



ARTICLE REVIEW

FLORENTINO HORNEDO'S VISION FOR FILIPINO PHILOSOPHY: DISCOVERING THE POLITICAL IN LOVING AND CULTURAL VALUATION

HORNEDO, FLORENTINO. PAGMAMAHAL AND PAGMUMURA: ESSAYS. QUEZON CITY, PHILIPPINES: ATENEO DE MANILA UNIVERSITY PRESS OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS, 1997.

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In this review, I highlighted Florentino Hornedo's unique rendition of philosophizing human values vis-à-vis the historicity of the growth and struggles of the Filipinos. Through what Hornedo termed a "processualist perspective," he has shown the political dimension in the development and decay of human values. Thus, the collective consciousness, as Hornedo argued, can be influenced by individual efforts, as shown by history, since the dominant value-concerns can affect the welfare of the nation. In so doing, Hornedo veers away from the cut-and-dried historiography of presenting the emergence of cultural phenomena by creatively placing a premium on the phenomenological grounds of its existence, which necessitates an ethical reevaluation.

I introduced this book in line with the scholarly projects and philosophy of Hornedo as a research luminary. The second part of the book presents my discovery of Hornedo's notion of Filipino identity, which is neither static nor immutable, as discussed in his developmental vision of a culture. This is followed by the third section of the review, in which I critically examined what led Hornedo to employ consequentialist vindication on the relevance of accepting the reality of change and cultural influences in social development, but without overlooking that Hornedo also believes that human consciousness cannot be completely reduced to issues of functionality and pragmatic concerns. The fourth part of the review deals with the attempt of Hornedo to realistically face the admixture of Filipino values as derived from its colonial history, nationalist spirit, and aboriginal elements that resulted in political confusion. This review ends with the hope that Hornedo offered as a gift to those who appreciate the delicate balance of objectivity and subjectivity in the axiological concerns of the Philippine society as interwoven to other social predicaments.

Keywords: Florentino Hornedo, human values, processualist perspective, culture, Philippine society

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A REVIEW ARTICLE

In this modern day and age when everyone seems to have been hooked up in the claws of many research specializations and is attracted to get a badge of expertise in one firmament, Florentino Hornedo stands out – not in his towering figure to arrogate to himself as many disciplinary enterprises as he could, nor as a jack-of-all-trades pedant – in his main business of showing the significance of interdisciplinary approach that deals with human development. Hornedo believes that a scholar, no matter how much one has been educated or has been a prolific author, should be a personification of humility and intellectual limitation. It is only in that profound sense of humility that a scholar can send one's consciousness to delve deeply into the fabric of social predicaments¹ as a reversal to the usual tendency of the educated to be gripped with plain texts, detached from contexts – becoming less human and humane. Historical context, by and large, is not an extraneous thing to be dismissed in the preponderance of inanimate facts for the reason that theory-formulation and construal of various phenomena can only produce an empowered instrument of cognitive work by painstakingly immersing oneself in the process of what might otherwise overwhelmingly blind us with lethargic regurgitation of findings.² For as long as humans struggle to be of historical relevance in the passage of time, time and again, as Hornedo would remind us, meaning-making is greatly involved in the discovery and making of one's historicity.

In this review of Hornedo's classic work "*Pagmamahal at Pagmumura: Essays*," I emphasize (albeit not apologetically) that a

certain rendition of philosophizing of human values can be extracted even if Hornedo's erudition had crisscrossed many disciplinary tracks in the Humanities. Implicitly, the book warmly entertains a blitz of questions, but it remains consistent with Hornedo's ambition in propelling a critical mode of reflection in the struggles for power, which can be seen in his philosophic account of cultural phenomena. In the same way that Hornedo once argued that one should not consider the falsity of value-free communication and consciousness as an abject deficiency in knowledge³ – without presenting a meticulous and procedural approach – the book realistically covers a wide range of topics that can show how onerous cultural studies may get in placing appropriately the process of acculturation and enculturation in the discourses about civic education. Hornedo believes that a deploring outlook towards the human subjectivity attached to cultural studies only occurs to us when we attempt to completely separate values from investigators and scholars – it is as if we no longer need a dialogue that sees right from the beginning the perspectivity and central value-concerns coming from the limitations and nature of humans themselves. On a more personal note, this methodology employed by Hornedo throughout the book reminds me of Gemino Abad's elucidation that markers in literary texts and other particular items do not necessarily connect to our sense of Filipino community, but rather the sense of our country arise out of a "practice of reading" and interpretation.⁴ Therefore, subjectivity – as part of human interpretation and lived experience – is not appallingly identified by the examiner but creates a fraction of openness to one's cultural particularity and the reality of

¹ Tomas U. Santos, "The Renaissance Man," *The Varsitarian*, December 01, 2006, <https://varsitarian.net/montage/20061201/the-renaissance-man>.

