

# ***Paninindigan* as an Integral Part of Filipino Virtue Ethics**

Ian Joeffrey G. Melendres, OP\*

University of Santo Tomas, Manila, Philippines

**Abstract:** While there are compelling reasons to shift from a Filipino value system to a Filipino virtue ethics shaped by the Thomistic tradition, certain areas need to be revisited and clarified. For instance, how do we clarify the ambivalent relationship between *loób* and *kapwa*? At this time, there seems to be a subjective understanding of *loób* and a perverted conception of *kapwa* that make an objective ethics difficult. In my view, this ambivalence is linked to how Filipino ethicists believe that reason is subjugated by the will, and even by the passions. Hence, this paper proposes that the virtue of *paninindigan* must play an integral part of any successful Filipino virtue ethics. By analyzing this uniquely Filipino concept, we discover that this virtue can fundamentally anchor the Filipino virtues in *katotohanan*, i.e, truth. After all, *katotohanan* is not devoid of a relationship-oriented character while at the same time remaining “objective” in the sense that it wills the true good—and not just a subjective or relative good—of both the *loób* and *kapwa*. *Paninindigan* bolsters the inherent goodness of a holistic and relational *loób* and *kapwa* since it serves as a *katig* (outrigger) of the Filipino virtues, safeguarding them from bad use. Simply put, *paninindigan* fortifies Filipino virtues to be virtues in the true sense of the word.

**Keywords:** *paninindigan*, *katotohanan*, *loób*, *kapwa*, *pagkakaisa*, *katig*, Filipino virtue ethics

---

\*Ian Joeffrey G. Melendres, O.P. can be contacted at [ianjoeffrey.melendres.eccle@ust.edu.ph](mailto:ianjoeffrey.melendres.eccle@ust.edu.ph).

## Introduction

In recent scholarship on Filipino ethical concepts, Jeremiah Lasquety-Reyes advocates a shift from a Filipino value system to a Filipino virtue ethics. It is a welcome development because it considers not just one conceptual framework but involves three major intellectual traditions that together can help shape a harmonious Filipino ethical system.<sup>1</sup> Also, the move towards Thomistic virtue ethics as an organizing framework is another commendable development because it affords a systematic schema that addresses the dynamic and integral interrelatedness of Filipino virtues. This in turn reveals the depth and richness of the Filipino ethical concepts themselves. Hence, the dialogue with Thomism is an opportunity for a systematic analysis and reinterpretation that could make Filipino ethical concepts more relevant and understandable.

Far from proclaiming the establishment of *the* Filipino virtue ethics but rather of *a* Filipino virtue ethics, Reyes also admits that more work has to be done. While it is compelling to advance such a project, in my view, many areas need to be revisited and refined. Filipino virtues have inherent characteristics that, even though they do not really contradict the Thomistic virtue ethics, pose some challenges to that Western system that must be clarified and explained. In fact, even what Reyes identified as the two pillars of Filipino virtue ethics, namely *loób* and *kapwa*, could tend towards ambivalence brought about by a narrow and at times confused understanding of them by the Western tradition. A subjective understanding of *loób* and a perverted conception of *kapwa* may still linger and loom large with the shift to Filipino virtues. While these limitations were mostly addressed by having recourse to Norris Clarke's Thomistic Personalism, a salient lacuna remains in this emerging Filipino virtue ethics, and it is brought into focus by this question: How do we understand the primary role of reason over the will – a classic Thomistic principle – in the conceptual framework of the Filipino *loób* and its relationship to the *kapwa*. Is Filipino virtue a matter of the will freely choosing to act in any manner whatsoever to maintain a good relationship between the *loób* and the *kapwa* or is the virtue grounded in something outside choice?

---

<sup>1</sup> He investigates the three major intellectual traditions that shape Filipino history, culture, and experience, namely, the (1) the Southeast Asian tribal and animist tradition, (2) Spanish Catholic tradition, and (3) the American modern tradition. This undertaking is a novel development because ever since the studies on Filipino ethical concepts gained interest in mid-20th century, the scholarly literature focused more on Filipino values and later turned towards an “indigenized” psychology, among others. While the initial studies on Filipino values were undertaken by non-Filipino scholars which were deemed inadequate and at times misunderstood, the Filipino psychology movement was pioneered and championed by Filipino social scientists, foremost among them was Virgilio G. Enriquez and his movement the Sikolohiyang Pilipino (Filipino Psychology). These scholarly developments altogether offered valuable contributions towards the continuous rediscovery and renewed understanding of the Filipino ethical concepts and ultimately to the Filipino identity—both at the personal and collective level.

In response, following Reyes' lead, this paper proposes that the virtue of *paninindigan* must play an integral part of any successful Filipino virtue ethics. By analyzing this uniquely Filipino concept, we will discover that this virtue can fundamentally anchor the Filipino virtues in *katotohanan*, i.e., truth. After all, *katotohanan* is not devoid of a relationship-oriented character while at the same time remaining "objective" in the sense that it wills the true good—and not just a subjective or relative good—of both the *loób* and *kapwa*. Similarly, *paninindigan* bolsters the inherent goodness of a holistic and relational *loób* and *kapwa* since it serves as a *katig* (outrigger) of the Filipino virtues, safeguarding them from bad use. Simply put, *paninindigan* fortifies Filipino virtues to be virtues in the true sense of the word.

