

The Filipino Value of Pakikipagkapwa-Tao Vis-À-Vis Gabriel Marcel's Notion of Creative Fidelity and Disponibilitè

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Introduction

The Filipinos like their Asian neighbors have holistic world view. The Filipino mind is not keen on making categorizations or compartmentalization of reality. The world or reality is seen as a whole where everything, the physical, spiritual and divine, is an integral part of reality. Even the self is regarded not as a totally separate entity but an integral part of the world or reality. The Filipino believes that he is one with humanity and is connected with creation. He experiences himself as part of the world and acknowledges that the life space on earth is but one for all. One of the core attributes of the Filipino psyche is how he views the person. This view is known as personalism. The Filipino has a very high regard and concern for the individual and the person. This view, however, is not a highly intellectualized view wherein a generalization and codification of the concept is attainable. In fact, it is more accurate to call a view rather than a concept. For the Filipino, “person” is not the abstracted or universalized notion or concept of person or ego; a person is a concrete, acting, relating individual.

The non-dualistic view of the Filipino of the self or *sarili* is manifested in his “loob” or inner self. “Loob” is a Tagalog term which means inside; it used to refer to things inside space or time. It can also be used in the context of the person and self as that inner dimension or inner core of the self. This view of the person of the Filipino as having a self – *sarili*, which is manifested in his loob can be related to Marcel’s notion of the person. Marcel focuses on the concrete human person, not in the theoretical and generalized conception of man. The human person for Marcel is not some kind of a cognitive construct, but a concrete subject who incarnates his subjectivity; that can be identified with the Filipino

view of the “loob.” Marcel, quite similar to the Filipino psyche, has not shown much interest in an absolute ego devoid of a link with the concrete ego. A correlate of the concepts of *sarili* and *loob* is the concept of *kapwa*. *Kapwa* indicates a shared identity and combines or relates the self with the other. *Kapwa* is the basis of Filipino sense of interpersonalism which is expressed in the value of *pakikipagkapwa-tao*. The interpersonalism of the Filipino can be seen in the light of intersubjectivity particularly according to Marcel’s notions of creative fidelity and desponibilite.

In this paper I will focus on the Filipino psyche and view of the person based on the notions of *sarili* and *loob*, which the Filipino sense of interpersonalism based on his value of *pakikipagkapwa-tao*. I will then relate these with Gabriel Marcel’s notion of person, intersubjectivity, creative fidelity, and disponibilit .

The Filipino Psyche and View of the Person

Unlike their Western counterparts, the Filipinos like their Asian neighbors have holistic world view. The Filipino mind is not keen on making categorizations or compartmentalization of reality. The world or reality is seen as a whole where everything, the physical, spiritual and divine, is an integral part of reality. Even the self is regarded not as a totally separate entity but an integral part of the world or reality. The Filipino believes that he is one with humanity and is connected with creation. He experiences himself as part of the world and acknowledges that the life space on earth is but one for all.¹ Hence the Filipino finds it difficult to extricate himself from external conditions and take a distanced view of reality. In his ordinary life and thinking, he finds it difficult to take an objective and detached stand from the world. The Filipino hardly makes a distinction between the internal and the external, between the spiritual and physical. Life is also non-dualistic; the Filipino has the ability to mix all aspects of life, political, social, religious, and even personal.

One of the core attributes of the Filipino psyche is how he views the person. This view is known as personalism. The Filipino has a very high regard and concern for the individual and the person.

¹See Katrin de Guia, *Kapwa: The Self and the Other, Worldviews and Lifestyles of Filipino Culture Bearers* (Pasig: Anvil, 2005), p. 9.

This view, however, is not a highly intellectualized view wherein a generalization and codification of the concept is attainable. In fact, it is more accurate to call a view rather than a concept. For the Filipino, “person” is not the abstracted or universalized notion or concept of person or ego; a person is a concrete, acting, relating individual. The Filipino will not go through a rigorous intellectual process of digesting and conceptualizing his view unless he is an intellectual whose concern is to problematize such reality, which is what this paper is trying to do.

