



Angel de Blas, O.P. and the Development of Experimental Psychology in the Philippines

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Fr. Angel de Blas, OP was a philosopher, an administrator and a pioneer in psychology in the Philippines. As a philosopher, his tenacious search for metaphysical truths and affinity to logic enabled him to engage in discourses in a wide range of topics. His tenure as Rector of Colegio de San Juan de Letran and University of Santo Tomas was marked by expansions in both physical and curricular structures. Fr. de Blas was a pioneer in Philippine psychology, established the first experimental psychology laboratory in the Philippines, published the textbook in experimental psychology in the country, and initiated to offer the first Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology degree at the University of Santo Tomas.

An enlightened educator and psychologist, Fr. de Blas' teachings and writings reflect his philosophical maturity resulting from a constant life of introspection and extensive reading of great authors. He was a restless pioneer constantly looking for new vistas without forgetting the old.

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Introduction

Fr. Angel de Blas, OP was an exceptional psychologist who had several achievements in the line of metaphysics and logic, aside from psychology. His various roles as an academic and administrator entailed that he epitomized a lifelong learner, tenaciously devoted to the expansion of his knowledge and understanding of things. Having acquired a passion for studying and contemplating, perhaps it was Fr. de Blas who personified the expectation of an average person of a psychologist who can read minds. His life was highlighted by the expansion not only of knowledge, but also of physical structures and curricula when he held several administrative positions in the University of Santo Tomas and in Colegio de San Juan de Letran.

This article underscores the life of Fr. Angel de Blas, OP as he embarked on his journey towards understanding man as a philosopher, an administrator, and a psychologist. Armed with a pioneering temper, he has brought about innovative achievements in his life which was recognized by the university, the country, and even internationally.

The Dominican Scholar and Administrator

Angel de Blas Carazo was born on March 1, 1896 at Bocigas, Soria, Spain. He finished his humanistic studies in Madrid and received his habit at the Convent of St. Thomas of Avila on September 14, 1912. He studied Philosophy courses in Avila and continued his studies in Theology and two other courses in the novitiate convent of St. Joseph Province in Washington. He got ordained to priesthood in 1922. He studied Biology for two years at the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC.

Upon arriving in Manila, Fr. de Blas was assigned to Colegio de San Juan de Letran as professor, and thereafter, became Vice-Rector and Director of the student interns (1927-1930). He transferred to the University of Santo Tomas in 1937, after having received the title of Lector, and a doctorate in Philosophy and Letters in March 1934 in the same university.

Fr. de Blas has held several administrative positions in the university. He headed several departments, among which included the Department of Zoology and the Department of Psychology. While he was Dean of the College of Liberal Arts in 1940, he established the Laboratory of Experimental Psychology, a pioneer in the Philippines. In 1947, he was a diffinitor in the Provincial Chapter and, in the following year, he was elected Rector Magnificus of the University devoting

himself to the widening of physical facilities and to the quality improvement of his professorship.

As a Dominican scholar, he has published several works such as *Nature of Logic*, *Nature of Affectivity*, *Nature and Essentials of Logic*, and several articles in the UNITAS. He was also able to author two volumes of a text book and a manual on *Experimental Psychology*, which was the first textbook in psychology published in the Philippines. Among his published works, his *Nature and Essentials of Logic* best exemplifies his originality and profundity. It was a vigorous and challenging effort to restore the traditional integrity of logic. The subject matter of logic is no more and no less than relations of reasons – it does not exist in reality, as they are pure creations of reason. His treatise, therefore, stands as a positive contribution to rendering logic “as an instrument of the finest kind.” (Espinosa & Samson, 1962)

But it was in the preface of his phenomenal book, *Experimental Psychology* (1952), where one can glean the initiative of Fr. de Blas in elucidating the instruction of psychology to Filipinos:

Professional psychologists have nothing to learn from this book. Written for the primary purpose of introducing our students of the College of Liberal Arts into the problems of Experimental Psychology, we have endeavored to explain such problems as clearly and as orderly as possible, avoiding the proposal of new views and ideas.