To facilitate the discussion, I divide this paper into three parts. First, we discuss the weakness-strength of a Filipino virtue ethics, focusing particularly on the *loób-kapwa* concepts and its telos, namely *pagkakaisa* (unity). Second, we move to a discussion of the threefold order in man in the Thomistic tradition. Third and last, we conclude with an elaboration of *paninindigan* as a constitutive part of Filipino virtue ethics, explaining what it is and how it serves a *katig* of Filipino virtues.

### **The Weaknesses and Strengths of a Filipino Virtue Ethics: *Loób*, *Kapwa*, and *Pagkakaisa***

Reyes' project of a Filipino virtue ethics is basically two-fold, namely, to establish an organic system that reveals the inherent interrelatedness of Filipino ethical concepts and at the same time, to preserve the richness of indigenous Filipino ethical thought.<sup>2</sup> What he advocates is a dialogue between Filipino ethical concepts with that of Thomistic virtue ethics. The latter serves as a framework that is not to be imposed but as a guide to organize an internally coherent system of Filipino virtue ethics. After all, "Filipino culture has its own indigenous ethics of *loób* and *kapwa* which, when in dialogue with Western ethics, can be easily interpreted and classified as a virtue ethics."<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, the heritage of Thomistic virtue ethics is believed to be not something new or far removed from the Filipino worldview considering that

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Rogelia Pe-Pua and Elizabeth Protacio Marcelino, "Sikolohiyang Pilipino (Filipino Psychology): A legacy of Virgilio Enriquez," *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* 3 (2000): 51: According to Enriquez, the term 'indigenization' is erroneous because one cannot indigenize something which is already indigenous. Hence, *cultural revalidation* is the appropriate term because the strategy that is mainly employed for discovering *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* is based on assessing historical and socio-cultural realities, understanding the local language, unraveling Filipino characteristics and explaining them through the eyes of the native Filipino.

<sup>3</sup> Jeremiah Lasquety-Reyes, "Loób and Kapwa: Thomas Aquinas and a Filipino Virtue Ethics" (PhD diss., KU Leuven, 2015), 9. (henceforth *Loób and Kapwa*)

the Spanish intellectual tradition—which has roots in the Catholic intellectual tradition—is highly influenced by Thomism. History attests that Thomism is an integral part of the Spanish Catholic tradition in the Philippines:

Thomism has the inherent resources for the synthesis of traditions ... And it is an attractive option precisely because Thomism is such an integral part of Philippine history and was formative in the culture that we are now seeking to describe. To use Aquinas is to use a philosophical “insider,” so to speak, with multiple advantages over using any modern philosophy.<sup>4</sup>

As an integral part of the Filipino intellectual tradition, Thomism had and continues to have significant influence on the formation and renewed understanding of Filipino ethical concepts. Reyes avers that it is evinced by their inherent affinity, especially the holistic worldview shared both by a Southeast Asian animist and tribal culture on the one hand, and the pre-modern philosophy of Aquinas on the other.

While both traditions share significant affinity, there are also areas that call for further reflection and analysis. Among others, the salient difference between the two ethical frameworks, in my view, is the primacy of the will over reason or even the primacy of feelings over reason, in Filipino virtue ethics. The faculty of reason is therefore relegated to the background. In connection to this, another difference is the horizontal orientation of Filipino virtue ethics due to the fundamental emphasis on human relationships. Set against the vertical orientation of the Thomistic virtue ethics, one sees that the faculty of reason in Filipino virtue ethics is made dependent on the good of the community. In other words, human relationships regulate reason when supposedly it should be the other way around. Accordingly, this will have significant repercussions to what ultimately governs the *loób* and *kapwa*, as well as the designated telos of Filipino virtue ethics, namely, *pagkakaisa* (unity).

### **On *Loób***

Reyes identifies *loób* as will which is the power of the soul. Nevertheless, it is qualified as a relational will and extensively, it pertains to personhood.<sup>5</sup> *Loób* moves the Filipino to another in order to establish a relationship with the other as a shared-self, called the *kapwa*. Within the *loób* itself, there is no conceived division between reason, will and the sensitive appetite, whereas in Aquinas, following Aristotle, these three are very fundamental distinctions within the soul.<sup>6</sup> However, Reyes claims that

---

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 78-85.

<sup>6</sup> *Quaestiones disputatae de virtutibus*, q. 1, a. 8, respondeo; Hause trans. 2010, 41: “*Sciendum est*,

they are not totally absent because even if there is only one power of the soul—the *loób*—in Filipino anthropology, it contains all the other powers virtually.<sup>7</sup> While that may be a kind of solace, a challenge arises when one is asked about the relationship among these three powers, particularly as regards the primacy of one over the other.

In Aquinas, while it is possible and desirable to have a harmonious relationship among reason, will, and the sensitive appetite, not all are equal. It is the faculty of reason that holds primacy. In other words, in Aquinas’s view, reason must govern the will. In the Filipino framework of *loób*, it is the other way around:

*Loób* is a “unity of thought and will... and affective life.”<sup>8</sup> However, even *within this unity it is the will which takes pride of place*. The other aspects of the *loób* only play a supporting role to the will.<sup>9</sup>

