigm on Who the Filipino and The Filipino Nation Is

The Filipino's seemingly ‘damaged culture’ and ‘plural society’ makes some to believe that truly there is no longer a Filipino.⁸ For some others, it may seem that the Filipino has already lost his ‘character’.⁹ Finally, with the phenomenal ‘Diaspora’ of Filipinos throughout the world, globalization, and the homogeneous culture brought about by the social means of communications, some feel a clear and the real need to spell out the basis for Filipino Identity. And how then can we talk of Filipino Spirituality when even our ‘being Filipino’ is put into question?¹⁰

⁷ Gustavo Gutierrez. *We Drink from Our Own Wells*. (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1984), 3-12.

⁸ Ben Villote, “Pinoy,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (1977): September 21. See James Fallows, “A Damaged Culture,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, November, 1987.

⁹ Richard Gordon, *The La Sallian* (1998): February 11.

¹⁰ Miguel Bernad, S.J. “Philippine Culture and the Filipino Identity,” *The Filipino in the Seventies: An Ecumenical Perspective* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1973) 6-15.

The good news, however, is that there are still those who believe that there is indeed the Filipino. In their view, the Filipino continues to grow, to develop and to mature. For them, the Filipino is coming to age and has yet to reach that full development and maturity.¹¹

Who then is the Filipino? What should be our basis for Filipino Identity? And is there sense to talk of Filipino Spirituality?

Filipino Identity and Its Importance to the Study of Filipino Spirituality

The Filipino as a People or Nation did not simply come out of the blue. They are a product of their long history of struggles and longings. Deeply rooted not only in culture, Filipino Identity began in the transformation of the Filipino Psyche. Coming into being and slowly developing into that awareness as a nation, the maturing process and experiences of the Filipinos and as the Filipino Nation is not only complex but also dynamic.¹² And just how do these historical-socio-cultural-spiritual experiences influence the development of Filipino Identity and Filipino Spirituality?

Describing Filipino Identity is undeniably a grueling task. And the fact that the Filipino is sort of an admixture of the influences of Malayan, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, American and many other races makes it more difficult to define Filipino Identity.¹³ Yet, it is from these historical-socio-cultural experiences that Filipino Identity and the Filipino Nation is born. Hence, retracing the formation and development of the Filipino Nation is of paramount importance. It is this sense of nationhood that defines Filipino Identity. And Filipino Identity is the key to describe Filipino Spirituality.

¹¹ Edilberto Alegre, "Looking For the Filipino" *Sunday Inquirer*: November 7, 1993, 5, 15.

¹² David Joel Steinberg sees ethnicity, religious difference, linguistic identity, geographical and historical experiences as important factors in the formation of a nationalist identity. *The Philippines: A Singular and a Plural Place*. (Oxford: Westview Press, 1994) 37-39.

¹³ Andres, p. 58.

Describing 'Who the Filipino Is'

In general, the word "Filipino" has been used in three senses. Firstly, as a citizen of the Republic, as a political being. Secondly psychologically, as somebody who lives in the Philippines and feels and acts in the Filipino manner. Thirdly, as the embodiment of all our history and aspirations as a people, a nation.¹⁴

While we shall take note of these different connotations of the word Filipino, in our discussion, we shall describe and understand Filipino in the third connotation: Filipino as a people and as a nation.

Filipino Identity and Nationhood has its complexities. It starts in the 'psyche' of the people that makes them to consider themselves one as a people and a nation. Secondly, it does not only take place politically, culturally and socially but also morally and spiritually. Alejo, in fact, describes this 'desire and capacity of the people to choose and to be themselves' as 'cultural energy'. And he says, "Cultural energy, seems to be what people need to collectively endure pain as well as to begin a protest or given to just sustain their existence... they generate from their own moral and cultural resources... it is more the power to will... The power to will is more on moral and spiritual creative resource to be or to remain or at least to become a people of self-confidence and self affirmation. This is what ordinary people are ultimately trying to keep alive in the struggle against hopelessness."¹⁵ Thirdly, this identity and the experience of being one as a nation is also an experience of the people with the divine within its peculiar culture and period.¹⁶

¹⁴ Marcelino Foronda. "The Filipino and His Society in Philippine History: Some Reflections."; Leonardo Mercado (ed). *Filipino Thought on Man and Society*. (Tacloban: Divine Word University Publications, 1980) 1-9.

¹⁵ Albert Alejo, S.J. and Christian Buenafe, O.Carm. (ed.) et al. "Popular Spirituality as Cultural Energy." *Context and Expressions of Filipino Spirituality: Lecture Series 3 on Spirituality*. (Quezon City: Center for Spirituality – Manila, 2004), 32-52.