The non-dualistic view of the Filipino of the self or person is manifested in his “loob” or inner self. “Loob” is a Tagalog term which means inside; it used to refer to things inside space or time. It can also be used in the context of the person or self as that inner dimension or inner core of the self. The Filipino recognizes that the person has an inner core, a “loob,” or a “boot.” This “loob” is the inner self, the internal dimension of one’s identity. According to Fr. Leonardo Mercado, one of the pioneers in the study of Filipino philosophy, loob has much to do with the Filipino sense of selfhood.² This loob, he said, can be characterized as holistic and interior; the Filipino has a total way of thinking which is non-compartmentalized.³ All his positive and negative attributes, his intentions, aspirations, beliefs and values are found in this inner core which is also the source of the value and dignity as person. The “loob” is intimately related to the Filipino notion of personhood which includes his “kaluluwa” (spirit), “budhi” (conscience), “katauhang panlabas” (external appearance), and “katauhang panloob” (innermost being).” So the Filipino notion of person or personhood recognizes the inner (loob), outer, (labas) and depth (lalamang) aspects. “Loob” and “labas” determines authenticity; if there is a congruence between the loob and labas then there is authenticity, if there is no congruence then it is not authentic, it is just “pakitang-tao.” According to Fr. Dionisio Miranda, “loob is the totality of self, a consciousness of the self and also awareness of the meaning of the self. Loob is interiority, the inner principle of affection, disposition, feelings, attitudes, thought, decision, (and) responsibility.”⁴

²See Leonardo Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy* (Tacloban City: Divine Word University Publication, 1974), p. 65.

³ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁴Dionisio Miranda, *Loob: The Filipino Within: A Preliminary Investigation into a Pre-theological Moral Anthropology* (Manila: Divine Word Publications, 1989), p. 45.

The inner core or “loob” is extended or expressed in the person’s “labas” through his actions, behaviors and attitudes. His actions and behaviors have also their value because they emanate from the person’s “loob” or inner core. While actions and behaviors are outward expressions of the “loob,” these actions or behaviors reach the very core of his being, so that Filipinos attached so much value of their actions or behaviors because they also carry the value of their being. The saying “hate the sin and not the sinner” is quite difficult to apply to the Filipino. Hence, every action or behavior of the person acquires the same value as that of the person. This the reason why for the Filipino an action is judged based on the person involved in the action rather than the very value of the action. Their actions are very personal for the Filipinos so that to criticize an act is tantamount to criticizing the person. Not only actions or behaviors are referenced to the person, everything including properties, by-products of one’s works, relatives is seen in reference or from the point of view of the person. It is not surprising that Filipinos are loyal to the person rather the institution; they follow the person rather than the system. Practices and customs have value because of their connection with person. The Holy Mass, for example, is regarded by the Filipino as a personal devotion; in confession the Filipino usually confesses individual sins rather than the social ones; they vote for the candidates who have shown them personal concern or have touched them or are related to them personally. This kind of personalism is also manifested in other Filipino values like utang na loob, pakikisama, pakikipagkapwa, hiya, amor propio etc.

The Filipino View of Person Vis-à-vis Marcel’s Notion of Person

This view of the person of the Filipino can be related to Marcel’s notion of the person. Marcel focuses on the concrete human person, not in the theoretical and generalized conception of man. The human person for Marcel is not some kind of a cognitive construct, but a concrete subject who incarnates his subjectivity; this subjectivity can be identified with the Filipino view of the “loob.” Marcel, quite similar to the Filipino psyche, has not shown much interest in an absolute ego devoid of a link

with the concrete ego.⁵ The human person according to Marcel is not an epistemological specimen meant to be analyzed and dissected; the person is a concrete individual, a human being who manifests his existence through his body. Hence the notion of the person cannot be found in the arid and empty generalizations of specialized investigations about what happens to a person or in the uncritical examination of the etymology of the word person. What really counts is the concrete individual. He writes: "The empirical self-in-general is a fiction. What exists and counts is such an individual, the real individual I am, with the incredibly minute detail of his experience, with all the specifications of the concrete adventure that belong to him to live and to him alone, not to another being."⁶ The human person cannot be reduced to generalizations or to some abstract conceptions. Marcel's interest in the concrete individual fits well into the Filipino view of the person.

Perhaps one aspect of Marcel's philosophy that can shed light on the Filipino view of the person is his notion of incarnate subjectivity. For Marcel, man is essentially incarnate or embodied and the only way he can exist in the world and think about the world and relate with the world and others is by being incarnate or embodied, that is, to appear as a body. It is through incarnation or embodiment that the person is present in the world; it is because of the body that the person is able to express his subjectivity. The inner core of man must be expressed, and man expresses this inner core or subjectivity through his body. His body "incarnates" or puts into flesh man's desires, intentions, wishes, and thoughts. The Filipino view of the person is not limited to the "loob" or inner core, there is also the "labas" or outer aspect which expresses his inner core. Through his actions and behaviors ("kilos" at "gawi" or "ugali"), he is able to express his inner core. The "panglabas" like his actions or "kilos" are made possible because of embodiment.

The Filipino psyche also puts emphasis on concrete situations; Filipino are situation centered and their behaviors are clearly influenced by present situation. Filipinos obey laws in situations where they think that they can put themselves in trouble, while

⁵Gabriel Marcel, *Philosophy of Existence* (New York: Book of Libraries, 1949), p. 18.