As regards the relationship between reason, will, and the sensitive appetite, “though a Filipino hardly acts primarily on rationality, it does not imply that he is irrational or does not use his head. Instead, he tends to act more from the promptings of his heart, from an intuitive and immediate grasp of reality.”<sup>10</sup> From a strictly Thomistic standpoint, it could be said that Filipinos are governed more by their passions rather than by their reason. For some, especially for some Thomists, this poses a difficulty for a Filipino virtue ethics. A Thomistic virtue ethics presents an organic system which considers reason as its governing power. When such is absent or inverted, the framework is undermined, and the Thomist proposes, the human being is cast adrift in a sea of passions with no anchor in truth. Such a demotion of reason to the passions is made even more problematic because it lies at the core, the “beating heart” or the central dynamic of Filipino virtues, namely the reciprocity of *kagandahang-loób* (charity) and *utang-na-loób* (justice):

What will in fact be noticed in the virtue of *kagandahang-loób* and other Filipino virtues is that the “emotions,” or what Aquinas calls “passions,” play a prominent and integrated part in the functioning of the virtue. *Certainly the emotions play a much more obvious role than*

---

*quod in homine triplex potest esse subiectum virtutis... scilicet intellectus, voluntas et appetitus inferior, qui in concupiscibilem et irascibilem dividitur*” (We must be aware that in human beings there are three possible subjects of virtue: intellect, will and the lower appetite, which is divided into the concupiscible and irascible).

<sup>7</sup> Reyes, *Loób and Kapwa*, 83.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Dionisio Miranda, *Kaloób ni Kristo: A Filipino Christian Account of Conscience* (Manila: Logos Publications Inc., 2003), 69.

<sup>9</sup> Reyes, *Loób and Kapwa*, 92. (Emphasis added)

<sup>10</sup> Manuel B. Dy Jr. Outline of a Project of Pilipino Ethics. *Values in Philippine Culture and Education*, ed. Manuel Dy, Jr.: 19-26, Washington DC: The Council of Research in Values and Philosophy, 1994, 20.

*reason, which is very much subdued in the background.*<sup>11</sup>

While admitting such a weakness, Reyes avers that *loób* understood as a “relational will” bears a sophisticated strength when it comes to human relationships.<sup>12</sup> To wit,

There is an added emphasis on human relationships, significantly more than found in the *voluntas* of Aquinas. *Loób* involves wanting and choosing, but most often in relationship to others, to the *kapwa* ... It is about wanting and choosing x insofar as it involves a positive or negative relationship to the *kapwa*. All desires and decisions are oriented to the *kapwa* in some way. The *kapwa* is always there in the *loób*'s decision-making.<sup>13</sup>

*Loób* always entails the *kapwa* even to be *loób* because the former's constant and dynamic relation to the latter is the condition for its own existence and authenticity as *loób*.<sup>14</sup> In view of what positive or negative implications any action the *loób* does to the *kapwa*, then it follows that the relationship to the *kapwa* serves as the regulating principle for the perfection of the virtues that qualify the *loób*.

### **On *Kapwa***

Filipino virtues are governed by relationships that help shape the social order in the life of a Filipino. Accordingly, “the defining feature of this [Filipino] virtue ethics is that it seeks to preserve and strengthen human relationships.”<sup>15</sup>

Challenging Frank Lynch's<sup>16</sup> assertion, Virgilio Enriquez, the founder of the *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* (Filipino psychology) movement, claimed *kapwa* as the primordial and the highest Filipino value. Enriquez avers that

in Filipino, *kapwa* is the unity of the ‘self’ and ‘others.’ The English ‘others’ is actually used in opposition to the ‘self,’ and implies the recognition of the self as a separate identity. In contrast, *kapwa* is a recognition of shared identity, an inner self shared with others.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Reyes, *Loób and Kapwa*, 127. (Emphasis added)

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>14</sup> Dionisio Miranda, *Buting Pinoy: Probe Essays on Value as Filipino* (Manila: Divine Word Publications, 1992), 84.

<sup>15</sup> Reyes, *Loób and Kapwa*, 167.

<sup>16</sup> Frank Lynch, SJ (1921-1978) is considered to be the pioneer scholar on Filipino values. He designated *smooth interpersonal relations* (SIR) as the key value for Filipinos.

<sup>17</sup> Virgilio G. Enriquez, *Kapwa: A core concept in Filipino social psychology*. *Philippine World-View* (1986), 52. (henceforth, *Kapwa: A core concept in Filipino social psychology*)

While subscribing to this idea, Reyes clarifies that *kapwa* is not a mere sentiment or a figurative imagination. For to speak of *kapwa* already entails an interaction with the other in a particular way. Hence, he gives a refined definition of *kapwa* as ‘together with the person’ veering away from the modern notion of self and other which already implies a contra-distinction.<sup>18</sup>

For Reyes, such a move towards the concept of person rather than self in *kapwa* is intentional since it paves the way to the Thomistic Personalism of Norris Clarke which talks about the *communio personarum*. Such philosophical basis entailed in the concept *substance-in-relation* is congruent to the Filipino understanding of *kapwa*. Accordingly, this is significant in his dialogue of a Filipino virtue ethics with the Thomistic virtue ethics. This innate dynamic and reciprocity between *loób* and *kapwa* is what Reyes referred to as a sophisticated strength of Filipino virtue ethics when it comes to human relationships.