¹⁶ Tomas Andres develops this approach. However, he relates Filipino Identity more with Filipino values especially 'loob'. *How to Become a Successful Christian*. 15-23. The latter is the view of the author.

The Coming of the Filipino Nation and the Complexities of 'Being a Filipino'

Historians agree that the Spaniards and the Americans had their role and contribution in the making of the Filipino as a nation. First, the Spaniards taught the early inhabitants of the Philippines living independently as ethno-linguistic groups to (freely or forcefully) live in communities called *poblaciones*. By building towns, municipalities, and cities, and by involving them in the system of government and making representations to the Spanish Cortes, the Spaniards slowly introduced to the early inhabitants of the Philippines the idea of a nation. On the other hand, it was the Americans, with their public school system and democratic concepts and structures of government, who gave the early inhabitants of the Philippines the structures of democracy and nationhood.¹⁷ Thus, the people of the Philippines, even after obtaining its independence and having been recognized as a country, basically remained a "plural society." Though they were starting to have a sense of nationhood and exercising a democratic form of government, they practically continued to live independently pursuing their own religious, linguistic, geographical or tribal values.¹⁸ And this has always been the continuing problem to their formation as the Filipino Nation.

Despite the independence of the Philippines and its being recognized in the community of nations, the fact remains: the multicultural people of the Philippines continue living as a "plural society." Seeds of division among the people continue and pose as a problem and a threat to the formation of Filipino Identity and the Filipino Nation. This indeed aggravates our attempt to define the Filipino.

Hence, we need to find a model or paradigm that can help us truly define the Filipino and the Filipino Nation. And this model should take into account this cultural 'locus' or condition of the

¹⁷ Marcelino Foronda. "The Filipino and His Society in Philippine History: Some Reflections"; Leonardo Mercado (ed). *Filipino Thought on Man and Society*. (Tacloban: Divine Word University Publications, 1980) 1-9.

¹⁸ David Joel Steinberg. *The Philippines A Singular and a Plural Place*. (Oxford: Westview Press, 1994) 37-38.

people, i.e. with several multi-ethnic, diverse cultures, and traditions. Our model should not only challenge this plural society; rather, it should enable them to see and look at themselves truly as one nation.

The Meaning of Nationhood and the Basis of 'Being a Filipino'

Let us try see how the social sciences would describe Filipino Identity and Nationhood. Let us also take a closer look at their bases.

a) Models to Understand Filipino Identity and Nationhood

1) For Doreen Fernandez, the essence of a National Identity is in the consciousness of a people: their awareness of seeing themselves united as one 'nation'. Sharing their roots, the same motherland with its peculiar history, sharing the same experiences and culture, habits, outlook in life, beliefs, traditions, values and arts, shared problems, victories and aspirations ... all these may contribute to their being one. Nevertheless, for Doreen, these are not enough and may not even be the most important in the development of the idea of a National Identity or a Nation. The true and real National Identity and Nationhood is only arrived at when it reaches the level of the consciousness of its people. This can only take place when the people themselves begin to recognize and cherish that they all belong to the one nation they identify with.¹⁹ The contributing factors for becoming a nation, as mentioned by Doreen, may be awfully important for some. But according to her, the more important basis would not be the list but the conscious awareness of the people that they belong to a community, their nation: the Filipino Nation.

2) Maria Luisa Canieso Doronila also did consider the complexity of nationhood. And she explains that in the process which she calls 'political socialization', she recognizes that conscious awareness of the people that they belong to a community they

¹⁹ Jose Abueva (ed.) et al., *Ang Aklat sa Bansang-Estado. Ang Pagbubuo ng Bansa at Republika ng Pilipinas: Mula sa mga Barangay, Tribu, Sultanato, at Kolonya*. (Quezon City: UP Press, 1998), 115-127.

cherish and are proud of is important, too. This, according to her, is truly a significant element for the National Identity of a group of people. However, she would add another determining dimension in this political socialization of becoming a nation which she considers important and crucial: *the personal participation of the people themselves in the building of this community which they consider their nation.*²⁰ Therefore, for Doronila, the mere conscious awareness of belonging to a community or a nation by the people does not make a nation. It is the personal and active participation of the people themselves in the building of their community and nation that really matters.