² Antonio Hila, "Homage to an Iconic Legend: A Tribute to Prof. Dr. Florentino H. Hornedo," *The Antoninus Journal* 3 (2017): 4-5.

³ Florentino Hornedo, "Values Education in the Social Sciences," in *Values in the Philippine Culture and Education: Philippine Philosophical Studies I*, ed. Manuel B. Dy (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1994), 79-80.

⁴ Gemino Abad, *Imagination's Way: Essays Critical and Personal* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2010), 49-54.





judgment from one's experiential and societal dimension. Nevertheless, I argue that this stance of Hornedo does not chillingly amount to becoming quite too unresistant from cloistered unwariness in beliefs formed in society hiding under the cloak of false toleration of so-called moderates by crudely giving birth to apolitical dispositions; nor it is disparaging all religious faith or other views somewhat unfavorable to modern science as entirely beyond the province of human understanding and undeserving of being listened to.⁵ The foregoing insights from Hornedo's scholarly project, I believe, prefigure well the value of the book that I am about to review. While there are some aspects of the book worthy of being criticized, or at the very least, to be clarified, it does not dilute the relevance of the book in emphasizing the importance of philosophical underpinnings when facing the challenge and limitations of objectivity and subjectivity in Cultural Studies.

PHILOSOPHY IN CULTURE AND CULTURE IN PHILOSOPHY

Perhaps, when one pays close attention to the central message, Hornedo's seminal book can be described as an attempt to reconnect in our rootedness to the history of our nationhood, the critical role of theoretical reevaluation of cultural consciousness, commitment to social development, examination of dominant values, and other crucial things that have been uprooted by our current obsession with mind-your-own-business sort of political segmentation. This whole philosophical undertone that can be found in the work through and through is aptly matched by the flavorful commentary of Hornedo on what ought to be discussed in the cultural lines of Philippine society. This

book enabled Hornedo to foster a particular brand of philosophizing – while claiming to be phenomenological in its method – that does not limit itself to its traditional intellectual moorings as it has a mainspring and aims of its own – something to be uniquely offered for the Filipino audience. As a more humane counterflow to the dehumanizing surge of excessive positivistic sciences, Hornedo understood that the search for wisdom, especially in light of cultural studies, cannot simply sidestep the core issues in the axiological roots of quotidian beliefs and practices. As Hornedo puts it, “*If wisdom is the query of [P]hilosophy, then [P]hilosophy is a delicate balancing act by which the ordered structures of reason are infused completely with the warmth of value. [...] Whether history is understood as the organization of the past into intelligible forms or the comprehension of the conditions of the present, what remains constant is the attempt to interpret, or make sense of the facts and conditions.*”⁶ The same is true, indeed, when we try to articulate social dilemmas, not for the sake of simply ascending the academic pulpit and bringing about a sermonizing tone to a blame game, but to gain a metacognitive understanding to our limitations and consciousness, and resolve the problems that mostly deal with values that we hold dearly to our hearts, be these detrimental or developmental. In speaking of this intimate bond between the practical sphere and theoretical bearings of Cultural Studies, numerous depictions of philosophical criticism reverberate in every leaf of the book, such that it can emphasize that the author is not to be left in isolation to face the complexity of social realities in the Philippines; for the most part, the book is an unputdownable invitation to question what seems to be oftentimes out of our curiosities as devoured by the busyness of our current state of affairs.

⁵ Cf. Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (London: Free Press, 2004), 25-32; 198.

⁶ Florentino Hornedo, *Pagmamahal and Pagmumura: Essays* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press Office of Research and Publications, 1997), 140-141.





Interestingly, the appeal of Hornedo's book owes itself to the thought- and action-provoking questions that are mounted in the thematic background of his philosophical articulation: If the colonial threats of hegemony should be kept at bay to assert our nation's sovereignty, how are we to reconcile these defensive measures with the positive influences of other alien cultures and the colonizers themselves? Is cultural relevance measured based on the degree to which a certain culture has shrugged off an iteration of foreign lifeways or any aspect of such? When the reductive spectacle of the scientific mindset is not considered the consummation of cultural transformation, regularly held as a principle in Cultural Studies, generally speaking, how do human values take part in the evaluative advancements with respect to the uniqueness of cultural provenance?