### On *Pagkakaisa*

The goal of the Filipino virtue ethics proposed by Reyes is *pagkakaisa* (oneness/unity). It is defined as “the unity of ‘holistic and relational wills.’” This means that the *loób* and *kapwa* together will the same things for their combined good, and they both have a commitment to the preservation and strengthening of their relationship. As Enriquez says, “*Pagkakaisa* is also the highest level of interpersonal interaction possible. It can be said that being one with another is a full realization of *pakikipagkapwa*.”<sup>19</sup> Such a oneness is not theoretical but practical, played out in daily life from within the most intimate setting of the family, outward towards the *kapwa*—and then towards the greater body called the *bayan* (country).<sup>20</sup>

The closest term for *pagkakaisa* in Aquinas is “concord” (*concordia*).<sup>21</sup> Compared to peace, concord is particular in scope because it deals with two persons arriving at a common understanding through the virtue of charity. But it is not about *thinking* the same things but *willing* the same things. According to Aquinas, concord is the union of wills and not of opinions. That is why it is still possible for two people to have divergent ideas, backgrounds, and personalities, but as long as they will the same thing, then it can be said that they have concord.<sup>22</sup> With this unity of wills in *pagkakaisa*, the full realization of the *loób-kapwa* relationship is attained.

<sup>18</sup> Reyes, *Loób and Kapwa*, 156.

<sup>19</sup> Enriquez, *Kapwa: A core concept in Filipino social psychology*, 64.

<sup>20</sup> Reyes, *Loób and Kapwa*, 167-168.

<sup>21</sup> Reyes, *Loób and Kapwa*, 115.

<sup>22</sup> *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 37, a. 1, respondeo; Reyes, *Loób and Kapwa*, 115.

So far, in the foregoing, we have discussed the primary strength of Filipino virtue ethics, that is, its focus on “relationality.” In my view, however, its primary weakness is its obscure and subdued place for reason, which leaves the human agent flailing in a sea of passion. Consequently, since what is good in a Filipino virtue ethics is always relational, the orientation and constitutive factor of the virtues is also rendered horizontal. Since *loób* presupposes *kapwa* and, hence, relational in nature, it implies that Filipino virtues are qualified as either positive or negative, good or bad, based on how one acts towards his *kapwa*.<sup>23</sup> However, as will be demonstrated below, the prominent significance of human relationships also augurs a problem considering the subdued place of reason. Accordingly, this will have a repercussion and inherent difficulty when set against the threefold order in man in the Thomistic tradition.

### The Threefold Order in Man in the Thomistic Tradition

In order to look into the viability of Filipino virtue ethics with its *loób-kapwa* dynamics and *pagkakaisa* as its telos, we turn briefly to the threefold order in man which Aquinas discussed in *Summa theologiae* II-II, Q. 72, A. 4. While this question deals with the divisions of sin into sin against God, sin against oneself, and sin against one’s neighbor, Aquinas provides clear and ample distinctions that illustrate the hierarchy within this threefold order in man:

[T]here should be a threefold order in man: one in relation to the rule of reason, in so far as all our actions and passions should be commensurate with the rule of reason: another order is in relation to the rule of the Divine Law, whereby man should be directed in all things: and if man were by nature a solitary animal, this twofold order would suffice. But since man is naturally a civic and social animal, as is proved in *Polit.* i, 2, hence a third order is necessary, whereby man is directed in relation to other men among whom he has to dwell. (ST II-II, Q. 72, A. 4.)

For Aquinas, three concentric circles constitute the threefold order in man, which, for the purpose of convenience, we refer to as the *order of reason*, the *order of Divine Law*, and the *order of society*. These three are interrelated in a hierarchical way:

Of these orders the [order of Divine Law] contains the [order of reason] and surpasses it. For whatever things are comprised under the order of reason, are comprised under the order of God Himself. Yet some things are comprised under the order of God, which surpass the human reason, such as matters of faith, and things due to God

<sup>23</sup> Reyes, *Loób and Kapwa*, 150-151.



alone. Hence, he that sins in such matters, for instance, by heresy, sacrilege, or blasphemy, is said to sin against God. In like manner, the [order of reason] includes the [order of society] and surpasses it, because in all things wherein we are directed in reference to our neighbor, we need to be directed according to the order of reason. Yet in some things we are directed according to reason, in relation to ourselves only, and not in reference to our neighbor. (ST II-II, Q. 72, A. 4.)

In a descending manner, the order of Divine Law takes the highest place subsuming both order of reason, and social order. The second is that of the order of reason which naturally participates in the Divine Law while subsuming the order of society. The third and last is the order of society which for Aquinas is governed immediately by the order of reason, and ultimately by the order of Divine Law.

This hierarchy is fundamental in imagining a virtue ethics patterned after the Thomistic tradition. When Filipino virtue ethics is set against this framework, one salient problem is its tautological structure if we could really speak of structure. In the dynamics of the *loób-kapwa* relationship, the good is governed and determined by human relationships. In turn, the good of the order of society is shaped by the good of human relationships. Accordingly, for Filipinos, reason which must govern the order of society is subordinated by the human relationships that make up the social order. In other words, for the Filipino, the hierarchy established by Aquinas—at least the two lowest rungs—is turned upside down. Practically, this proves itself problematic insofar as the Filipino concept of the good becomes weakened when it is anchored not in reason but in passion. While it is fitting that *pagkakaisa* be given as the *telos* of Filipino virtue ethics, it must be anchored upon an objective foothold of reason. Accordingly, this is a difficulty since there is no explicit Filipino metaphysical thought that accords reason its primacy.<sup>24</sup>

While *kapwa* indeed can serve as a complement and regulating principle to set the *loób* on course towards the good, this is not assured. A question can therefore be raised: What then governs human relationships in Filipino virtue ethics? Many historical instances show that *kapwa* could become perverted, thus affecting the *loób* itself. A consequence to such a perverted account of the *kapwa* is that the understanding of what is good becomes relative. Hence, what is good is conditioned by the person's feelings pervading the *loób* and greatly influenced by social pressure overriding the *kapwa*. In turn, Filipino virtues become ambivalent and negate the essential property of virtue which is to guide action so that it is ordered towards the authentic good. As a result, the Filipino acts primarily to keep his relationship with

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 104.

his *kapwa* intact and tension-free without any regard to what is authentically good or true or beautiful. He seeks a superficial and disordered *pagkakaisa*.