Such being the case, perhaps some would think it is absolutely unnecessary to write a new textbook, since excellent textbooks already exist on Experimental Psychology in the English language. But it must be taken into account that the greatest majority of such textbooks have been published by non-Catholic authors who did not infrequently propose some doctrines in exact conformity with the teachings of the Church, and it is not advisable to place those books in the hands of Catholic students.

This consideration forced me to prepare these notes in spite of the many obligations that occupy most of my time.

The educational background and orientation of Fr. de Blas enabled him to have a lucid understanding on the nature of psychology as an emerging science. Fr. de Blas was of an illustrious intelligence, and an unrelenting searcher of truth. From his youth, he dedicated himself to the study of the sciences, as much ecclesiastical as the irreverent, broadening his acquisition of encyclopedic knowledge. It was because of this background that he was able to unify philosophy and science in his turf in experimental psychology. He was likewise an emulated professor, inspiring the

young educators to be enthusiastic in research and in Thomistic philosophy. As an educator, Fr. de Blas repeatedly reminded his students two things: first, the mastery of philosophy is the mastery of concepts, and second, the art of becoming wise is never to forget (Samson, 1962). His fidelity to the method and doctrines of St. Thomas Aquinas are often reflected in his patient discourses of large theories into statements, of statements into terms, of terms into their antepredicamental, predicamental, and postpredicamental meanings, always delighted by his genuine interest in metaphysics (Espinosa & Samson, 1962).

He was likewise considered a “genius, humanitarian, and scientist” who opposed the idea that admission to the university should only be limited to the academically bright students (De Ramos, 2000, p. 145). As a faculty and administrator, he was known to have paid greater attention to the welfare of students, recognizing that the youth requires the guidance and supervision of adults. Thus, he encouraged faculty members to do their best to look after the well-being of students, recognizing that most come from provinces, “who might be lonely for parental affection and care” (De Ramos, 2000, p. 145). One of the issues that exemplified Fr. de Blas’ regard for fair and practical standards in dealing with students was as Dean of the College of Liberal Arts. He proposed a rule that the students in his college who obtained a grade of Condition (60-74) in a subject, and passing grades in all other subjects should be raised to 75%. This astute judgment on the students’ welfare, is one example of Fr. De Blas’ genuine concern for students (De Ramos, 2000, p.140).

As Rector, he “urged a return to religion, proper appraisal of true moral values and improvement of present intellectual standards.” In his term, the Department of Religion was changed to Institute of Religion, where training of students for teaching religion in public schools and other schools around the UST area was done (upon request of the Catholic Hierarchy). The institute had its own Dean, who takes charge of all matters concerning the teaching of religion in the university (De Ramos, p. 146).

There were several innovations and expansions in the University during the rectorship of Fr. de Blas. He was responsible for the establishment of DZST, “The Voice of the Catholic of the Philippines.” Likewise, he was also responsible for the construction of the buildings for the Faculties of Medicine and Engineering, and the fifteen colossal statues atop the Main Building made by the Italian sculptor Francesco Monti (Espinosa & Samson, 1962). Because of these expansions, Fr. de Blas considered moving the campus to a 50-75 hectare property in Quezon City to address the growing student population. However, it did not materialize and the campus stayed in Sulucan (Sampaloc), Manila.

His opinions were sought not only by ecclesiastical authorities, but also by the civil authorities. He was given a Medal by the Spanish government with the “Encomienda de Alfonso el Sabio,” an award given to reward individuals who have distinguished themselves by the merits contracted in fields of education, science, culture, teaching, and investigation (Neira, et al., 2012).