As one scholar of Filipino Philosophy noted, students of Philippine Studies are not being carried by Hornedo to see the already vast and dense forest, but they are transported by Hornedo's fruitful research to see the fertile grounds where investigative seeds of potential Filipino intellectualization can be seen sprouting in a manner that will promote a culture that does not only ask what is in the environment but also how these things developed and what we should do with them.⁷ It is worth noting that, in the preface of his book, Hornedo claims that he places this scholarly vision in keeping with what he coined as a "processualist" perspective. As a strong faith in the phenomenological explanation of social realities – to veer away from absolutizing political-cum-ideological answers – Hornedo firmly believes that the answer lies not in the purely homogenizing nor heterogenizing terms of establishing national identity because,

historically speaking, ethnic communities are neither exceptionally without any need of concerns in modernization nor permanently pacified by the threats of forceful acculturation with the culture of the so-called majority.⁸ To bring light to his claim, Hornedo dared to ask if the former Marcos regime had been sincere in addressing national issues on water irrigation and frequent power outages, why was the government absent-minded about the lack of electricity and jobs among the Igorot tribe who migrated from the Chico river as it was then being transformed into a hydroelectric power plant. Furthermore, Hornedo criticized the sloganeering of the former Marcos administration in asserting the commonality of racial origin without the slightest understanding that central to cultural studies is the cognizance of the multiracial setting of the Philippines. Hornedo even contends that this is similar to the obsession with nomenclature and the scheme of labeling as a surface-level form of social unification without substantial dealings to achieve social justice and fairness, which can be gleaned when the Spaniards tried to categorize all indigenous people as *Indios* under the sub-categories of being "*feroz*" and "*feroces*" (fierce) or those who refused to be baptized as Christians and be subsumed under the Spanish administration, and some were labeled as "*docil*" (docile) because these people were easily subdued by the Spanish government. According to Hornedo, these kinds of exclusivism and social bracketing – as he makes a similar point to his critique of William Henry Scott's claim that the Ilocanos and the Ibanags were displaced by the Spaniards only by physical force and no other attractive, non-violent means concerning their well-being – are very much sustained by the lip service of the government in recent history which is still not fully committed to providing the fundamentals for authentic human

⁷ Emmanuel C. de Leon, *Mga Tomasino sa Pilosopiyang Filipino* (Manila, Philippines: Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino, 2019), 98-101. Also see Roland Theuas DS. Pada, "The Humanity of Florentino Hornedo in the Humanities," *Kritika* 9 (December 2015): 1-4.

⁸ Hornedo, *Pagmamahal and Pagmumura*, 40-53.





empowerment to decentralize “*the locations of the greatest concentrations of modern life-enhancing arts, sciences, technology, and institutions such as universities, hospitals, transport and communication centers, factories, and major finance facilities, job opportunities, and recreation.*”⁹ Consistent with his more non-ideological approach to cultural changes, Hornedo also criticized Scott for narrowly defining a cultural minority based on social appellation as in the manner that Scott commended the Isnegs for courageously refusing to accept foreign influences as a preservation of their cultural identity short of any ethical examination if public toleration must still be applied in the frowned-upon practices of the indigenous group, such as the head-taking and the trial of crooks through a procedure that involves a criminal determination based on how easily can the hands of the suspect be damaged by boiling oil or water.¹⁰

In another instance, through a colorful and banter-filled essay, Hornedo proudly elucidated how an alien thing can be imbibed and totally nativized in the process of knowing its usefulness – but not without any touch of innovation and creativity on its very receiving end.¹¹ The raw materials of Willys jeep from the USA during the Second World War had been modified as a Philippine jeepney through the dexterity of the Filipinos to be, practically speaking, a not-so-convenient-yet-still-useful vehicle that can now transport over a dozen commuters as compared to the shorter built of its precursor. Hornedo did not fail to give a spotlight not only to the material transformation but also to the social assimilation that took place in the process: in which the jeepneys that were mainly used for the delivery of military supplies and other combative purposes are now appreciated as a crystallization