⁶Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysics of Hope* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 19.

they are tempted to violate laws when they think the presence of authority is not visible or apparent. They can be hardworking or lazy depending on the situation; and they can be friendly or rude depending on the situation. In a limited sense this can be understood in Marcelian terms. According to Marcel, the experience of embodiment ensures that the person is a being-in-situation. This means that one's experience and knowledge of the world is affected and shaped by his situation. One's situation determines the intricate web of human relations that he finds himself involved with at any given moment of his human existence. The person therefore not an spectator of life – his life or the life of other human beings. One is not an spectator of the world, but rather involved in every affair that shapes and define one's life. But this being situation-centered by Filipinos can be enhanced by what Marcel further says. According to him “our condition in this world does remain, in the last analysis, that of a wanderer, an itinerant being, who cannot come to absolute rest except by a fiction.”⁷ But our itinerant condition cannot be separated from the given circumstances; hence to be in a situation and to be on the move, are two modes of being that cannot be separated.⁸ As individuals we are on the move and therefore Filipinos cannot just rest on the situation; he has to continue with his life.

Filipino Interpersonalism and Pakikipagkapwa-tao

Interpersonalism is another dimension in the Filipino view of the person. The Filipino does not only emphasize the inner core of the person and his value, and his outer dimension; he also recognizes the relationality or relatedness of the person with other persons. This is expressed in another core attribute of the Filipino psyche, which is interpersonalism. The Filipino view of the person is very much different from the egoistic interpretation of the Western mind where the ego or self is affirmed as a separate entity. In the Western view, the person has an ego which takes its stance as a separate individual. For the Filipino, the person is relational; it is always related to other persons, to the community or society, to the world and to the Divine. The ego or “sarili” for

⁷Gabriel Marcel, *Mystery of Being I* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1950), p. 133.

⁸Ibid.

the Filipino cannot be detached from others; while the ego or sarili has to be developed, it cannot be developed apart from the others. Independence or autonomy (pagsasarili or kasarinlan) may be a value but when the ego or “sarili” is completely detached as in egoistic or “makasarili” then such detachment is regarded as negative. The Filipino always considers himself as being related or attached to others, to the community, to the world and to God. Because of personalism and interpersonalism, Filipinos attach great importance to social approval, acceptance, warmth and closeness of reciprocal ties, loyalty to persons and family. They want their actions to be approved and accepted by others; one of the most painful experiences for the Filipino is separation, separation from family, friends and other loved ones.

The Filipino sense of personalism and interpersonalism is expressed in the Filipino notion of “kapwa-tao” and the core value of “pakikipagkapwa-tao.” The person has his own identity based on his “loob,” and “labas” but he has a shared identity with fellow human being. The person is a “tao” and the other person is a “kapwa-tao.” “Kapwa” is a concept and value that combines the self and other; as a term it is used to address another with the intention of establishing connection.⁹ The Filipino psyche recognizes that every human being connected to other human beings and each individual although unique is an integral part of humanity.¹⁰ Through the concept of the “kapwa” we recognize that the essential humanity of everyone is connected and not separated from others. So the core value of the Filipino personhood is not just the person or “tao” but also the “kapwa-tao.” This notion of “kapwa-tao” or shared identity or shared self opens the self or person (tao) to the other self (kapwa-tao.) The self is not seen as a separate entity but a related self to the other self. The self or I (ako) includes the other (ikaw or siya). According to Virgilio Enriquez, the father of Filipino Psychology, “kapwa” is the “unity of the one-of-us-and-the-other.” The closest English equivalent term of “kapwa” is “other” but “other” in English connotes what is opposed to the self and it implies the recognition of the self as a separate identity. “Kapwa” on the other hand recognizes a shared identity and an inner self shared with others. Virgilio Enriquez,

⁹De Guia, p. 8.

¹⁰Ibid.

a professor at the Department of Psychology in the University of the Philippines in the 70s and 80s and considered the father of Filipino Psychology defined "*kapwa*" as "the unity of the self and others, a recognition of shared identity, an inner self shared with others."¹¹ The "*kapwa*" orientation reaches deep and wide. "It anchors the mind of man in the memory of nature." When the concept is viewed within the animistic framework it transpires how far the roots of "*kapwa*" extends into the ancestral memories of shared self becomes shared life; the respect and consideration for the other is extended to all beings, animals, plants, trees, rocks, living planet and spiritual world.¹²