In 1956, he received the title of Master in Theology, in recognition for his knowledge not only in the ecclesiastical sciences, but also in the field of experimental psychology, and his generous dedication to teaching. In the previous year, Fr. de Blas was appointed a rector of Colegio de San Juan de Letran. In his term in Letran, he was able to expand the academic curricula for several majors. Additional structures including a gymnasium were also built during his term. During this time, he concurrently performed the office of Letran’s rectorship and the deanship of the graduate students’ section at the University of Santo Tomas. His term ended in 1961.

He retired at the Santo Domingo Convent in Quezon City where he spent the last years of his life, submitting to the study of interior life. It was symbolic: at the convent cell in Santo Domingo where he was overtaken by a severe cardiac arrest, works of St. Therese of Jesus and on metaphysics were found on his study table. He died of a second cardiac arrest at the University of Santo Tomas Hospital on November 10, 1961.

The Experimental Psychologist

Most of the literature that discuss about Thomistic psychology and rational psychology are considered classics which date back to the 1800s and early twentieth century. Similarly, it is important to highlight the literature available in this period to understand the perspective of Fr. de Blas in his passion for experimental psychology.

The Rational Psychology of Fr. de Blas

Fr. de Blas lectures on the psychology of emotions in 1948. He said: “The wise psychologist starts by understanding himself. He knows that there are many things that cannot be known without being known from within, for to him who has not experienced pain, pain is meaningless in the same way as to the man who has never felt love, love is a mystery. If you are sincere in seeking the truths of personality, begin therefore by discovering yourself and everything else will follow. Psychology is the only science in which the seeker himself is the key to the truth he seeks.” (printed in UNITAS vol. 30, no.1, March 1962)

In the early 19th century, psychology, as a new science independent from philosophy, faced opposing views from various philosophical approaches in the study of human nature. These gave way to diversity in schools of thought in psychology without a common point of agreement and excessive emphasis on theory. The field of psychology struggled with questions about its identity if it were to become a science. Psychology was transformed from a philosophical discipline into a natural-scientific discipline. The distinction between psychology as a science and psychology as a philosophy was still blurry as schools of thought such as behaviorism, structuralism, functionalism, and the like, started emerging in this era. Students of psychology at the time had to grapple with emerging theories and criticisms about the nature and focus of psychology. In the Philippines, psychology was offered in selected schools such as University of the Philippines and the University of Santo Tomas. The former, which was gearing towards American psychology and largely influenced by the experimental psychology of Wilhelm Wundt was established by the Americans. The latter upheld the philosophical influences as part of the European tradition because it was brought by Dominican Friars. But Fr. de Blas was keen in his foresight about the implications of conflicting insights brought about by the criticisms of the time. Fr. Cabezon (1977) noted that, “with the acumen of a philosopher, Fr. de Blas was well aware of the disparaging influence modern philosophical ideas exerted upon psychology as a new science. He saw the need not only of preserving scientific endeavor from the muddling philosophical concepts, but also the necessity of shielding students of psychology in the Philippines from similar struggles afflicting students of psychology in other countries.”

In the early 19th century, experimental psychology faced “countering opposition from various philosophical approaches in the study of human nature.” (Cabezon, 1977). The conflict between science and philosophy as the cornerstone of psychology was the theme during this time. It started in the late 18th century when Immanuel Kant argued that if psychology were to study the soul, it cannot subject itself to the methods of natural sciences because of the nature of the soul. Yet, the 19th century philosopher Auguste Comte saw psychology as moral philosophy, that is, psychology is “the propaedeutic science, the science where all the other sciences depended. We have assumed that man must first understand the workings of nature before he can hope to understand himself.” However, the period was also the time when academia had greater respect for the natural sciences. Thus, psychologists of the time struggled to align themselves with the discipline by limiting its focus only on observable conscious phenomena, which is human behavior. As such, it became inevitable at the time to draw a distinction between science and philosophy in the study of psychology. “In order to build up a science of the mind, one must study man in all his various manifestations” (Brennan, 1945, p. 255).