of resourcefulness to address the growing population and to give way to the mobilization of commercial goods in the face of economic development. While Hornedo observes a level of depersonalization towards what is considered “new” as compared to the traditional transportation of *kalesa* (carabao-drawn carriage) that was once a venue for longer leisurely talks and communal exchanges due to its slower pace in mobility, the jeepneys and the tricycles from the transformed Honda motorcycles are still adorned by the elements of Filipino sociality as reflected in its humorous stickers, ornamental displays of Filipino proverbs, and the fad then in the installment of heart-trembling speakers for the satisfying sound trip. Drawing from Frank Lynch, S.J., Hornedo reminds the readers that it is indeed possible that “today’s native is yesterday’s visitor.” Moreover, Hornedo warns that sheer blindness to the real factors of progress brings us to a failure to recognize that “*freedom is [a] creative discipline, while slavery is [the] undue dependency on any power, local or foreign*”¹² because, as Hornedo further explained the demanding character of social development, “*nativeness and the sense of nationhood is centered in the human consciousness, so that the production and consumption of native goods and services are not necessarily patriotic unless rooted in a deep awareness of and moral commitment to hold the welfare of Filipinos as the supreme national law.*”¹³ Parenthetically, this can be contrasted with Leonardo Mercado’s approach to Filipino Philosophy, which borders on the ideological form of cultural triumphalism. For instance, Mercado argued that Filipino Ethics must be separated from other philosophical traditions to the extent that he even asseverated that the pain of financial bankruptcy can be justified in hosting extravagant celebrations of local fiestas to simply declare that so-called “social needs,” a thing that

⁹ Hornedo, *Pagmamahal and Pagmumura*, 51.

¹⁰ Hornedo, *Pagmamahal and Pagmumura*, 40-41; 52; 61.

¹¹ Hornedo, *Pagmamahal and Pagmumura*, 109-114.

¹² Hornedo, *Pagmamahal and Pagmumura*, 94.

¹³ Hornedo, *Pagmamahal and Pagmumura*, 95.





he believed to be naturally and domineeringly present in the Filipinos, can override physiological needs (in contrast with Abraham Maslow's claim).¹⁴ While even the Supreme Court of the Philippines already established a strong precedent to declare that fiesta can be a more non-rationalistic way for a culture to grow in the sense that it "*relieves the monotony and drudgery of the lives of the masses[,]*"¹⁵ such freedom is still subject to other more compelling interests of the state (e.g., freedom of religion, separation of church and state, prohibiting the use of public funds for religious purposes, and the "benevolent neutrality" approach of the Philippine arrangement in order not to trample the free exercise of all law-abiding religions as enshrined in the Bill of Rights in the 1987 Philippine Constitution) as it is not essentially immune from critical deliberations that tackle the great measures of the state to give well-coordinated policies that will lead to well-balanced protection of all human rights of the Filipinos. This is the reason why the idea of consequentialism is still a necessary ingredient in scholarly engagements with Cultural Studies to also promote the idea that there are some aspects of a culture that are dynamic and not eternally static – and it can be changed with the intention to improve one's cultural well-being. This is, I believe, the ideological point that Hornedo wanted to avoid in his project as much as possible. The processualist perspective from Hornedo gives the view that critical philosophizing and appreciating the creative power of culture in forming lifeways should go hand in hand.

SCOPE OF HORNEEDO'S CONSEQUENTIALISM

While one may soundly accede to Hornedo that there is a humanitarian, common denominator that every country can share with one another, Hornedo could have added more scholarly references to his critical remarks against what he claims to be stark yet unrealistic skepticism from Jose Rizal and Andres Bonifacio who allegedly turned a blind eye on the potential developmental impact of foreign education to the literacy of indigenous people that allegedly resulted to the curtailing of glorious evolution of native civilization. Such a critical and contentious inference from Hornedo – claiming the perpetuation of illiteracy of some indigenous communities in the Philippines as a result of their total reclusiveness from and resistance to foreign influences – must be presented with scientifically supported studies for the benefit of the scholarly doubts, as Hornedo himself deemed this subject matter worthy of contentions from dedicated historians.¹⁶ Corollary to this, consider how Hornedo argued that traditions on communal regulation of human conduct must be protected temporarily until the reinforcement of the police force is already at hand – even at the expense of truth or even if it can be considered as a fear-mongering technique – without providing scholarly literature for that matter.¹⁷ Hornedo is of the opinion that by placing folkloric beliefs and their ritualistic paraphernalia at the center stage of social concern, one may avoid, say, the rampant stealing of crops on farms as criminals also believe in the power of extra-human guardianship. However, for instance, in today's world that is already drowning in meticulous, highly technologized monitoring instruments to ensure that felonious acts will be abated drastically, the value of people acting on goodwill and giving people the freedom of

¹⁴ Leonardo Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Ethics*, 2nd Printing (Tacloban: Divine Word University Publications, 1979), 35.

¹⁵ "G.R. No. L-53487 – Garces, et Al. v. Estenzo, et Al."

¹⁶ Cf. Hornedo, *Pagmamahal and Pagmumura*, 89-90.