If the person or "*tao*" has a value, then the "*kapwa-tao*" has the same inherent value. He emphasizes that "*kapwa*" implies moral and normative aspects that obliged a person to treat one another as fellow human being and therefore as equal. It bridges the deepest individual recess of a person with anyone outside him or herself, even total strangers. So although the Filipino is very personal in the sense that he recognizes more those that are personally related to him, because of his "*pakikipagkapwa-tao*" also recognizes the other who may be a stranger to him. In this core value, the social or political status of the other is not important; particular characteristics or state in life and society do not matter. "A person starts having a *kapwa* not so much because of a recognition of status given him by others, but more so because of his awareness of shared identity. The *ako* (ego) and the *iba-sakin* (others) are one and the same in *kapwa* psychology. "*Hindi ako iba sa aking* (I am no different from others)." Once *ako* starts thinking of himself as different from *kapwa* the self, in effect, denies the status of *kapwa* to the other."¹³

This Filipino linguistic unity of the self and the other is unique and unlike in most modern languages. Such inclusiveness implies the moral obligation to treat one another as equal fellow human beings. It goes without saying that we cannot regard the other or the "*kapwa*" as an object that can be exploited or manipulated. This notion is definitely inconsistent with exploitative human interactions. Once the self – *ako* - starts thinking of himself

¹¹Virgilio Enriquez, "Kapwa: A Core Concept in Filipino Social Psychology" in Philippine Social Science and Humanities Review, 42, 1978, p. 263.

¹²De Guia, p. 9.

¹³Enriquez, "Kapwa," p. 264.

as separate from “*kapwa*” then the Filipino ‘self’ gets to be individuated and separated as in the Western sense; in effect he denies the status and dignity of the “*kapwa*” to the other.

Filipino Interpersonalism *Vis-à-vis* Marcel’s Notion of Intersubjectivity

The interpersonalism of the Filipino can be seen in the light of intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity is expressed by the preposition *avec* translated as “with.” The relationship that “with” expresses does not apply to the world of objects; objects are either alongside or beside, under or above; hence a chair is alongside a table or beside a bed; it is never with the table or with the bed in this sense. Of course it is possible to be beside a fellow passenger but in this sense we regard the passenger as an object not a subject. Intersubjectivity arises when I recognize the other as a somebody not as a something. It is when we discover the deep and individual quality of somebody that true intersubjectivity arises. There may be a graduated scale of the levels of intersubjective relations from the most ordinary to the ones reaching the level of the spirit. A single human relationship can work its way all the way up or down in this scale.

According to Marcel, we recognize the other human being whom we consider as a subject as “thou.” The Filipino psyche is not keen on making a distinction between subject and object; such is a Western categorization. Although Marcel and the other existentialists try to avoid dualism and distinction, it cannot be helped because it is engrained in their psyche or mentality. The Filipino psyche and worldview as mentioned is non-dualistic, hence, such distinction is quite foreign to the Filipino mentality. Suffice it to say that the “subject” of Marcel corresponds to the Filipino view of the person or “*tao*.” So the “*tao*” and “*kapwa-tao*” are both subjects. In “*pakikipagkapwa-tao*” the other is regarded as a subject or person and there is deep respect for his dignity and inherent worth as a fellow human being. But a change in our attitude toward the “*kapwa*” can also reduced it to an object. For Marcel, when we regard a person as an object, he is reduced to a She or He or even an It. If the other person is acknowledged only for the service he renders or when he is treated as a source

of information then he is treated just as any other object. But even in a very ordinary practical encounter a touch of genuine intersubjectivity can possibly break through. The person whom I ask for direction on the road can be transformed from an anonymous “sign post” who just showed me the way to a concerned guide who is truly sincere in extending a helping hand to a somebody who is alone and lost. It may be our first and last encounter but somehow a “spark of spirituality” is ignited. On occasions like this we have lingered for a moment to the threshold of intersubjectivity, the realm of existence to which the preposition “with” properly applies.¹⁴

Within the realm of intersubjectivity, a variety of relationships must be distinguished from each other. The word “together” or “together with” can have several connotations which could be deceptive. It could mean working or traveling together, playing or studying together; “together” could be construed as collective labor which is nothing but the sum-total of various tasks performed by separate individuals. At this level intersubjectivity has not reach the level of the spiritual, of a true companionship. But if different individuals discover a common sense of fate and awareness of their condition and recognize each other as persons and share a feeling of community, then what started as a barren intersubjectivity can be transformed into a genuine companionship, a profound or genuine intersubjectivity. Similar realms can be applied to the notion of “kapwa-tao.”

Marcel also recognizes the transcendental orientation of the human person. He says, “from the beginning my philosophy has been directed towards the so-called conjoint recognition of the individual and the transcendent, in opposition to every impersonal or immanent idealism.”¹⁵

The core value of kapwa-tao is expressed in the value or practice of “pakikipagkapwa-tao.” Because of “pakikipagkapwa-tao” Filipinos are open to others and empathize with others. Because of “*pakikipagkapwa-tao*”, they regard others with dignity and respect and deal with them as fellow human beings. “Pakikipagkapwa-tao” is manifested in a basic sense of justice and fairness and in concern for others as demonstrated in the

¹⁴Marcel, *Mystery of Being I*, p. 180.