As a Dominican scholar, Fr. de Blas mirrored the same sentiments as Fr. Robert Edward Brennan, O.P. from the University of Montreal, who wrote a comprehensive account on the history of psychology from the standpoint of a Thomist. In the prefatory note of his book, *History of Psychology*:

From the Standpoint of a Thomist (1945), the Catholic French philosopher Jacques Maritain, also an influential exponent and interpreter of St. Thomas Aquinas, noted that the task of Thomist philosophers is (to make clear the inconsistencies of the positivist prejudices, and to achieve, in the psychological field as in other fields of human knowledge, the rapprochement and reconciliation between science and metaphysics).

In his book, Fr. Brennan argued that the state of affairs in psychology at that time (1940s) may regrettably be due to bad philosophical influence. “Unless the philosophy of psychology is sound and reassuring, the science of psychology can hope for no real prosper... to look at man scientifically without studying him in his philosophical nature, must inevitably result in false purview of his real being” (Brennan, 1945, p.7).

Perhaps the highlight of Fr. de Blas’ work on the philosophical standpoint of psychology is illustrated by his article on “The Modern and Thomistic Views Regarding the Constitution of Personality,” which was reprinted in the special issue of UNITAS in 1977. The main point of the article is to consider first what constitutes the very core of individual differences, which is the soul, prior to determining possible correlations of what constitutes individual differences such as personality traits, intelligence, and other measures. In the classic article of Fr. De Blas written in 1941, “the Thomistic school has shown in its solution an intellectual insight and accuracy of details worthy of the most modern investigations.” St. Thomas Aquinas was able to strike the balance between philosophy and theology by understanding its distinction from each other, and at the same time synthesizing them into a system of doctrine to enlighten our understanding of human nature. Since the proper subject matter of psychology is human nature, it is important to understand man in his totality – both body and soul – which requires a higher level of reasoning that philosophy can offer.

The discourse of Fr. de Blas on the source of individual differences in “personality psychology” – a term he coined to distinguish it from personality when taken in a metaphysical, moral, and juridic sense – boils down to temperament. That is, our temperament – inherent traits which we are born with – creates the differences in the perfection of the soul in each of us, making us uniquely different from each other. Interestingly, the sentiments he expressed in the introductory chapter of his

textbook in Experimental Psychology, is in congruence with his discussion about personality. In this pioneering book, he posits several assumptions to guide the students in their understanding of the approach to the study of psychology. The following are the assumptions discussed in the book which echoes his synthesis on the constitution of personality psychology (de Blas, 1952, p.21):

1. Man is composed of two natures, body and soul, both of which are incomplete as essences.
2. The body is incomplete, not only as an essence, but also as a substance, and as such, it cannot exist by itself.
3. The soul, though incomplete as an essence, is not incomplete as a substance, and as such, it can exist by itself.
4. The body is material, the soul spiritual.
5. Body and soul join substantially to form a new essence and a new substance, man.
6. Since the body cannot exist nor act alone, and the soul can exist and act by itself, we can distinguish two different psychical functions: compound (ex. sensitive functions) and proper to the soul alone (rational functions).
7. In all sensitive functions, the physical and psychical elements interact intrinsically. These are explained by psychophysical laws.
8. The rational functions of man are purely psychical and cannot be explained except by purely psychical laws.

Temperament has also been a key construct of Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas as they expounded on the universality and peculiarities of the soul and body. The body is instrumental primarily through its functions of sensations which render itself to the empirical measures of science. But Fr. de Blas notes that, “The fear of going beyond experimentation and entering the field of pure rational speculation explains this rather inconsistent attitude of many modern contemporary psychologists” (Panizo, 1977, p. 188). To balance the rational side of psychology with the empirical, Fr. de Blas found experimental psychology to be a potent vehicle in merging the two.