¹⁷ Hornedo, *Pagmamahal and Pagmumura*, 62.





choice through genuine trust – and not simply done out of fear as a result of being subject to unrelenting observation – is seriously at stake.¹⁸ Moral education and other ethical discussions can be sidelined with this argument far too consequentialist. However, such a serious concern to keep track of ethical consequences, I believe, must not be unwarily associated with the economic suggestion that certain types of basketry may be used as creative and pleasing material for lampshades even though such a craft is already becoming unfashionable in other places, or how one might consider using T’boli cloth for bags despite the fact that cotton and nylons are readily available.¹⁹ Meaning to say, we have to also engage with the indispensability of human rights and the provisional requirements in dealing with economic concerns. This particular challenge to Hornedo’s scholarship reminds me of how John Stuart Mill himself struggled to locate a “disinterested and benevolent spectator” who could juggle between the intensity of individual desires and the task of harmonizing and criticizing the various conceptions of “desirous advantages” to arrive at social interests with human happiness without sidetracking the philosophical evaluation of consequences that these options put into place.²⁰ It was, indeed, a challenge for Mill to rethink the consequentialist orientation in Utilitarianism that forms its flesh and bones. But in another essay, Mill accentuates the idea of cultivating the higher faculties of humankind in order to establish a social morality that will not let the qualification of human desires be under the full sway of arbitrariness and whimsical tendencies.²¹ This idea of social differentiation

¹⁸ John Weckert, “Trust and Technology,” in *Faith and Reason in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition*, ed. Joel Sagut (Manila, Philippines: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2022), 149-163.

¹⁹ Hornedo, *Pagmamahal and Pagmumura*, 64-65.

²⁰ John Stuart Mill, “Essay on Utilitarianism,” in *The Great Political Theories: From the French Revolution to Modern Times*, ed. Michael Curtis (New York: Harper Perennial/Modern Classic, 2008), 128.

²¹ John Stuart Mill, “On Liberty,” in *The Great Political Theories: From the French Revolution to Modern Times*, ed. Michael Curtis (New York: Harper Perennial/Modern Classic, 2008), 186-204.

in weighing the value of human desires vis-à-vis the investigative mode of understanding ethical consequences presupposes the importance of deliberative understanding in a social context; for without which every citizen will remain in their echo chambers and unqualified reactionaryism. Hornedo’s book, with all its profound insights on social contradictions and constant attempts to overcome the ideological valorization of culture, becomes a testament to the never-ending challenge of expanding the horizon of one’s understanding of ethical consequences concerning what is constitutive of human fulfillment and happiness in a place full of political and cultural subdivisions.

Should we, therefore, accurately paint Hornedo as working at a splendid utilitarian argument to vindicate cultural amalgamation? If at all it is true, what are we losing in permitting pragmatic concerns to take over our cultural ways? One thing is for sure: it seems unlikely that Hornedo has been putting pure marketable functionalism at the core of his concern. In a world that is so mesmerized by the acceleration of technological innovation, Hornedo asserts that spaces for the Humanities and Social Sciences must not be desecrated by the unequal treatment of the government to overly elevate the market and its exponents. To illustrate the importance of people dedicated to the Human Sciences, Hornedo believes that the controversial construction of dams in places where indigenous people dwell and covered by humungous forests such as the Chico Valley must be accompanied by experts who can bring effective dialogical channels not only to make the natives approve the project, but more importantly, to understand their worldview.²² A key to understanding Hornedo’s take on the wellspring of Filipino thought is the two-level philosophical elucidations of the

²² Hornedo, *Pagmamahal and Pagmumura*, 127.





notion of nature. Following in the footsteps of the philosopher Ramon Reyes, Hornedo accentuates the relevance of knowing the difference between the vital form of thoughts and the more reflexive development in thinking.²³ The former refers to the traditional and non-rationalistic expressions of a deep sense of awe in the bewildering order and chaos in the universe and its accompanying emotional stirrings – as distilled through rituals, folk literature, myths, folkloric beliefs, religious practices, and other customs – while the latter is concerned with the more analytical and systematic assessment of the former's limitation and contradictions by using scientific premises to criticize underlying collective assumptions about reality. In his most playful use of the term “function,” Hornedo believes that the scientific understanding of myth should not be considered inimical to the mythic understanding of science by adopting a hair-splitting clash of academic categories; as Hornedo goes on to explain, “[i]t means seeing knowledge as a function of life and not merely of consciousness. For consciousness abstracted from its life context has often caused mischief in man. Knowledge must always be of wholeness, for only then can a person be whole and care for the whole.”²⁴ The book gives a breath of fresh air to the readers who can pause from a modern gaze of scientific inquiry that brackets phenomenon after phenomenon through the linear projection of analysis in cause-effect examination. As Hornedo argues in the book, without coming to terms with the synthetic generalism in the Aboriginal mind, a modern observer might anachronistically apply a modernist viewpoint replete with prejudiced and distorted inclinations to simply ridicule the so-called “primitive people living in savagery.” This message of Hornedo reminds us of how the great anthropologist Michael Carrithers saw the deep connection between Anthropology