3) In our experience of a globalized and borderless world, however, we observe a new paradigm in the making: a new way of understanding 'who the Filipino is'. Forced by the lack of opportunities in the homeland, some Filipinos seek better pastures abroad. Although literally dispersed all over the world, nonetheless, the minds and hearts of these Filipinos, their *kalooban* and *damdamin*, are in their communities and their Inang Bayan. Here, *the Filipino sense of belonging to the Filipino Nation gains a new meaning. One that can no longer be limited by geographical and national boundaries.*

Michelle Macaraeg Bautista typifies this by saying, "We, as Filipinos, do not find a home in a specific place but within a people that share a common identity.... The Filipino diaspora is not a leaving or separation from home. It is a return to home."²¹

This is a different and relatively a new way of looking at the Filipino Today: the borderless Filipino. While this new paradigm may presuppose and still consider culture as an essential component of Filipino Identity, nevertheless, it also opens a new concern and problem in the question of Identity: in the interplay of the foreign cultures with the culture of the Filipinos, whose culture will determine the Identity?

²⁰ Jose Abueva ed. et al., *Ang Aklat sa Bansang-Estado. Ang Pagbubuo ng Bansa at Republika ng Pilipinas: Mula sa mga Barangay, Tribu, Sultanato, at Kolonya*, 543-561.

²¹ Michele Bautista, 'Movement and Migration'. Available from World Wide Web (<http://www.magandamagazine.org/09>)

From the findings of a study made by a network of Filipino scholars and researches working on migration issues and concerns, Preciosa Soliven insists that defining Filipino Identity based on culture will be difficult.

"The degrees to which individuals of communities assimilate into American life or retain community-of-origin ties overlook the emergence of distinct new cultures that differ from those of the immigrant homelands, as well as from traditional American Identities. Settling for neither nativism nor assimilation, these Filipino Americans describe the ongoing construction of ethnic identity as process of selecting, rejecting and redefining both ethnic and mainstream notions of being Filipino-American" ...²²

And this problem persists among these mixed cultures with Filipino origin.

4) Globalization and the New Social Means of Communications have their impact, too, on Filipino Identity. In fact, Randolph David noticed that *Filipino traditions and culture can no longer be held as the essential and meaningful basis for the nationhood*. And the mass media or the new communications technology poses a similar challenge to culture as the basis for Filipino Identity, too. Both are slowly producing and transforming the traditional indigenous cultures into the homogenous culture called 'pop culture'. And this 'pop culture' is not only fast becoming prevalent throughout the world. Its dominance is becoming inevitable, too.²³

Thus, in a borderless world, in the midst of globalization and with the dominance of 'pop culture', the Filipino is challenged to re-image himself. Randolph David knows that although to be a Filipino in a borderless world may still entail a feeling of belongingness and sense of pride as a Filipino, he also feels that there is indeed the need for the Filipinos to recreate and search within the

²² Preciosa Soliven. "The Social Costs of Being Filipino Migrants Abroad", *The Philippine Star*, October 20, 2005. p. 13.

²³ Franz-Josef Eilers. *Communicating in Community*. (Manila: Logos Publications, Inc., 2002), p. 56.

Filipino himself for something original or more definitive on 'Who the Filipino is'.²⁴

Rolando Gripaldo gives a similar observation when he made an attempt to describe and discuss Filipino Identity. Although his main concern was his search for Filipino Philosophy, he also made use of culture as an approach to resolve the problem of identity. Tribal culture or national culture, as the case may be, Gripaldo concludes that culture is fluid. Hence, culture should not become the sole basis for Filipino Identity. In fact, even the dominant traits of a culture may be modified, he says. Despite this limitation of culture, Gripaldo insists that culture is not an end in itself but that it can still help improve or better the society and the nation.²⁵

Slowly, therefore, homeland, cultural heritage and roots may soon no longer hold and may also no longer be considered as the sole and important basis for National Identity and Nationhood. These new experiences "borderlessness," globalization, and the homogenous pop culture is bringing about a challenge and a more radical shift to our basis for Filipino Identity and Nationhood.

Clarissa Chikiamko, in her article 'Have our artists found the Filipino Soul?', expresses her concern and question, too, on Filipino Identity in a globalized world. 'If an artist who has Filipino blood was raised abroad but tackles Filipino issues – is his art Filipino? What about artists with no Filipino blood who reside and practice in the Philippines? Do location, upbringing and blood matter in determining Filipino art from art made by a Filipino?' Indeed it is not that easy to draw the thin line delineating Filipino Identity or culture from the next.²⁶

Finally, David Joel Steinberg discusses the issue of national identity also as a global phenomenon. According to him, Common

²⁴ Randolph David, 'The Filipino Identity in a Globalising World.' Available from World Wide Web: (<http://www.ffon.org/documents/randy.doc>).

²⁵ Rolando Gripaldo. *Filipino Philosophy: Traditional Approach*. (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 2004) 171-177.