However, contemporary textbooks in personality psychology acknowledge the complexity of the term “personality.” Larsen and Buss (2014) attempted to

define personality as “the set of psychological traits and mechanisms within the individual that are organized and relatively enduring, and that influence his or her interactions with and adaptations to the intrapsychic, physical, and social environment.” In the same book, they discussed a summary of varying levels of personality analysis: the universals, particulars, and uniqueness. Universals are what makes us similar to all others – our human nature – such as the need to belong or our capacity to love. Particulars are what make us like some others – an analysis of individual or group differences – such as variations in expression of love; females tend to be more expressive compared to males. Uniqueness is what makes us like no other – for example, John’s unique way of expressing his love. It is then quite obvious that the discourse of Fr. de Blas about what makes up individual differences in one’s personality is an attempt to merge the universal and the particular. Yet, like most grand theories of personality, he has emphasized the human nature level more than the particulars. Most contemporary personality constructs and tenets are now based on empirical evidences that focus on particulars. For example, there is an extensive research done on extroversion and introversion, sex differences in terms of aggression, and the like.

The Experimental Psychology of Fr. de Blas

When Fr. de Blas established the Department of Experimental Psychology in UST in 1938, he formed a nucleus of professorial staff before the war to fill the void created by the formative stages of psychology education in the Philippines. He authored the first local textbook on the subject in the same year, and formulated the first manual patterned after the experimental works of the European psychologists Fechner, Weber, and Helmholtz (Espinosa & Samson, 1962). These German psychologists were the prehistorical figures that greatly influenced psychology by building the bridge between physiology and psychology. Their studies on psychophysics, which studies the relationship between stimulus and perception, helped Wilhelm Wundt, their contemporary, and considered to be the Father of Modern Psychology, put up the first experimental laboratory at the University of Leipzig in Germany. Fr. de Blas therefore equipped the laboratory with the most advanced instruments at that time, which was truly a monumental achievement in the field of psychology in the Philippines, even in Southeast Asia (Padilla and Aldaba-Lim, 1961). In spite of the war, Experimental Psychology survived in UST. It was from this group in 1942 where UST left a mark in Philippine psychology, together with his professorial staff Dr. Jose N. Lopez and Dr. Emmanuel Vit Samson. The first class of BS Psychology students graduated in 1957, which included Jose A. Samson, who fondly coined “Grand Old Man” to his mentor as documented in his tribute article in the UNITAS (vol. 35, No. 1) in 1962.

Another highlight in his accomplishment in experimental psychology aside from putting up the modern laboratory at that time was his textbook which he used in teaching experimental psychology. Interestingly, his textbook gave a detailed description of the different sense organs and their functions by according a chapter for each. The voluminous work starts off with an introduction on the nature, division and methods of experimental psychology and is followed by two general sections. Section A discusses the sensitive cognitive process which constitutes three fourths of the entire textbook. The section is divided into chapters devoted to external sensation in general, cutaneous sensations, sensations of taste and smell, auditory sensation, visual sensation, internal sensations such as perception, imagery, and memory. Section B is devoted to sensitive affectivity such as affections and emotions. The chapter on external sensations in general covers the physical elements of sensation such as adequate and inadequate stimulus, as well as the physiological elements of sensation such as receptors, transmitters, the central and peripheral nervous systems, complete with illustrations and diagrams. Meanwhile, each chapter devoted to the senses thoroughly discusses the sense organ, response qualities, stimulus thresholds, and abnormalities. Thus, students are equipped with a thorough discussion of what transpires in a conscious phenomena which can either be relating to psychophysics (relating to outside physical object such as sensory processes), or psychophysiology (relating to physiological processes such as the nervous system), which are further validated when they perform experiments in the laboratory.

