

KIERKEGAARD'S NOTION OF LOVE AND ITS RELEVANCE TO THE FILIPINO

UTANG NA LOOB

A Thesis

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS IN PHILOSOPHY

by

REYNALDO A MARTINEZ

October 2000



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This Thesis entitled "KIERKEGAARD'S NOTION OF LOVE AND ITS RELEVANCE TO THE FILIPINO *UTANG NA LOOB*" prepared and submitted by REYNALDO A. MARTINEZ in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS IN PHILOSOPHY has been examined and is recommended for acceptance and approval for ORAL EXAMINATION.

THESIS COMMITTEE


FR. FLORENCIO L. LAGURA, SVD, Ph.D.

Adviser


FR. HEINZ KULUEKE, SVD, Ph.D.

Member


AGUSTIN L. SOLLANO, Jr. Ph.D.

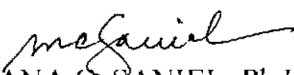
Member


MONTANA C. SANJEL, Ph.D.


Member

PANEL OF EXAMINERS

Approved by the Committee on Oral Examination with a grade of PASSED.


MONTANA C. SANJEL, Ph.D.

Chairman


FR. FLORENCIO L. LAGURA, SVD, Ph.D.

Adviser


AGUSTIN L. SOLLANO, Jr., Ph.D.

Member


FR. HEINZ KULUEKE, SVD, Ph.D.

Member

Accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS IN PHILOSOPHY.

Comprehensive Examination PASSED: April 17 and 18, 1998.


CLARITA C. FILIPINAS, Ph.D.

Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

October 23, 2000

Date of Oral Examination

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Researcher

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
TITLE PAGE	i
APPROVAL SHEET	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENT	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
 Chapter	
1 THE PROBLEM AND ITS SCOPE	1
INTRODUCTION	1
Rationale of the Study	1
Theoretical Background	7
THE PROBLEM	13
Statement of the Problem	13
Significance of the Study	13
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	14
DEFINITION OF TERMS	15
2 KIERKEGAARD'S PHILOSOPHICAL MEANING OF LOVE	16
Love's Hidden Life and Its Recognizability by Its Fruits	16
You Shall Love: You Shall Love Your Neighbor	17
Love Is the Fulfilling of the Law	19
Love is a Matter of Conscience	21

Our Duty to Love Those We See	23
The Duty to be in the Debt of Love	25
Love Builds Up	29
Love Believes All Things And Yet Is Never Deceived	31
Love Hopes All Things	34
Love Seeks Not Its Own	37
Love Hides the Multiplicity of Sins	38
Love Abides	41
The Victory of Reconciliation in Love Which Wins the Vanquished.	43
3 <i>UTANG NA LOOB</i> AND HOW IT IS EXPRESSED IN CONTEMPORARY FILIPINO LIFE	46
Intrafamily <i>Utang na loob</i>	47
<i>Utang na Loob</i> in Practice	50
4 THE RELEVANCE OF KIERKEGAARD'S NOTION OF "LOVE" TO THE FILIPINO CONCEPT OF <i>UTANG NA LOOB</i>	56
5 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	67
Summary	67
Conclusions	73
Recommendations	75
BIBLIOGRAPHY	77
CURRICULUM VITAE	81

Chapter 1

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SCOPE

INTRODUCTION

Rationale of the Study

The Philippines has just celebrated her 100th year of independence from her colonial masters. In this event, one cannot simply uphold the occasion without reflecting on the varied and rich experiences that have influenced the culture and psyche of the Filipino people. At present, Filipinos are viewed as a multi-colored race in history and tradition- a cosmopolitan spectrum of Eastern and Western cultures. A Filipino may be steeped in oriental culture, yet he emulates the way Westerners do things and prefers anything western, even in the midst of poverty. This is evident in his choice of food, clothes and even entertainment. Renato Constantino says:

In the Filipino desire to solve problems of the present, dream of a future anchored on western concept and values. Filipino films on the whole are reflective of a Westernized society because their themes are too often copied from foreign successes and because scriptwriters and directors view Philippine life through the lenses of their Western upbringing. Thus their greater popularity at the present time is not a complete gain for they are still agencies for Westernization.