In fact, *pagkakaisa* has revealed itself in recent events in Philippine history. Reyes cites the example of the EDSA People Power Revolution of 1986 which demonstrated the *pagkakaisa* of the Filipino people who successfully overthrew the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos. They gathered on the EDSA highway and confronted tanks and armed soldiers by peaceful means. The people together willed the same thing for their common good. This was the background in which the optimism of Filipino psychology was born. Sadly, that *pagkakaisa* turned out to be short-lived because after some time things reverted to the status quo characterized by a “confusion of traditions.”<sup>25</sup>

Another recurring problem in the political life of Filipinos is the perversion of *pagkakaisa*. This occurs when the Filipino limits his understanding of *kapwa* to family clans or to close relations to the exclusion of other larger groups and institutions in society. Hence, the Filipino voter will cast his ballot for a politician who is from his province or his city regardless of that politician’s policy proposals or even, moral integrity. Yet this disordered perspective also points subtly to the weakness of the horizontal orientation of Filipino virtue ethics. If *loób* only extends to *kapwa*, understood as a part—or just a mere projection—of *loób*, then the Filipino concept of the good is basically self-reflexive. This view is dangerous because it has the potency—and the history and experience of the Filipinos reveals that this potency easily becomes an actuality—of becoming self-centered, even if it appears to be collective-oriented. This contributes to the perennial problems in Filipino society of *kamag-anak* (nepotism), *padrino* (cronyism), and bribery, which together make it difficult to establish a social system that is based on honor and merit.<sup>26</sup>

To remedy these problems, Reyes calls for the expansion of the sense of *kapwa* to include the *bayan* (country). This can be done, in his view, by advocating “a shift in general values education for the young, a synthesis of the three traditions especially in scholarly discourse, and committed individuals living out an educated example of Filipino virtue ethics.”<sup>27</sup> While these courses of actions are necessary, I also think the philosophical foundation needs to be re-examined to emphasize the role of reason in Filipino virtue ethics.

Mentioned only in passing, one interesting point that Reyes suggests is that when we talk about *pagkakaisa*, we must not ignore its Christian context in the

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 150; James Putzel, “Survival of an imperfect democracy in the Philippines.” *Democratization* 6, no. 1 (1999), 216.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

Philippines, which expanded the concept of *kapwa* beyond the tribe to embrace the world. This injunction needs to be emphasized inasmuch as concord, as Aquinas understands it, ultimately “directs many hearts together to one thing, which is *chiefly the Divine good*, secondarily, the good of our neighbor.”<sup>28</sup> After all, in Aquinas a life of virtue exhibits a “measure of judgment in contemplating divine things or in directing human affairs according to divine standards.”<sup>29</sup> This exactly shows the necessity of a vertical orientation that highlights our relationship with God who is *the good* as the background of all virtue. This not only counterbalances but also fortifies the strength of the *loób-kapwa* dynamics understood within the form of a life.<sup>30</sup>

### ***Paninindigan* as an Integral Part of Filipino Virtues**

Even if the Christian context cannot be brought to the fore, I propose that the Filipino virtue of *paninindigan* is an indigenously potent counterpoint that identifies a vertical orientation in Filipino virtue ethics. This in turn highlights the priority of reason to which Filipino human relationships, social order, and *pagkakaisa* can be directed and regulated.

Looking into its indigenous understanding, Enriquez translates *paninindigan* as a conviction to one’s convictions.<sup>31</sup> While *paninindigan* can be taken as conviction that operates merely on the intellectual level, in my view, it would not capture the richness of the Filipino word. The Filipino worldview is not inclined towards an abstract and objective comprehension but a holistic worldview. Thus, *paninindigan* is not mere intellectual adherence to abstract imperatives but a manifestation through one’s action and way of life of one’s convictions and principles.

---

<sup>28</sup> *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 37, a. 1, respondeo. (Emphasis added); Cf. Mark D. Jordan, *Ordering Wisdom: The Hierarchy of Philosophical Discourses in Aquinas* (Notre Dame: 1986), 177: “If there is a methodological difference between metaphysics and theology, there is no material segregation of them in the texts [of Aquinas]. The discourse of metaphysics is not closed at some point below theology in the hierarchy of sciences. The reader passes imperceptibly from one discourse to another. Indeed, it is not as if one were passing outside of metaphysics, even though one knows that metaphysics itself cannot prove the necessity of a higher realm. It is rather that one finds the unexpected completion of metaphysics in revelation.”

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 45, a. 5.

<sup>30</sup> Moreover, I would like to extend further the implication as regards the importance of this Christian strain which must necessarily inform *pagkakaisa* as telos of Filipino virtue ethics. For, in the Christian faith the perfect example of the unity of wills is in the Trinitarian God. This *perichoresis* (interpenetration) between the essential property of relations and unity in the Trinity must be the ideal to which Filipino relationality and unity also must strive for. Conversely, the innate relationality of *loób* mirrors that of God as essentially self-communicating. Indeed, this Christian strain will serve as a potent foundation and pattern for all human relationships from which unity of wills—the *pagkakaisa* of the *loób-kapwa*—must be inspired.