In contrast, the other textbooks on the same subject tended to focus more on research methods and empirical methods of collecting and analyzing data through laboratory works and laboratory apparatuses, which was more in line with behaviorists at that time. Behaviorism gradually emerged as the dominant school in American psychology in the early 20th century which argued that psychology should be a purely objective experimental science, thus limiting focus to overt and measurable behavior. As noted by Kantowitz, et. al. (2015), in the 1930s, experiments were limited to understand sensation, perception, learning, memory, and a few other types. At present, experimental methods are used to explore and study social psychology, development of individual differences, which were not considered decades ago. Virtually all textbooks at that time provided an introduction to research methodology but only in the context of researches in experimental psychology. They were primarily about the content of experimental psychology (i.e. perception, sensation, etc.) with an emphasis on methodology used to acquire the knowledge. Yet, during the 1970s and 1980s, many “research methods” texts that appeared altered the organization of the subject matter quite differently. The methodological topics which were given chapter titles and content was only included to expound on the discourse on the

method. This shift in focus is a stark contrast from the textbook authored by Fr. de Blas. At present, experimental psychology seeks to integrate both methodology and content as virtually all facets of human experience can be investigated by the field of psychology.

Despite the advancement in psychological techniques and methodologies, psychology remains as a problematic science (Walsh, et.al., 2014). From the late 18th century critique of Immanuel Kant that to study the soul is impossible under natural-scientific investigation, to a persistence by Watson, Skinner, and other behaviorists to transform itself to becoming a natural-science and abandoning philosophy, the question of its identity remains. While the natural-science approach which focused on overt behavior and marginalizing the study of the soul and subjectivity until the 20th century was favored a parallel movement emerged to establish psychology as a human science which was expressed as phenomenological, existential, and psychoanalytic studies. Experimental psychology shares the same struggle when it moved its focus from content to methodology before reaching an integrated view of the scope of its field.

The “Grand Old Man” of Psychology

Fr. de Blas was one of the forerunners in experimental psychology in the Philippines. Through his pioneering vision and zealous effort, he was able to put up the first experimental psychology laboratory in the country, lectured extensively, and wrote books and discourses on the philosophy and science of psychology, earning him the moniker, “Grand Old Man” of psychology. This section highlights his contribution to the field of experimental psychology in the Philippines.

A Brief History of Psychology in the Philippines

From a number of historians, there is said to be four general lines of inquiry dispersed in a timeline in the development of the study of psychology in the Philippines. The most popular was the academic-scientific psychology in the 1920s, mainly through the American pragmatist behavioral school that permeated in the University of the Philippines. Next was the academic-philosophical which came about upon the establishment of a higher system of education around the University of Santo Tomas in the Spanish times, around the middle 17th century. The third is ethnic psychology, where indigenous beliefs, practices and literature are examined to give light to the socio-cultural nuances of Filipino psychology. And lastly, the psychological-medical, with Filipino religion as cohesive element (Salazar, 1983).

Early Philippine psychology could be traced in native tradition where psychological knowledge is said to have been carried by the *babaylan* (Visayas), *catalonan* (Central Luzon), and *baglan* (Northern Luzon). Thus, these priestesses and guardians of Filipino sacred knowledge were considered the first psychologists of the country (Enriquez, 1994). Their *dalangin* (prayers) and *bulong* (whispers) are rich sources of early Filipino psychology, along with the use of *anting-anting* (amulets), among other psychological practices and beliefs. Likewise, early Philippine literature, both oral and written, and other inherited customs and beliefs in medicine and rules that govern interpersonal relationships may serve as the first ancestral basis of Philippine psychology.

However, these indigenous practices characterizing the Filipino psyche were not given much importance in the study of psychology. Philippine colonial education espoused the belief that psychology in the country was created by the Western colonizers (Enriquez, 1994). Psychology in the Philippines has been taught in schools as early as the 17th century at the University of San Carlos in Cebu and University of Santo Tomas in Manila. Philosophical psychology was part of the European tradition brought by the Spanish friars. By the early 1900s, underground psychology courses beyond introductory courses were taught in the University of the Philippines, in the College of Education using American textbooks and English as medium of instruction. In 1908, the state university was established with American Murray Bartlett, as the first president. One of the pioneer Filipino psychologists was Agustin Alonzo, who, after finishing his Master of Arts in Psychology in the University of the Philippines, took his doctorate in experimental psychology in University of Chicago. After five years of American training in advance psychology and Harrison's policy of Filipinization, Bartlett paved the way for Alonzo to become the chairperson of the Department of Psychology in the University of the Philippines. The American teachers were then soon slowly replaced by Filipino professors, but like their predecessors, most were trained in different fields and not psychology.