and Philosophy, which enables a person not only to objectively gather data nor to simply state *a priori* truths through highly speculative lines of reasoning but also to acknowledge that the sites of error and ignorance are also a result of failing to reveal one's assumptions to the judgments imposed on social phenomena which ultimately shows an unexamined living, to put it in a Socratic sense.²⁵ Through the critical and meticulous interpretation of the Subanon myth on the creation of the Earth, the Ifugao myth on the beginning of the world, and the Bago myth on bountiful harvest,²⁶ Hornedo inferred that the indigenous people are generally wont to believe not in the natural-supramundane divide but in the levels of the visible and the invisible. The politico-moral implication of this is traced in a cognizance of the limitedness of human perception to grasp the invisible order that is meant to be fulfilled in the forces of historical drama; serving as a reminder that there is a hidden meaning and purposefulness that holds the visible things together – upon which the community is subject in order to normatively satisfy and attempt to understand through the mediation of customs and ritual sacrifices. Nature, in this sense, is not treated as conflicting with the manipulative capacities in a malevolent elbowing with the functionalism of a scientific orientation but is cherished with the harmonizing purview in the mysterious profundities of human existence and complex cosmos. By the same token, Hornedo believes that artistic traditions can be explained not only by their ergonomic considerations but also by axiological orientation, such as the influence of Islamic tradition's averting of possible idolatry through the use of color patterns in their almost image-less aesthetic considerations, which can be

²³ Hornedo, *Pagmamahal and Pagmumura*, 1-3.

²⁴ Hornedo, *Pagmamahal and Pagmumura*, 37.

²⁵ Michael Carrithers, “Anthropology as Irony and Philosophy, or The Knots in Simple Ethnographic Projects,” *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4 (2014): 117-142, <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.14318/hau4.3.010>.

²⁶ Hornedo, *Pagmamahal and Pagmumura*, 6-33.





contrasted to the Spanish Catholic tradition that introduced the representation of spiritual beings and other religious figures in the Philippines to emphasize spiritual mediation to God. As Hornedo once quipped: "*While the tool is not subject to interpretation because its end is obvious in its function, the additions constitute expressive data that cannot be reduced to anything other than the will of the human consciousness to impress upon the material culture a stamp of its character, something that goes beyond mere physiological needs.*"²⁷

VALUE-LADEN CALL FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

As we raise questions about the dichotomy of the old and the new, or between the traditional and the innovative, Hornedo implicitly breaks away from this rhetoric by making the readers realize that our concern for our cultural heritage and the respect for humanity is not at odds with well-moderated modernization. In certain parts of the book, apparently, Hornedo was stuck on the problem of cultural stereotyping and seems to be extremely fascinated with the compartmentalization of values drawn from the springs of Filipino culture (e.g., the Aboriginal, Islamic, Hispanic, nationalist, American roots, and the contemporary influences) in order to merely arrive at a conclusion that this results in cultural confusion and conflicts in the manifold of identities sharing the Philippine soil.²⁸ But Hornedo's elaboration proves us wrong. The main purpose of the juxtaposition of values is not simply typification but to lend a critical lens that can magnify social contradictions. For instance, Hornedo surmised that because the Spaniards all the more emphasized the hierarchical structure of governance in which authoritative figures could appoint loyalists

as strongmen in their localities to excise the resources of ordinary people, patronage politics has been considerably suppressed by the checks and balances among the different branches of democratic government during the American occupation – this, unfortunately, led to the trivialization of Philippine politics nowadays as a cockfight of various contending parties buying their way through purely majoritarian means for their self-serving and ideological ends. Another striking flaw that Hornedo noted are the self-contradicting agenda in the Philippine educational landscape that does not correspond to our geographical needs: such as the insertion of the English language in almost every subject in educational institutions to promote so-called value of globalization without giving a chance on how indigenous languages can also grant opportunities for growing the intellectual capacity of the Philippine society; on the uneven outpouring of government sponsorship for Science and Technology education over the subjects on Humanities that does not have an eye to maintain a national community of scientists who can directly resolve issues in agriculture and economic productivity in the country and not to simply become migrating agents who are nothing but after the lucrative projects abroad; and how over the years the Philippine educational system has been overemphasizing the end of any kind of training as purely a business of moneymaking to resuscitate a problematic economy that, in turn, made the country as a magnet of foreign investors due to the attractive wage differentials as compared to other countries whose fresh graduates have wider range of work choices to make nor at their desperation, generally speaking, to grab any unfulfilling employment for the sake of minimum income generation. Things such as these are occasionally considered part of day-to-day struggles or the vagaries of human tragedy in the Philippines since we have come (or we were made) to believe that the answers can only

²⁷ Hornedo, *Pagmamabal and Pagmumura*, 100.