²⁶ Clarissa Chikiamko. "Have our Artists Found the Filipino Soul?" *The Philippine Star*. May 29, 2006, G-1 & G-3.

or National Identity and common allegiance is not only a problem of the people of the Philippines. It is also one of the central dreams and problem of all modern nation-states. They, too, are experiencing these changing new patterns and nationalist values. These changes are becoming one of the central issues of twentieth century history, too.

"In fact the issues of ethnicity, religious difference, linguistic identity, geographical and historical experiences, different life experience, familial or clan obligation, kinship patterns – all of these priorities that are potentially antithetical to the nationalist dream. People will not think themselves as Filipinos or Indonesians or Americans if they posit their religious, linguistic, geographical, or tribal values as being more central to their lives than their nationalist identity."²⁷

The Philippines has been struggling to build its nation on a 'plural society'. A sense of common identity, a feeling of bonding may have grown, and an awareness of common past is undeniable among some of its people. But even the nationalist experiences like revolutions and people power do not in themselves create a sustaining sense of union and thus become the basis for nationhood.²⁸

How then shall we reach and what basis or criteria shall we use for Filipino Identity or of the Filipino Nation?

b) *Re-Imaged Filipino: a framework for analysis and a framework for National Identity and the Filipino Nation*

Nathan Gilbert Quimpo discusses the complex and knitty gritty issue of Filipino Identity. He relies on the theory developed by Franz Fanon and Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan. Although the theory was particularly developed and applied to groups who have been or were under oppression, colonization or racism, this theory also attempts to describe how a 'national identity' is developed and formed under such conditions. Applying the theory to the Filipinos, Quimpo describes three stages or patterns that slowly lead to the

²⁷ David Joel Steinberg. *The Philippines, A Singular and Plural Place*. (Oxford: Westview Press, 1994) 37-38.

²⁸ Ibid.

full and mature development of this national Identity of the Filipinos:

- 1) *Capitulation or submission*: This is the process of defensive mechanism where the people identify with the oppressor and simultaneously reject their own culture. Here, the people begin to assimilate or adopt to the colonizing culture.
- 2) *Revitalization*: This, according to Quimpo, is a mode of psychological defense and identity development manifesting itself in this stage. Here the people begin to revive their indigenous culture, lament their westernization and degradation and loss of their ancient traditions, laws, writings, songs, art, etc., and begin to take pride in their race.
- 3) *Radicalization*: This is the stage of synthesis and commitment toward radical change: liberation and internalization of his national identification to become one nation.²⁹ In fact, freedom reaches its maturity when, torn by a multitude of possibilities, one reaches some kind of personal wholeness and integral identity and finally commits oneself to 'become somebody'.³⁰

Hence, in this stage, the people make the *radical decision and choice*. The nation becomes the prime allegiance, the cause to which citizens devote their loyalty and offer their lives. Hence, "Filipino Identity" resides not only in one's cultural heritage but *mainly in one's moral choice*.

Quimpo however warns that there is no pure stage or pattern. In his analysis, he also says that it can happen that one stage or pattern need not exclude the other. Finally, he warns that one may even find the three stages or patterns in the same person or in one group or groups at the same time, where one of the stages or pattern may dominate.

²⁹ Nathan Gilbert Quimpo, '*Pananaliksik at Pagkukuro sa Pangalang Pilipino*.' Available from World Wide Web: (<http://filipinos4life.faithweb.com/NQUIMPO.htm>).

³⁰ John Sachs, S.J. *The Christian Vision of Humanity*. (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1991). 30-34.

For instance, during the colonization of Spain, the first stage of capitulation can be seen among Filipinos. These were the Filipinos who submitted themselves to the colonizing culture. Allowing the hispanization of their clothing, language, writing... in fact, they wished to enjoy the benefits of the Spanish citizenry by dreaming of an official Philippine representation to the Spanish Cortes. The second stage of revitalization during the Spanish colonization is clearly seen in the attempts of many Filipinos to lament the degradation of traditions, culture, and past. Slowly, there were attempts to take pride in the Filipino. The third stage of radicalization was, however, typified by Bonifacio who committed himself to that national identity by tearing the Spanish cedula, rising up in revolt, establishing an independent republic and discarding the colonial name Filipinas. He gave the country the name *Katagalugan* as the term for all natives of the archipelago... Visayan, Ilocano, Pampango, etc., *to mean one nation*.³¹