¹⁵Marcel, *Homo Viator*, p. 192.

Filipino's ability to empathize with others, in helpfulness and generosity in times of need (pakikiramay), in the patience of bayanihan or mutual assistance and in the famous Filipino hospitality. "Pakikipagkapwa-tao" also promotes in camaraderie and a feeling of closeness to one another. "Pakikipagkapwa-tao" is also the basis of the Filipinos' extensive social openness and intricate interrelations that they have specific titles for extended relations. In addition, Filipinos have the profound 'ka' institution, loosely translated as 'equal to the same kind' as in kasama (of the same company), kaisa (of the same cause), kapanalig (of the same belief), and a host of other similar terminologies. It is also expressed in other Filipino values like pakikisama (getting along).

Pakikipagkapwa-tao and Creative Fidelity

Despite the positive orientation of the Filipino values, they are relatively ambivalent. Filipino values are like two-edged sword, while it promotes a positive view of person, life and the world, it can also promote a decadent attitude towards a person, life and the world. Personalism makes the Filipino person-oriented. He appreciates the value of persons and the things that are associated with persons. But this personalism may cause the Filipino to be too subjective and too personal that he may no longer see the difference between systems and persons, or persons and institutions, even the difference between right and wrong. He may no longer be objective when evaluating issues, he becomes biased to persons that are closed to him and this is very true in politics. The Filipino makes a decision on the basis of persons he knows not on issues. Pakikipagkapwa may promote smooth interpersonal relationships and harmony and loyalty among persons. Because of pakikipagkapwa and pakikisama, Filipinos respect and accept others into their fold and avoid rejecting people. Pakikipagkapawa promotes fairness and equality and pakikisama promotes friendship and camaraderie. But they may also cause the person to be conformist, and to neglect his obligations and tasks. He may compromise his own principles and beliefs and other values. *Utang na loob* promotes gratitude, humility and respect. Because of the Filipino sense of utang na loob, he does not forget those people who helped him in his needs and as an

act of gratitude repay back the kindness of people. Because of utang na loob Filipinos respect their elders especially parents as a sign of gratitude. On the other hand, it may make the person subservient to others to the point that he can no longer say no to someone he is indebted even if what is being asked is wrong. So in the end, because of utang na loob, he may compromise his own good, he may undermine his own integrity and principles.

The question now is how do we established a genuine “pakikipagkapwa-tao” like a genuine intersubjectivity where the both the I or “ako” and the thou or “ikaw” are both open to each other, an intersubjectivity that reaches the spiritual, the personal, the ontological, a genuine “pakikipagkapwa-tao” that overcomes the ambivalence of such value? Perhaps we can get some insights and inspiration from Marcel’s notions of creative fidelity and disponibilité to deepen and enhance our value of pakikipagkapwa-tao.

In ordinary language fidelity is usually associated with faithfulness, and faithfulness is related to commitment, so that fidelity, faithfulness, and commitment are often used interchangeably. But the question for Marcel is how does one become faithful and committed? What is the very basis of fidelity? Is fidelity merely faithfulness or constancy over time? Is fidelity real or is it even possible to be constant and committed to a person over time?

At the outset, it seems easy to connect fidelity with constancy or with immutability. Fidelity certain requires constancy, that is, one does not change or abandon for example his promise. We often hear lovers pledge that their love will last until the end of time, that their love for each other will remain constant. According to Marcel, constancy could be considered as the “rational skeleton of fidelity.”¹⁶ The two, however, must be differentiated. Constancy could be construed as perseverance in a certain goal or purpose. Constancy could also be understood as immutability which means remaining unchanging over time. But fidelity requires more than just constancy over time; it implies another element which Marcel refers to as presence.

Marcel admits that it is difficult to put in clear words the

¹⁶Gabriel Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, trans. by Robert Rosthal, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), p. 153.

meaning of “presence.” When I regard someone as a faithful friend for example, I mean he is someone who does not fail me, someone who stands by me no matter the circumstance or situation is. In this sense presence is different from constancy. Constancy can be applied to others and to one’s self as when somebody is constant to himself for his own purpose. But one is present for the other or more precisely to a thou.¹⁷ To be present for someone is to assure the other with all one’s intentions that his inner feelings and dispositions for the other will not change. So that if one is not there at the very moment when his presence is needed, then, his fidelity becomes questionable. Presence of course should not be construed as always being physically present for the other; it involves making the other feel that one is with the other. The mark of presence is the mutual tie to the other. For Marcel, it means that the self is “given” to the other, and that givenness is responsively received or reciprocated.