<sup>31</sup> Enriquez, *Kapwa: A Core Concept in Filipino Social Psychology*, 15: “Pakikipagkapwa is both a *paninindigan* (conviction) and a value.”

*Paninindigan* fortifies human relationships based on what is “objectively” good.<sup>32</sup> By “objectively” good, I mean not only an abstract or theoretical good but the common good that elevates human relationships to an authentic *pagkakaisa*. This also implies the expansion of the *loób* and *kapwa*. For Filipinos, the concept of *paninindigan* embodies such a vertical orientation that expands the notion of *kapwa*. What is more, *paninindigan* truly perfects the *loób* towards willing the good of the *kapwa* and not simply settling on maintaining a good-feeling-relationship with his or her *kapwa*.

Next, *paninindigan* makes the person virtuous. In fact, *paninindigan* only manifests itself in the purpose-driven actions of the person rather than his words. One cannot be both a person with *paninindigan* and without *paninindigan*. When one does not adhere to *katotohanan* (truth), then he has no *paninindigan*. What is more, Enriquez avers that *paninindigan* elevates social interactions and relations to a deeper level.<sup>33</sup> For instance, in the mother-child relationship which serves as the fundamental framework of *kagandahang-loób* (charity) from which Filipino virtue ethics should be based,<sup>34</sup> one characteristic of it must also be highlighted, namely the *paninindigan* of the mother for the good of her child. In many instances, the mother, as part of her maternal care, has to rebuke or chastise her child when the latter does something wrong. This demonstrates that the mother is greatly concerned with the welfare of her child, regardless of the usual painful discipline it entails that also slights the feeling of the child, but nonetheless strengthens their relationship because ultimately the good of the child is safeguarded. She is challenging her child to live a life of moral integrity regardless of the sacrificial consequences. This ascribes the virtue of *paninindigan* to the mother.

Finally, we must distinguish *paninindigan* from *pangatawanan*, which the vice that leads to a person’s stubbornness of will even when he already knows that there is something wrong with his decision or action. Individuals characterized by *pangatawanan* have no humility and no acceptance of their mistakes and weakness even if they become apparent. Rather, they embrace a stubbornness that entails burden, anger, resentment, and grudge. *Pangatawanan* comes from the word *katawan* (body) because it connotes externally showing adherence to something regardless of the adverse consequences that are entailed. To an extent, as a vice, *pangatawanan* even asserts itself and hides the wrong by performing another wrongdoing.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *Summa Theologiae II-II*, Q. 47, A. 6, *respondeo*: “The end of moral virtues is human good. Now the good of the human soul is to be in accord with reason.”

<sup>33</sup> Enriquez, *Kapwa: A Core Concept in Filipino Social Psychology*, 16: “*Pakikipagkapwa* as a conviction does not simply imply either *pakitungo* (amenities) or *pakikisama* {adjusting} or any of the other modes and levels of inter-action.”

<sup>34</sup> See Reyes, *Loób and Kapwa*, 144-146.

<sup>35</sup> Javier, *Madaling Maging Tao, Mahirap Magpakatao*, 52-53: “*Ang kaloóban ng may paninindigan ay hindi rin matigas. Dahil ang tigas ng loób ay may bigat na tulad sa pasanin, kaya mahirap dalhin gaya*”

## **Paninindigan and Katotohanan**

When we speak of *paninindigan* as a virtue, we affirm that it upholds *katotohanan* (truth).<sup>36</sup> In fact, for Filipinos, *paninindigan* is not *paninindigan* if it rests on a *kasinungalingan* (lie). A person who has *paninindigan* is a man with principles, with truth as the fundamental principle amongst them. For Filipinos, *katotohanan* is objective, it is transcultural, and it is universal. This means that it does not depend on the fickleness of emotions. Living with *katotohanan* can even withstanding the pressure of relationships, social acceptance, or social approval. *Katotohanan* cannot inflict harm on human relationships but fortifies them. Thus, *paninindigan* can never undermine the value or virtue of the Filipino in the greater context of his human relationships. In fact, it is praiseworthy for someone who manifests *paninindigan* even in the absence of general social approval. In relationships, someone who has *paninindigan* is a person of integrity. He is trustworthy. More importantly, *paninindigan* does not capitalize on a superficial social order or a perverted notion