The same pattern can be seen among the Filipinos during the American colonization. The first stage of capitulation may be seen among Filipinos who assimilate and want to imitate the American way of life: things, dresses, style of life and thinking, language... the so called 'colonial mentality'. Up to now, there are still Filipinos who still dream of annexing the Philippines as one of the many states of the USA. The second stage of revitalization is however seen among Filipinos who revive the filipinization for the arts, culture, and traditions despite the American invasion. This even led to the contempt against the American imperialism in whatever form it may have taken. The third stage of radicalization is however seen also among Filipinos who truly dream of and commit themselves to the realization of a Filipino nation. The rejection of the extension of US Military bases in the Philippines by the senate, the peaceful revolution of Edsa I and Edsa II of the people... these are clear indicators of such a radical commitment for change and for nationhood. In fact, our sincere search for that Filipino Identity, truly, is indicative of that longing, desire and commitment for the Filipino Nation. This *stage of*

³¹ Nathan Gilbert Quimpo. He applies the theory during the Spanish Colonization.

radicalization is therefore the fullness of that development of the Filipino Identity and the Filipino Identity coming to its maturity.

Even today, we can still see Filipinos who may be at the different stages described by Quimpo. And if we look deeper into ourselves sometimes we find ourselves moving from one stage to another at different moments of our life. The challenge therefore is to be able to reach that maturity: the stage of radicalization i.e., *to make that personal choice and commitment to the nation. And even David Joel Steinberg insists that "Modern nationalism demands that the nation must be the prime allegiance."*³² Hence, more than the cultural heritage, nationhood and identity becomes a matter of radical "choice." No wonder even Thomas Aquinas discussed love of country and patriotism in 'Question 101, article 1, 3 at Question 102, article 3' of his *Summa Theologica* as a moral choice.³³

In our case allow me to call this radicalization and prime allegiance to the nation as the *Re-Imaged Filipino*.

The Re-Imaged Filipino: Living the New Filipino Paradigm Today

To be a Filipino today is not simply to belong to our country. It is essentially to participate in the building of that nation we are all proud of. And in the midst of the diverse cultures and alternatives globalization has to offer, "To be Filipino, Today" is the 'desire to be, to freely choose to be, to freely choose to remain as one, and to freely choose to commit oneself: to give our prime allegiance to the nation and to participate in the development and maturity of the Filipino Nation'.

Is the 'Re-Imaged Filipino', therefore, a simple wishful thinking? I don't think so. In fact, we can witness this paradigm consciously or unconsciously among Filipinos today. We can see this New Filipino in many of our people.

³² David Joel Steinberg. *The Philippines: A Singular and Plural Place*. (Oxford: Westview Press, 1994) 37-38.

³³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (Philippines: Rejoice Communications for Harmony Media, Inc., 1998).

The problem of being Filipino or Filipino Identity was similarly encountered by Dindo Tesoro and Joselito Jose. In their book, "The Rise of Filipino Theology" they practically dedicated almost half of their introductory chapter to clarify the question of Filipino Identity. Although theirs was the question of Filipino Theology, none the less they felt that the question of Filipino Identity in theology needed clarification and was of primary importance. Whether the authors did it consciously or unconsciously, their descriptions or characterization of Being Filipino only proves that the new paradigm is there and is truly being lived today.

Allow me then to mention the several elements deemed by these two authors as essential and important to their categorization of 'Being Filipino'. Also to point out the similarities of their basis with the new paradigm or the characteristics of the "Re-Imaged Filipino."

Filipino in Filipino Theology

1. *Intentional element*: the conscious desire for relevance, responsive to *nation*, questions raised by the Filipino situation.
2. Capable of producing real impact, transforming, relevant, committed, action inspiring, at the service of life.
3. Theology of unity, tendency to unity, in the context of the Philippine Socio-cultural experience.

Re-Imaged Filipino

1. Desire to be, *commitment* to the community.
2. Helps, *participates* in the development and maturity of the nation. *Prime allegiance* to the nation.
3. Participating in the (re-)building of the Nation.

Living the Re-Imaged Filipino: Prime Allegiance to the Nation

Today, the challenge for the Filipinos is not simply the economic upliftment and development of the people. It is rather the development of the maturity of the Filipino as a nation. This is the more important and the more urgent task. While we have to accept the fact that the culture, tradition, and the history of the Filipino People are still holding ground as basis for nationhood, it is time to face the challenge of globalization and the media: that culture may no longer hold as the basis for National Identity. Hence, people should look more deeply into this prime allegiance

to the nation as basis for Filipino Identity. And this should lead Filipinos to devote loyalty, offer their lives, and participate towards the mature development of the Filipino nation. And just how can Filipinos participate in (re)imaging and (re)building this nation?