Fidelity as constancy can be based on duty or obligation; it could be interpreted as fulfilling one’s duty or obligation to the other. One can make great efforts to be steadfast for the other, to stand by the other’s side when the other needed him most. But if his presence is simply based on his idea of duty and he simply wants to be the person or friend he thinks he is must be - a faithful – dutiful friend, then this sense of fidelity as constancy based on duty or obligation can hardly be a genuine fidelity for the other. While his conduct is admirable and unquestionable, he is more faithful to his idea or model of himself as a faithful friend than as faithful to the other. A genuine fidelity for Marcel is one that is based on spontaneity, that is, a faithfulness that is not “coercive” but rather independent of the will – a pure spontaneity. Marcel expresses that “fidelity as such can only be appreciated by the person to whom it is pledged, if it offers an essential element of spontaneity, itself radically independent of the will.”¹⁸

A constancy that is based on duty or obligation alone cannot prosper into a genuine fidelity. It is danger of being replaced by inner struggle that could developed into aversion. Marcel cites the example of fidelity to a particular ideology. When one joins a political party or a social group, he is expected to follow and

¹⁷Ibid., p. 154.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 155.

obey certain rules and prescriptions. This is to ensure compliance and discipline on the part of members. To the extent that such discipline could be coercive, there is the danger that such discipline could be internalized to the point that all inner spontaneity on the part of the individual is lost. The more organized the group or party, the more it could encourage hypocrisy and subservience. The extreme result could be a kind of totalitarianism. Such danger could also lurk into some basic personal relations like friendship and marriage. While marital union is based on personal and individual decision and will, one spouse could be faithful to the union and the other only out of pure feeling of duty. Fidelity then is reduced to a constancy that is based on a duty or obligation.

Earlier we have noted the seeming ambivalence of the value of pakikipagkapwa-tao since such value can have either a positive or a negative orientation. This where the Marcelian notion of genuine fidelity, that is, one that is not just based on duty but on spontaneity, can check the tendency of pakikipagkapwa-tao to be just a form of conformity or being subservient to others most especially to social or political ideologies. Pakikipagkapwa-tao cannot just be based on one's feeling of duty to the kapwa because that feeling of duty has the tendency of being "coercive." We are not saying here that doing something out of one's sense of duty is wrong, but that sense or feeling of duty must be based on something more fundamental, the personal disposition. So that sense of duty that motivates one to his kapwa must be based on a personal disposition. Pakikipagkapwa-tao must be based on a personal disposition or an inner disposition of the self to be present to the other. Pakikipagkapwa-tao should mean being present for the kapwa to assure him or her with all of one's intentions that his inner feelings and dispositions for the kapwa will not change. The kapwa-tao is there at the very moment when his presence is needed. The constant presence of course should not be interpreted as always being physically present for the other; it involves making the other feel that one is with the other and vice versa. The mutuality of presence is an essential mark of pakikipagkapwa; mutual presence is the bond that ties kapwa-tao.

Now what does it mean to be faithful or to pledge fidelity? How can pakikipagkapwa-tao as constancy and mutual presence be possible? According to Marcel, the pledge to fidelity is based

on some inner disposition. But we know that inner dispositions could change in the course of time. Inner dispositions whether feelings or decisions could be affected by a lot of factors. Hence the question is, can one still guarantee that the disposition he has at the moment he commits himself will not change later on? At the moment I commit myself and pledge my fidelity, I am almost certain that my inner disposition, my decision and resolve will not change. It seems almost certain at that moment. However, will this seeming certainty be enough to hold my promise? Will this anchor fidelity on solid foundation? How about if the person – my kapwa - I pledge my fidelity to, changed in the course of time? Certainly inner disposition can change, either because I changed or the other person has changed. With this possibility can I still act as though my disposition is unchangeable? This puts pakikipagkapwa-tao based on fidelity on a very shaky foundation.

According to Marcel, when I commit myself, I guarantee in principle that such commitment or pledge will not again be put in question, I do not doubt my commitment in the very same manner that I do not doubt the inner disposition I have when I made the promise. This active volition not to question “intervenes as an essential element in the determination of what in fact will be the case. It at once bars a certain number of possibilities; it bids me invent a certain *modus vivendi* which I would otherwise be precluded from envisaging.”¹⁹ Marcel refers to this as creative fidelity.

To ask how I can test the initial assurance which is the ground of my fidelity leads to a vicious circle. In principle according to Marcel, “to commit myself I must first know myself; the fact is, however, that I really know myself only when I have committed myself. That dilatory attitude which involves sparing myself any trouble, keeping myself aloft...is incompatible with any self-knowledge worthy of the name.”²⁰ Fidelity of this sort may appear to a spectator to be a vicious circle, because he views it from the outside. Viewed from the outside fidelity may appear to be incomprehensible, impracticable, maybe a grave risk. But what may appear from the outside as incomprehensible is experienced from within as growth, as deepening or as an ascending. Marcel

¹⁹Ibid., p. 162.