*ng galit, ngitngit, at hinanakit. Walang pagpapakumbaba a pagtanggap sa kanyang pagkakamali ang matigas ang loób kaya pinangangatawanan maging ang kahinaan. Karaniwang naririnig na kailangang pangatawanan ng isang tao ang isang bagay na sinabi nito. Kailangan niyang patunayan sa kanyang gagawin ang isang bagay na nasabi na niya kahit pa ito ay mali kaysa akuin at panagutan ang nagawang pagkakamali. Ang salitang pangatawanan ay buhat sa salitang katawan. Kaya nga kung pangatawanan niya maging ang mali ay ipinapakita niya kung ano ang inaasahan mula sa kanya ng iba. Sa madali't sabi, panlabas ang tinutugunan ng tao kung pangatawanan niya ang isang bagay. Hindi ito paninindigan dahil ikinukubli ang mali sa paggawa ng ibang bagay. Maiuugnay pa ang tigas ng loób sa sama ng loób na kinikimkim at sa kalauna'y nauuwi sa suklam, poot, at paghihiganti. Gayundin naman, sinasabing makasarili ang matigas ang loób dahil hindi ito matutong makipagkapwa, hindi makayanang gumawa ng mabuti, o kaya'y hindi marunong magpakumbaba. Samakatuwid, masama ang matigas ang loób sapagkat may ikinukubli ito na makasisira sa sarili lalo pa't sa kanyang kapwa. Kaugnay ng salitang kimkim ang salitang sakim sapagkat kubli ang damdaming ito o lihim. Hindi ito ipinaparamdam dahil may maitim na balak. Ang masamang loób ay sakim kaya sariling kapakanan sa tuwina ang uunahin. Ang masamang loób ay mapagsamantala sa kapwa. Kaya nga ipinanutukoy sa mga taong gumagawa ng kapahamakan sa sarili't kapwa ang mga salitang masasamang loób. Hindi ba't ang pinagnakawan ay sinasabi ngang 'pinasok ng masasamang loób.' "Hindi maitutuwid ng isa pang mali ang isang pagkakamali." Madalas itong marinig sa mga nakatatanda kung nagpapayo sa nakababatang mga magulang. Sinasalamin nito ang paninindigan na dapat tumalima sa tama at talikdan ang mali. Halimbawa, kung ang nag-alibughang anak ay nagbabalik-loób sa kanyang mga magulang ipinapayo sa kanyang ina't ama na tanggapin siya sapagkat siya nama'y 'natauhan na.' Maling itakwil ng mga magulang ang kanilang mga nagkakasalang anak. Ito ang pangaral ng mga nakatatanda. Mas matuwid na muling tanggapin ang 'lumayo ang loób' na anak. Kailangan lamang ng anak na magbalik-loób at tulungan siyang ayusin ang kanyang buhay. Katibayan ito ng paninindigan ng mga matuwid na tao na karaniwa'y iyong mga higit na nakauunawa at may malawak na isipan. Sa haba ng panahon ay naipon na yata ng mga nakatatanda mula sa mayamang karanasan ang mga tanging aral ng buhay. Ang iba nama'y nabuo ang paninindigan sa kanilang paggulang, kawastuhan ng pag-iisip, at dalisay na damdamin. Ang paninindigan ay bunga rin ng paulit-ulit na akmang paraan sa paglutas ng suliranin sa iba't ibang pagkakataon at, sa lawig ng panahon, ay naging matatag at matibay.*

<sup>36</sup>Javier, *Madaling Maging Tao, Mahirap Magpakatao*, 51: "Halos iisa ang nanunulay na kahulugan sa mga salitang tindig, tama, at tuwid at ito ay kung ano ang ayon o dapat at kung ano ang nasa ayos... Kung uugatin mula sa paninindigan ang katagang tindig o ang tuwid na tayo, mangangahulugang nasa panig ng tama at totoo ang may taglay nito. Paninindigan niya na ang mali ay mali, ang tama ay tama at itatama niya ang mali."

of *pagkakaisa*. Rather, it holds on to *katotohanan* as the foundation of all human relationships, including political ones.

With such a notion of *paninindigan* as inherently grounded on *katotohanan*, it is compatible with and approximates reason as the regulating principle of virtue.<sup>37</sup> This complements the goodness of Filipino virtues and at times rectifies their ill-use by facilitating *pakikiramdam* (prudence), *utang na loób* (justice), *hiya* (temperance), and *lakas ng loób/ bahala na* (fortitude) not only conform to what the *kapwa* feels or wants but to what the *kapwa* truly needs. For when one has *paninindigan*, he stands, i.e., *tindig*, on right reason. *Paninindigan* keeps the Filipino away from excess and deficiency.

All in all, *paninindigan* grounds the other Filipino virtues in truth. Without it, one is easily swayed to pursue smooth interpersonal relations even when this involves vicious actions. Without it, *pagkakaisa* is reduced to mere mutual agreement and social conformity. Without it, *utang-na-loób* will be perverted by the benefactor, e.g. politicians. Without it, *hiya* will not be temperance but a paralyzing shame. Without it, *bahala na* will be a mere surrender to chance and mediocrity, if not really fatalism. Without it, *pakikiramdam* could be easily overpowered by subjective feelings. *Paninindigan* directs the other Filipinos to the authentic good.

### ***Paninindigan* as the “*Katig*” of Filipino virtues**

According to Aquinas, a cardinal moral virtue possesses parts, which can be integral, subjective, and potential, in nature. An integral part is a necessary component for the perfection of the cardinal virtue. Without it, the fulfillment of the cardinal virtue is practically impossible. Integral parts are related to the cardinal virtue just as the roof, the foundation, and the walls are to a house. A subjective part is related to the cardinal virtue as a species is related to a genus. Subjective parts of prudence include military prudence which governs an army; domestic prudence which governs the home or family; regnative prudence which governs a city or kingdom, while political prudence which concerns the subjects. Finally, the potential parts of a cardinal virtue are secondary virtues directed to certain secondary acts or matters related to that cardinal virtue. Hence, the potential parts of prudence are “good counsel,” which concerns counsel; *synesis*, which concerns judgment in matters of ordinary occurrence; and *gnome*, which concerns judgment in matters of exception to the law.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 51-52: “*kakawing ng paninindigan ang katuwiran, karapatan, katarungan, pati ang pagiging kapwa, sampu ng taos-pusong paniniwala sa pagkakapantay-pantay ng tao.*”; “*ang paninindigan ay hindi hiwalay ang pagpapakahulugan sa katuwiran, katotohanan, katunayan, katapatan, at katarungan.*”

<sup>38</sup> ST II-II, Q. 48, A 1, Respondeo.