²⁸ Hornedo, *Pagmamabal and Pagmumura*, 115-119.





be found in the fastness and bowels of the world – in fact, these are things happening in our midst that we let to escape our social sensibilities on what are supposedly disturbing us. That we need not dispose of the right appreciation of objectivity and subjectivity in the learning process suggests a transformational orientation principal to Hornedo's educational mission where theorizing and dealings with practical concerns are not fed via a pharaonic dictation of a single expert but in scrupulously immersing oneself in the dialogical circles of lived experiences of and for diverse people.²⁹ From this discursive approach to cultural understanding, one does not take for granted the hegemonic tendencies of holier-than-thou political changes.

Human values, in the multi-layered cultural setting of the Philippines, seem to be a highly abstract and abstruse subject of debate for academics, but Hornedo did not fail to inculcate in the readers that just as it is difficult to be a topic of public discussion, it remains to hold sway in every mainstream aspect of public engagements. To escape the two polarizing ends in social discourses becomes a commonplace of heated debates, unsurprisingly, but modestly, Hornedo exposed the materials that can be collectively utilized to construct a more nuanced approach in rightly determining the balance of changes and preservation of a certain cultural value to a very particular context. The painstaking attempt to avoid tokenistic drivel is evidently at the heart of Hornedo's brand of cultural studies in this book, one in which the heightened exigent call to remain bothered with the across-the-board procurement of insular provincialism is highly respected that, in turn, gives a "*room for working out an effective national synthesis of values by elevating consciousness to*

a reflexive critical plane where the vital forms of Filipino thought may acquire a still higher quality of rationality and integration" since, as Hornedo writes, "[o]nly then can the priorities of culture, law, institutions[,] and policies become more congruent with general, national behavior and our national self, lucidly defined and finally realizable."³⁰ Guided by philosophico-historical illustration, the readers will be presented with Hornedo's explanation that there is a prismatic effect that can be gleaned in becoming aware that there are diverging lines in cultural valuation in Philippine society. From tribalism and factionalism to the tenets of Christianity, Hornedo brought the attention of the readers to the seemingly almost incompatible viewpoints on human values that make unified social cooperation harder to achieve.³¹ In so doing, the reader would be encouraged by Hornedo to ask the following insightful questions: Is the exclusivist behavior in the Aboriginal mind – that overemphasizes familial relation at the expense of a more depersonalized, wider environment and human relationships – still nourished by a modern culture that reduces business stakeholdership to employer-employee graded relation? Must we simply say that no blunder or anything is confounding in speaking of terrorism as a delivered promise to *parang sabil* or the human succumbing "in the way of Allah" just because those who performed such terroristic acts are the so-called "Muslim martyrs" who perished as they were killed by non-Muslims? Is it reasonable to completely blame the Latria-Hyperdulia-Dulia schematic worldview of worshipping from the Roman Catholic tradition on the pervasiveness of complacent submission and resignation in the false promises of colonization of the Spanish government; as it somehow resembles the spiritual intercession of prayer to God in which the faithful has to be extraordinarily enduring

²⁹ See Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, 30th Anniversary edition (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc., 1970), 59-69; 101-103.

³⁰ Hornedo, *Pagmamahal and Pagmumura*, 202.