²⁰Ibid., p. 163.

says: "In swearing fidelity to a person, I do not know what future awaits us or even, in a sense, what person he will be tomorrow; the very fact of my not knowing is what gives worth and weight to my promise. There is no question of response to something which is, absolutely speaking, given; and the essential of a being is just that – not being 'given' either to another or himself."²¹

All fidelity according to Marcel is based on a certain relation that is felt to be unchangeable, and therefore it has the assurance that it cannot be fleeting. The mystery of commitment or fidelity is focused on a privilege and decisive moment. Of course it cannot be avoided that such mystery could be reduced to habit or some social constraints. There is always an attempt to devalue fidelity by interpreting it as a mode of affection for oneself or human self-respect, and of pride. Such attempt is related to the subjective interpretation of knowledge which asserts that I cannot know anything except my own conscious states.

By relating fidelity to spontaneity, Marcel implies the element of sincerity, of genuine feeling or love. Sincerity is distinguished from obligation which has a coercive character. He is critical about the ethical rigorism of Kant who based the rightness of an act on duty or obedience to an imperative which could lead to inner conflict between one's inclination and one's obligation. The fulfillment of an obligation against one's inclination and devoid of sincerity cannot be identified with fidelity. In the same sense *pakikipagkapwa-tao* that is based on mere duty or fulfillment of obligation and devoid of sincerity is not a genuine *pakikipagkapwa-tao*.

An ethic of obligation can be based on egoism especially when one does the right thing simply because he wants to come up to one's own standard. According to Marcel an ethic of obligation can be construed as symptomatic of "fanaticism" of the ideal." What is then problematic for Marcel is a kind of commitment which avoids the rigorism of the Kantian position which is devoid of any positive feeling or desire on one hand and a kind of commitment that is contingent on one's own state of feeling or desire. Scheler avoids the formalism of Kant by positing a kind of ethics that is based on feeling of values. In order to avoid both extremes, Marcel proposes

²¹Gabriel Marcel, *Being and Having: An Existentialist Diary* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 47.

a creative fidelity that is neither coercive nor contingent. We can also say that creative fidelity should be an essential element of pakikipagkapwa-tao.²²

Creative fidelity satisfies these conditions through the collaboration of two acts, one of which depends on our own initiative and the other on the response of the other. A commitment implies a refusal to put future state of mind or attitude in question and this attitude is based on our interpretation of future conflict between how one feels and what one ought to do, as a temptation or trial. The apprehension of the possibility of conflict between what one feels and what one ought to do makes the commitment a risk. Although this conflict can be resisted, it is not enough to erase the doubt that my commitment may have been mistaken. The object of one's commitment may not prove to be worthy of the commitment or certain conditions have already changed. To make this commitment unshakable and to establish the relation on solid ground, Marcel stresses that the commitment must be infused with hope. Hope, however, is an invocation or an appeal to what lies outside of us. It is not depended on our own initiative but on a being external to us. Hence, fidelity is possible in faith. Fidelity to the other is seen to be the "shadow of a more absolute fidelity to the Thou." Fidelity is dependent on a response to an appeal. Pakikipagkapwa-tao as fidelity must be based on two things. One is that I should not entertain doubts or have the attitude that in the future my present inner disposition will change or that my feelings will no longer be the same. This is the refusal to entertain what my future state of mind will be. One's this is entertained then pakikipagkapwa-tao is already on the wrong footing. Of course if cannot be helped that I will have some thoughts that my kapwa will change later on that he will no longer be the same kapwa I've known before and he or she will no longer reciprocate my presence. This is where the second condition comes in. Pakikipagkapwa-tao based on fidelity is an invocation, an appeal for the kapwa and this appeal for the kapwa is based on hope which is an appeal to something that is external or outside of us.

How can fidelity be creative? In what sense is fidelity creative? To be creative is to exist existentially. But what does it mean to

²² See Robert Rosthal. Translator's Preface, in Gabriel Marcel's *Creative Fidelity*, trans. by Robert Rosthal, New York: Fordham University Press, 2002, p. xxxiii.

exist existentially? It is easy to construe existence as simply to be or to live, to breath. But for a human being to exist is not only to live or breathe or move. For Marcel, to exist existentially is to exist as a thinking and feeling and creating being. To exist is not only to function like objects; human beings according to Marcel have creative impulse. Our mode of being or existence is dependent on our creative development. Those who pursue their creative development live life qualitatively at a higher mode of being than those for whom experiences are another facet of their functionality. Marcel says, "A really alive person is not merely someone who has a taste for life, but somebody who spreads that taste, showering it, as it were, around him; and a person who is really alive in this way has, quite apart from any tangible achievements of his, something essentially creative about him."²³ The acts of love, admiration, and friendship are creative acts. Hence to exist existentially is to love, to admire, to relate with others. This shows that pakikipagkapwatao to be creative fidelity must also encompass or include acts of love, admiration and respect. Pakikipagkapwatao is a way of living existentially.