Nation building, though an arduous and Herculean task, becomes daunting facing the reality of Filipinos multicultural and diverse ethnic groups. To become a community is not to treat people as things, using them, or manipulating them. It is not just sharing a common trait, interest or experience. Real community is not merely based on a shared objective or a common purpose. It is overcoming fear, selfishness and individualism. It is the desire to share one's self. It is developing self-transcendence and sensitivity to others.³⁴ To become community is to realize that the final good of individuals must be seen as the mutual relationship of persons in the community. It is resolving to commit ourselves to participate in the (re)building of our nation. Therefore, Re-Imaging the Filipino is to put into action our love for our country, our love for our people and our love for the Filipino Nation.

The Re-Imaged Filipino. Model for Filipino Spirituality amidst the Spiritualities of the Filipinos.

a. Diverse Spiritualities of Filipinos

The 7,100 islands, with their various languages or dialects, have their own unique culture, peculiar traditions, unusual habits and rituals. Although scholars identify eight major ethno-linguistic groups (Ilocano, Capampangan, Pangasinan, Tagalog, Bicol, Waray-waray, Visayan, Ilonggo), the fact is they also recognized other surviving ethnic or indigenous groups of Northern Luzon and Mindanao and the Muslims.

Definitively, these different ethno-linguistic groups have their peculiar way of relating with God, too. Thus, they have their own and unique form of spirituality. Because such a spirituality was not yet influenced by the so called world religions or religious traditions, Leonardo Mercado would call this as "the spirituality

³⁴ John Sachs, S.J.

of the Indigenous Peoples.”³⁵ Kees Waaijman would also describe this kind of spirituality as the Indigenous Spirituality of the people, too. In this context and culture, then, we can talk of the different spiritualities of the Filipinos: the kind of spirituality not yet been transformed by the religious traditions particularly by Christianity or by the schools of spirituality for that matter.³⁶

With the advent of Islam, the Spanish and American Colonization, changes did not only occur in the socio-cultural and political life of the pre-Hispanic inhabitants of the Philippines. Changes took place also in their concrete way of relating with God. And Kees Waaijman would call this kind of spirituality taking place in a broader framework of society where assimilation of experiences and communication of values takes place as *secular spirituality*.³⁷ Some others will further describe this Spirituality resulting from Muslim, Spanish and American Colonialism as Folk Religion, Folk Islam, Folk Catholicism, Folk Christianity or simply folk spirituality.

The encounter of the pre-Hispanic inhabitants of the Philippines or the Indigenous Peoples with Islam, Spanish – Catholic Christianity and with American Christianity, too, did not really change entirely the Indigenous world-view and their manner of relating with the divine. It resulted to a new mode of relating with God: the syncretistic form of Islam or Christianity, where external trappings of Islam or catholic/Christian beliefs and practices were superimposed on the original pattern of pre-christian beliefs and rituals.³⁸ This resulted to what we would call as folk spirituality.

Thus, Filipinos indeed have diverse spiritualities. Among them are their different indigenous spiritualities and folk spiritualities.

³⁵ Leonardo Mercado, SVD. *Meeting the Spirituality of Indigenous Peoples*. (Manila: Logos Publications, 1998) 1-39.

³⁶ Kees Waaijman, O. Carm.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Vitalino Gorospe, S.J. *Christian Renewal of Filipino Values*. (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University, 1966) 37.

b. *Basis for Filipino Spirituality*

Indeed, attempts were made by the colonizers to form the inhabitants of the Philippines become one as a people or as a nation. Despite these, the People of the Philippines basically remained a pluralistic society with their indigenous spiritualities or/and their own new and unique folk spiritualities.

Being a plural society, just how can each group really respect and accept each other's differences, rise above their parochial views, and unite as one people and contribute to the good of our nation? Can we indeed talk of a Filipino Spirituality?

To me this "pluralistic society" is the crux of the problem but also the key to this unrelenting problem of Filipino Identity and Nationhood. Hence, this will also answer our search for the model for Filipino Spirituality.

The good news, however, is that, now a days, we can honestly see Filipinos who have reached that sense of maturity in their being Filipino: the new breed, the Filipino with the new paradigm, the Filipino with a re-imaged Identity; the True Filipino at heart and by choice. These are the Filipinos who are ready to give to the nation their prime allegiance; they are the ones ready to accept the multicultural differences and ready to let go the parochial parameters. These are the individuals who freely choose to be Filipino despite the alluring conveniences of living in other nations. These are Filipinos who commit themselves to contribute towards the development of our nation while sacrificing their personal comfort. They are the Filipinos who willingly forgo personal interests for the common good of our nation. These are the very Filipinos who relate with God and their people: living their Filipino Spirituality, too.

c. *The Filipino Today: Consciously and wholeheartedly opting and living the new paradigm*

The diaspora of the Filipinos who left their homeland just to look for better opportunities is truly regrettable. But despite their cultural and emotional loneliness, their minds and hearts remained in their communities. And this cultural and psycho-

logical uprooting has even pushed the Filipino to draw from his *loob* (being) and led him to reach that mature level of his Filipino Identity: Desiring, remaining and committing to make the nation as their prime allegiance and participate in the building of the Filipino nation. The words of Patricia Evangelista, a 19 year old winner in the 2004 International Public Speaking competition in London, substantiates this paradigm...