³¹ Hornedo, *Pagmamahal and Pagmumura*, 182-195.





to understand that the miseries of the present can be acceptable for a somewhat “rewarding” afterlife? Perhaps if these questions present political solidarity as too good to be true, then we can be more modest in admitting that the politico-moral ties of Filipino citizens with one another must not be facilitated by a belief in the oneness of values, instead, the liberal democratic rule must be able to give citizens a deep sense of respect with one another by recognizing a reality that everyone has the capacity to confer a gradient of values on the sources of our human sentiments.³² In his interpretation of the peaceful People Power Revolution of 1986, however, Hornedo mentioned the historical importance of a social consciousness that is critical of oppressive power structures – transcending some values that hinder the creation of new values for the sake of human development.³³ Before the pessimism in froward and ungovernable value pluralism completely overshadow the worth of social unity in a democratic regime, Hornedo intentionally brings a message that while there are numerous speculative factors that might discount the relevance of the EDSA revolution 1 (e.g., the predominantly Catholic resonance in the event due to the strong encouragement of the late Cardinal Jaime Sin to bring in revolutionary support from the people, or that the manipulative ideas of so-called “people power” began proliferating through the frequent staging of some powerful personalities to drag a rowdy mob in support of their monkey business), the monumental event became a haven wherein “*there was born a consciousness of liberty, the consciousness that to deserve freedom, one had to fight for it[.]*”³⁴ It is one of the salient indications that despite the paternalistic and authoritarian values carved in Philippine history, while not

trumpeting complete victory against all forms of social ills, the Philippine society itself has been a witness to and an agent of political transformation.

CONCLUDING NOTES

Returning to the phenomenological energy that brings life to Hornedo’s book, a sense of wonder will dawn on the reader as one may attempt to fathom one’s understanding of social realities in the Philippines after all the contradictions in human values that continue to affect the Filipino people. Hope is a precious gift that one may get from the book, even though Hornedo has been too sincere in submitting to us that the wider scope of the Filipino spirit will have to ride a long way to sustainably resolve the challenges in the divergences of our culture. As Hornedo enigmatically captures this dilemma, “*Pagmamahal [love], therefore is intimately and essentially bound up with halaga [value]. And to love, therefore, is both to recognize worth or value and to act in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the value of the minamahal (one considered of great value).*”³⁵ Participating in a guessing game as it seems, I think, I now understand the reason behind the title of this book – despite the fact that this book is difficult to encapsulate in any respect as it draws from various disciplines, such as Literature, Philosophy, Linguistics, History, Cultural Studies, Political Sociology, and so forth – as it delves into the interconnectedness among problems themselves rather than ushering in, if not intensifying, the superficial packaging of ideas. Despite the fact that *mahal* (expensive) and *mura* (cheap) can be used as devices of appraisal in the market, Hornedo is deeply aware of their potential in discussing matters

³² Christine M. Korsgaard, “The Dependence of Value on Humanity,” in *The Practice of Value*, ed. R. Jay Wallace (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 73.

³³ Hornedo, *Pagmamahal and Pagmumura*, 132-139.

³⁴ Hornedo, *Pagmamahal and Pagmumura*, 139.

³⁵ Hornedo, *Pagmamahal and Pagmumura*, 152.





that are of significance in the Philippine cultural ordeal. One thing is for sure: in being human, we cannot and must resist being neutral on every fundamental social cause when weighing things for our country, so to speak, lest we automatically bear the emptiness of our apathy. Depoliticization amounts to dehumanization. In a time when political concerns are becoming valueless as the rise of overpowering economic forces in our lives becomes enamored by a more apathetic clime of individualistic commerce, Hornedo extends a helping hand in recovering the human and humane in us. To be sure, and as the discussion of the book has shown, our value orientations might end up being imposing on one another and ensuing havoc, but only through good faith and the willingness to understand can we realize that there is interiority in a dialogical valuation, that is, first, *“the recognition of the value-in-itself of the personhood of the one being respected or revered, and [the] second is the purposeful letting-be of the loved one to be himself/herself.”*³⁶ Hence, it challenges us to respect cultural diversity while ferreting out the right degree of normativity and objectivity that bind us, as analogized by Christine Korsgaard, just as we still need to be committed to knowing the nature of a house amidst the liberty in the variety of its construction because all of us deserve a safe home to reside in.³⁷ In the book, Hornedo is in no way saying that knowing the limits of objectivity and pluralism in cultural discord is as easy as counting the coins in our pocket nor using purely quantifying instruments of human thought, but to gainsay the role of human values in society is an effective way to eradicate the difficulty of the subject matter so much so that we fall in the abyss of forgetting what makes us humans in the first place – to have a listening heart and understanding mind. It is one thing to know that there are conflicts,

but it is quite another to give up on our dreams to find a dialogical path that will not simply eliminate the conflictual baggage of human values, but zealously learn, time after time, about the delicate balance between the objective and the subjective, between unity and diversity, and between apathy and sympathy. For Hornedo, there is no way of going around this task, and this particular book of Hornedo will surely help us on this journey.

³⁶ Hornedo, *Pagmamabal and Pagmumura*, 155.

³⁷ Korsgaard, “The Dependence of Value on Humanity,” 75-76.





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