Meanwhile, the University of Santo Tomas initiated offering a doctorate degree in Psychology (Padilla, 1961). UST has established its own Department of Psychology in the early 1930s. By offering a Doctor in Philosophy in the field, UST undertook the responsibility of providing the majority of schools in the Philippines with psychology trained instructors. Moreover, in 1938, Fr. Angel de Blas, OP established the first Experimental Psychology laboratory in the Philippines together with Dr. Emmanuel Vit Samson, a medical degree holder, and Dr. Jose Lopez, the first doctorate degree holder in Psychology from the University of Santo Tomas.

It had several instruments that provided for the study of psychology in a more scientific way such as the audiometer, anesthesiometer, pain-pressure balance, among other devices, which was considered as one of a kind in Far East Asia. The laboratory blazed the trail as a training laboratory, publishing a series of workbooks, manuals, texts and exercises for students' use. The focus of instruction was gearing towards the medical and physiological aspects of psychology. Dr. Jose Lopez could likewise be credited as the person responsible for the clinical characteristic of the UST curriculum (Cabezón, 1977).

Fr. de Blas' Vision for Experimental Psychology in the Philippines

Fr. Angel de Blas, OP was chairman of the Department of Psychology from its establishment in the early 1930s to 1954. In 1948, the College of Liberal Arts offered the Bachelor of Science major in Psychology degree. He was succeeded by Dr. Samson, a physician, who was the chairman for 18 years (Licuanan, 1985, p.68).

During this time, the University of the Philippines also established the Department of Psychology, aligning itself with the School of Education. After the Americans, first generation Filipino pioneers in psychology taught in UP after obtaining their degrees from the United States of America. Thus, the concentration of the curriculum was leaning towards American psychology, which was struggling to move away from philosophy to align itself with the natural sciences. However, in UST, under the leadership of Fr. de Blas, although the curriculum reflected a medical and physiological aspect of psychology, it did not abandon its philosophical roots. These are evidenced by early theses of the students of UST at the time (Licuanan, 1985, p.70).

Fr. de Blas had the foresight to protect his students from the diverging philosophies that beset the study of psychology by focusing on what he considers as essential and in congruence with his faith: humanity. As a true Dominican psychologist, he was able to integrate Thomistic rational psychology as the philosophy that guides his exploration in the robust nature of experimental psychology as a science. To quote from his lecture on the Psychology of Personality in 1948 (Espinosa and Samson, 1962): "The ancient philosophers called psychology the philosophy of human nature; the modern scientists speak of it as a science of man's functions. But in its application to life it is neither of these. Psychology is humanity itself: mankind's inner being calling to man for sympathy and understanding."

Conclusion

Fr. Angel de Blas, OP was an illustrious educator and administrator of two distinguished Dominican educational institutions in the Philippines: Colegio de San Juan de Letran and the University of Santo Tomas. He was a voracious learner with a discipline of a scientist in his constant search for understanding human nature. His interest in experimental psychology, combined with his passion for guiding young minds paved the way for a trailblazing legacy in the field of psychology not just in the university but also in the country. His ideas were both expansive and inclusive, which was translated in his achievements as Rector of both educational institutions as they were marked by great progress in terms of physical structures and curricular revisions. With his unconventional character and lyrical outbursts, he sought refuge and balance in scientific methods. He was a man who delighted in introspection and who heeded the guidance of the past as he embarked on his visions for the future. ■

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