Now, it is apparent that some of distinctions present in Thomistic virtue ethics are difficult to appropriate into the Filipino ethical mindset. However, I suggest that *paninindigan* constitutes an integral part of Filipino virtues in general since it establishes a moral and normative aspect for their action. It is *paninindigan* that anchors the virtues to *katotohanan* so they are not to put it to ill-use due to the pressures from within (concupiscence and passions) and from without (social pressures brought about by family, relatives, friends, or authorities).<sup>39</sup> In short, *paninindigan* safeguards Filipino virtues from perverting and exploitative factors.

Interestingly, Javier likens *paninindigan* to a *katig*, which is an outrigger of a boat that is fastened to its hull on both sides that serve as floating and balancing support. Like a *katig*, *paninindigan* directs virtues towards what is right and true. In other words, *paninindigan* fortifies Filipino virtues.<sup>40</sup> While a *katig*-less *banca* (boat) can sail through calm waters, the *katig* provides a better balance. However, without a doubt, fisherfolk on a *katig*-less *banca* will not gamble their lives in such a boat in troubled waters. Similarly, *paninindigan* serves as the *katig* for Filipino virtues so that pressures from passions and social relationships will not compromise *katotohanan* thus putting the Filipino virtues to bad use.

## Conclusion

The project of identifying key concepts for understanding a people's way of life, social psychology, mind, personality, or behavior is a most difficult one.<sup>41</sup> This paper proposes that to balance the horizontal orientation of Filipino virtue ethics and its relegation of reason to a secondary position that is subordinated to the will and the passions, Filipinos need to embrace the indigenous Filipino virtue *paninindigan*. *Paninindigan* provides the moral anchor that fastens Filipino virtues to *katotohanan*. It is the *katig* that fortifies the Filipino virtues so they are not swayed by an ambivalent or perverted notion of what is authentically good. **PS**

<sup>39</sup> Enriquez, *Kapwa: A Core Concept in Filipino Social Psychology*, 16.

<sup>40</sup> Javier, *Madaling Maging Tao, Mahirap Magpakatao!*, 50: "Itinutumbas din naman ang *paninindigan* sa pagkatig. Katig ang salitang ugat ng pagkatig sa Tagalog. Ang katig ang siyang ikinakabit sa isang bangka sa magkabilang panig nito upang hindi lumubog kung naglalayag sa katubigan. Ang katig ay karaniwang yari sa kawayan, isang matibay na halamang damo na hindi nabubuwal kahit gaano mang lakas ang hangin. Isang payak na paraan ang paglalagay ng katig sa bangka, ang pangunahing sasakyang pantubig saan mang dako sa ating kapuluan. Ang karagatang nakapalibot sa atin na paiba-iba ang iniuugali ay kinasayanan na nating pakibagayan na gamit ang simpleng sasakyang ito na katig lamang ang nasa magkabilang panig upang hindi tumaob sa pakikipagsapalaran sa malawak na karagatan. Ang paglalagay ng katig ay pagtitiyak na magiging matatag, matibay, maaasahan ang bangka. Ang *paninindigan* tulad ng pagkatig ay maipapakahulugan na katiyakan dahil nasa tama ito. Gayundin, kinakatiyan ang isang patotoo dahil may katibayan ito."

<sup>41</sup> Enriquez, *Kapwa: A core concept in Filipino social psychology*, 6.

## References

- Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa theologiae*. Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. New York: Benziger Brothers, 1911-1925.
- Clarke, Norris. *Person and Being*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1993.
- Dy, Manuel Jr. B. Outline of a Project of Pilipino Ethics. *Values in Philippine Culture and Education* ed. Manuel Dy, Jr.: 19-26, Washington DC: The Council of Research in Values and Philosophy, 1994.
- Enriquez, Virgilio G. Kapwa: A core concept in Filipino social psychology. *Philippine world view*, 6-19. 1986.
- Farley, Margaret R.S.M., "Fragments for an Ethic of Commitment in Thomas Aquinas," *Journal of Religion* 58: 135-155. 1978.
- Javier, Roberto Jr., Madaling Maging Tao, Mahirap Magpakatao!: Paninindigan, Pagpapakatao, Pakikipagkapwa-tao. *Malay*. 2010.
- Mataragnon, R. Pakikiramdam in Filipino social interaction. *Foundations of behavioral sciences: A book of readings*, 470-482. 1987 .
- Miranda, Dionisio, SVD. *Buting Pinoy: Probe Essays on Value as Filipino*. Manila: Divine Word Publications, 1992.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Kaloób ni Kristo: A Filipino Christian Account of Conscience*. Manila: Logos Publications Inc., 2003.
- Pe-Pua, Rogelia and Elizabeth Protacio-Marcelino, "Sikolohiyang Pilipino (Filipino Psychology): A Legacy of Virgilio Enriquez," *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* 3 (2000).
- Putzel, James, "Survival of an imperfect democracy in the Philippines," *Democratization* 6, no. 1 (1999): 198-223.
- Reyes, J. Loób and kapwa: An introduction to a Filipino virtue ethics. *Asian Philosophy*, 25 (2), 148-171. 2015.
- \_\_\_\_\_. In defense of hiya as a Filipino virtue. *Asian Philosophy*, 26 (1), 66-78.
- Tablan, F. (2021). Filipino Virtue Ethics and Meaningful Work. *Humanities Bulletin*, 4(1), 20-40.