"In a few years, I may take advantage of whatever opportunities that come my way. But I will come home. A borderless world doesn't preclude the idea of a home. I'm a Filipino, and I'll always be one... It's about giving back to the country that shaped me."³⁹

Similar words in the person of Alex Pagulayan reecho this Filipino Identity coming to maturity. Alex, the 2004 Pool World Champion, is a Fil-Canadian, 26 years old; his parents hail from Cabagan, Isabela; they left for Canada when Alex was simply 13 years old. Upon receiving the World Pool Champion Award, Alex had this to say...

"This was the game I've been waiting to win my whole life. I'm dedicating my victory to all Filipinos. Next year, I will play for the Philippines... I am 101% Filipino."⁴⁰

Prime allegiance to the nation. Desiring, remaining and committing to the development of the Filipino Nation: this is the essence of the new breed of Filipinos. This is the *New, True and Mature Filipino Spirituality*.

Despite the diaspora and globalization, therefore, the New Filipino arises. Other Filipino Patricias and Alexes here and abroad will be coming to commit themselves to participate in the development of our nation. These are the New Filipinos opting to reclaim Being Filipino and take pride of being one whenever and wherever they may be.

³⁹ Patricia Evangelista, 'Borderless World Does Not Preclude the Idea of a Home'. Available from World Wide Web: (<http://www.inq7.net/nat/2004/may/23/text/nat>).

⁴⁰ *The Philippine Star*, July 19, 2004.

We can also see the New Filipino among the 'Tsinoy's' or the Filipino-Chinese. Despite their Chinese culture and heritage, they never gave up their Filipino Identity. Unlike their Chinese ancestors, the 'tsinoys' fought for their Filipino Identity. They were ready to integrate themselves into the Filipino nation and are ready to share themselves and their resources to the nation. And with their socio-civic volunteerism, they truly show their active participation in the (re)building of the Filipino Nation. Secretary Arthur Yap, former Agriculture Secretary, is one that clearly typifies the Re-Imaged Filipino among the Filipino-Chinese. In his words he says...

"There's always the tendency for us to say, 'The country is hopeless,'. But, really, if all of us say that, what's going to happen? It's just going to bring us all down. Ultimately, someone's got to say, 'Let me see how I can help, you just go for it, regardless of the sacrifices you have to endure.'"...⁴¹

The presence of the New Filipino in the person of those who remained in the homeland can not also be denied. These are the Filipinos who have had opportunities to go, work or put businesses abroad. But, aware of the conditions of the nation, they freely and consciously opted to remain and hoped to contribute by serving the Filipino people and by helping in the (re)building of the nation. Like the OFW's, they are also our unsung heroes: doctors in the rural areas, technicians in agriculture and fisheries, entrepreneurs, businessmen, educators, NGO workers and volunteers. They are the New Filipino who choose to be, remain and decide to participate in the building of our nation.

We are the Filipino! We all should dare to become the "New Filipino." And this is the challenge of the New Filipino Paradigm. The good news is that Filipinos are capable of living this re-imaged Spirituality... and we are witnessing them in our times.

⁴¹ Open quote by Rod Nepomuceno. "Keepers of the Faith". *The Philippine Star*. October 24, 2005. p. 1-4.

Precious Lara Quigaman, the 2005 newly crowned Miss International, again proves the reality of this New Filipino Paradigm. When asked: "What do you say to the people of the world who have typecast Filipinos as nannies?" ...She replied...

"I take no offence on being typecast as a nanny. But I do take offence that the educated people of the world have somehow degenerated the true sense of and meaning of what a nanny is. Let me tell you what she is. She is someone who gives more than she takes. She is someone you trust to look after the very people most precious to you – your child, the elderly, yourself. She is the one who has made a living out of caring and loving people. So those who have typecast us as nannies, thank you. It is a testament to the loving and caring culture of the Filipino people, and for that, I am forever proud and grateful to my roots and culture."⁴²

We really have to watch now a days the new forms or ways by which this Re-Imaged Filipino Spirituality is being lived. Gawad Kalinga is one of these. A 10-year-old movement against poverty throughout the nation that started in the catholic charismatic community, Couples for Christ, the movement builds a home for every family. It has become a multi sectoral effort in nation-building. The goal is to build 700,000 homes in 7,000 communities in seven years by October 2010. "It is living out your faith, what you believe in and doing it for your country, your own roots. Double purpose: faith and patriotism" says Inoy Figueroa.⁴³

"Balikbayanis" is another phenomena among Filipinos to watch. These are the successful Filipinos who have built a wonderful life abroad and then come home to rebuild the country of his roots.⁴⁴

⁴² Ms. *Philippines-Miss International*. Available from the World Wide Web: <http://www.filipino.ca/forum/thread-view.asp?threadid=24178>.