Because of the long monopoly of American films, the principal Western influence is American. Philippine movies therefore are American movies in the preoccupation with escapism, sex, and violence. Their main preoccupation is material consumption. The values they have embraced are intrinsically alien to human existence for the material goods that obsess them have dehumanized their lives.¹

Thus, a Filipino, though he has the appetite and desire of a Westerner, is still basically oriental by tradition and custom. He views the world and society from the perspective of the cultural milieu of an oriental but uses the standard of western rationalization. Intrinsically, a

¹ Renato Constantino, Identity and Consciousness (Quezon City: Malaya Books Inc., 1974). 26 and 221

Filipino is typically oriental and subjective, yet on the outside he perceives things and events objectively. This can be supported by Ruben Santos-Cuyugan's description when he says:

The Filipino is more likely to use standards from outside his cultural system; standards that contravene, even debasing his own.... The true, good and beautiful to the Filipino is what looks Greek, Semitic, or generally Caucasian.... The Filipino has rejected his own brown image.²

A point of example is the Filipino value on personalism. In Panopio's book on general sociology personalism is defined thus: "Personalism attaches major importance to the personal factor which guarantees intimacy, warmth and security of kinship in getting things done"³ Personalism is the tendency to favor or appoint someone or a person whom one knows for a particular job or responsibility even if the person does not possess the necessary qualifications. And yet, one understands this to be objectively unfair and unethical. Ironically, one does not bother to inquire whether the person has the necessary qualifications needed for the job. What matter is that one knows the favored person personally

The problem arises when a poor Filipino, a nondescript citizen who does not have any reliable connection or has nobody to recommend him, applies for a job. Will he be turned down in favor of someone who has connections? What will happen of a Filipino does not have money to pay for or fix his papers in order to transact business, will he be given attention and due recognition? Who will listen to him? Should services be given only to those who are capable of paying for the goods and services one receives? Should civil servants attend only to those whom they know and those who could afford to pay them?

These and other similar situations are prevalent in contemporary Filipino society. A poor Filipino becomes an easy prey to other ideologies espousing ideas that appear hospitable.

² Evelyn Feliciano, Filipino Values and Our Christian Faith (Manila: OMF Literature Inc., 1990), 38

³ Isabel Panopio, General Sociology Focus on the Philippines (Quezon City: Ken Inc., 1975), 3

favorable, or disposed to the cause of the deprived and neglected. This and other oppressive and discriminatory acts will lead to a divided society- of the elite and the poor. It becomes evident that Filipinos are divided as a people, and a great number are being enticed to other ideologies.

In the words of Constantino

The 'new cultured Filipinos,' it seems, are a breed apart from the mass of Filipinos. Their thought-processes are comprehensible only to themselves and their foreign models; they do not understand their people and the people in turn regard their artistic and literary creations as objects of curiosity which neither affect their lives nor elevate their spirits. They do not speak the same language and they do not have the same experiences.... Others, mistakenly believing that sophistication in the Western sense and familiarity with Western ways are the true measures of cultural progress... These cosmopolites who dream of world renown will not even merit national remembrance for they are not only foreigners to their people, they are also foreigners to their foreign friends.⁴

An impersonal, rather than an objective, fair and just orientation towards all men is created in this kind of impersonalistic behavior as well as other negative and selfish values. The Filipino becomes more open to the negative influences of discriminations, favoritism and corruption- values that do not promote unity, justice and love.

In contrast, "all men are destined for the community of friendship with God. Hence if anyone loves God, he will also love those who are loved by God. He will respect the rights and freedom they need and can claim for the accomplishment of their divinely appointed task, and he will help them in the realization of their calling. This loving concern extends to all men and to all creation. It also includes the obligation to strive responsibly after the preservation and perfection of one's own self."⁵

In such a perspective, personalism can thus be viewed positively as gratitude of a person

⁴ Renato Constantino, Dissent and Counter-Consciousness (Quezon City: Malaya Books Inc., 1970), 43.

⁵ Henry C. Peschke, SVD, Christian Ethics: A Presentation of General Moral Theology in the Light of Vatican II Vol. I and II (Alcester, Dublin: C. Goodlife Neale, 1977), 70.