⁴³ Eline Santos. "Balikbayanis rebuild country of their roots." *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, Sunday, January 22, 2006. p. 1A7.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

The new Filipino Spirituality as a paradigm therefore continues to challenge and is being lived by today's Filipinos.

There are countless other Filipinos who found their life's purpose in building, not just houses for the poor, but rebuilding a nation with renewed faith in God and renewed sense of pride in being PINOY.⁴⁵

And surely, this concrete experience of being PINOY, living the Re-Imaged Filipino Paradigm, is a concrete way of living a spirituality. It is a new mode of relating not only with our fellow Filipinos and as Filipinos but a concrete way of a Pinoy's way relating with the divine and the Pinoy's way of relating with the people: the Filipino Nation.

Conclusion

"To be Filipino, Today' is accepting and respecting the multicultural, diverse ethnic groups, and unique spiritualities composing the Filipino Nation. Giving our prime allegiance to the Nation, devoting our loyalty to the nation and offering our lives to the nation, implies the awareness and consciousness of belonging to our community, our nation. This Re-Imaged Filipino, this new lived experience as the Filipino People is also a new mode and experience of relating with God or the divine: Filipino Spirituality. The religious rituals of our experiences at EDSA I and EDSA II, the new forms of rituals of the Stations of the Cross and devotions taking the mode of nationalist nationhood are but experiences of this Filipino Spirituality. The diverse spiritualities of the Filipinos, therefore, should not be stumbling blocks to live the spirituality as the Filipino Nation.

Trina Firmalo, a student fellow in Singapore, shares a situation while with other Asean Students. Facing different groups with unique cultures and religions, she remarks...

⁴⁵ Ibid.

“I was able to immerse and interact with students of various nationalities. The multicultural environment opened my eyes as to what an atmosphere of respect, understanding, and connectedness to what a common national culture could bring about... I learned more about other cultures and realized the importance of cultivating an Identity that was built on common socio-historical, political, and cultural experiences and yet which recognized the diversity that made us unique. Interestingly enough, I became more sensitive to what it was that made me Filipino – the nuances as well as the bigger things that mattered. I learned to take more pride in being Filipino and to proudly share this heritage with others.”⁴⁶

Watching the great boxing fight and the live interview of the great Filipino boxer, Manny PACMAN Pacquiao, last January 23, 2006 in Las Vegas in the United States was truly revealing. First was the ritual Manny showed before the fight: wearing the rosary, kneeling and praying inside the ring before the tremendous fight. And after being officially declared winner, when thrown several questions during the interview, Manny did not only express his folk-indigenous spirituality but also his mature love for the nation: truly expressing the Filipino Spirituality...

“I told you, I told you before I’ll do my best in the ring... Para sa karangalan ng bansa... para sa karangalan ng pamilya ko... “Hello mga kababayan ko. Unang una maraming maraming salamat sa Panginoon... at ako po ay talagang nagpapasalamat sa inyo at sa sambayanang Pilipino... Ginawa ko po ang lahat, nagtraining po ako ng mabuti hindi lang po para sa sarili ko, para sa pamilya ko, kundi para sa karangalan ng buong bansa... Ako ay dedicated sa bansa natin... Masayang masaya sa pagbigay ng karangalan sa buong bansa... (Aware of the political squabbles in the country, Pacquiao in his simple way wished...) Sana magka-intindihan na tayo... sana magkaisa na tayo... “Masayang masaya ako sa pagbigay ng karangalan sa buong bansa. Ang

⁴⁶ *The Philippine Star*, August 9, 2004. H-10.

tagumpay ko ay hindi tagumpay ko lang kundi tagumpay
ng mga Pilipino at ng buong bansa... "Sabik ko na makita
ang minamahal kong bansa..."⁴⁷

Finally, we can truly say that there is truly such a specie
called 'Filipino Spirituality'. And that there are many Filipino
spiritualities amidst Filipino Spirituality. □

⁴⁷ The following were the transcriptions of the author himself taken during
the interview of Manny Pacquiao on television through delayed telecast in the
Philippines last January 23, 2006.