The creative élan or spirit moves away from the objectification of our humanity; where creativity is not limited to the development of the self; but it is essentially tied relationally to others. Pakikipagkapwatao as creativity fidelity must be the basis of intersubjectivity. Intersubjective relations or our participation with others allow us to respond to others as creative and participative beings. Intersubjective relations as creative draw the human person to an experience of the self as a being-among-beings – pakikipagkapwatao.

Pakikipagkapwatao as creative fidelity, then, entails a commitment to acts which draw the person closer to others, which is balanced with a proper respect for the self. Self-love, self-satisfaction, complacency, or even self-anger are attitudes that can hinder one's existential progress and could go against the creative impulse.²⁴ In order to have a greater sense of being, one must have creative fidelity. "It is real fidelity only when it is truly creative." In other words, pakikipagkapwatao as creative fidelity allows to create the self – sarili in order to meet the other - kapwa.

²³Marcel, *Mystery of Being I*, p. 139.

²⁴Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, p. 168.

Pakikipagkapwa-tao and Disponibilité

Another Marcelian notion that is related to pakikipagkapwa-tao is the notion of disponibilité. Marcel insists that if there is a possible “assurance” of fidelity, it is because disponibilité or availability and creativity are related ideas. Consequently, we can also relate pakikipagkapwa-tao with disponibilité. To be available is to believe in the other and to place one’s self at the other’s disposal. “Creative fidelity” consists in actively maintaining ourselves in a state of openness and permeability, in willing ourselves to remain open to the other and open to the influx of the presence of the other. But what does it mean to be available? What is the very notion of disponibilité?

One significant insight that Marcel provides us is in the realm of value. Our concrete human experiences are laden with value and this value-laden nature of our existence and being gives us insight into the transcendent nature of our existence. In other words we are not isolated self-contained subjects or individuals. The value of our life or of our existence is not solely caused by us. There is “a transcendent aspect to human existence because it is already endowed with value, which no individual brought to it, or created, but which we recognize, and which will exist after we are gone.”²⁵ There is something beyond us.

The experience of transcendence is something that should be understood not as coming from the outside, although we recognize that it has an independence from any individual. We recognize the transcendent from our own experiences, both in our personal experiences and in our experiences with other beings. Hence transcendence can also be understood as “reaching out of myself toward the intersubjective nature of our existence”²⁶ and such reaching out is essential in our existence, without which we will not experience authenticity and fulfillment. This experience of transcendence allow us to experience not just our fellow human being, it could also lead to the affirmation of God.

The experience of transcendence and the intersubjective nature of our existence lead us to the notion of disponibilité.

²⁵Brendan Sweetman, “Introduction” in *A Gabriel Marcel Reader*, edited and introduced by Brendan Sweetman, (Indiana: St. Augustine’s Press, 2011), p. 6.

²⁶*Ibid.*

Marcel designated to *disponibilité* or availability a special meaning and significance in philosophy. The concept of *disponibilité* or availability played no special role in the history of philosophy until Marcel rendered it as a special quality as a peculiar human virtue, hence, he was the first to recognize its fundamental significance.²⁷ The more common understanding of availability is based on the practical and mechanical aspect of life and not on ethics. When we say that something is available it means ready to be used as when tools are available and ready for our disposal. People are also available when they are and when they do not have any commitments or appointments. So when something is available we can claim it, we can use it or we can dispose of it. When someone is available we can take him or her, we can ask him or her to do something for us. So the concept of availability in the common understanding pertains to some forms of utility; it is understood in the utilitarian sense to the extent that people can be used for some purpose if they are available. Definitely this is not the notion of *disponibilité* or availability for Marcel because this would mean treating the person as an object or a creature incapable of making decisions. *Disponibilité* can be construed as a practical way of how our actual behavior toward other human beings ought to be conducted. This is definitely not the notion of *disponibilité* that we relate with *pakikipagkapwa-tao*.

For Marcel *disponibilité* or availability does not involve being passively or instrumentally used by another person, but rather, it involves responding in complete freedom to a directed appeal; it means being receptive to an appeal addressed to me as a person, not as an object.²⁸ It conveys a kind of spiritual availability that we should adopt in our relation with our fellow human beings. We need to relate with our fellow human beings with openness and humility and that we should not be detached or egocentric or obsessed with our daily affairs.

In his *Metaphysical Journal*, Marcel associates *disponibilité* or availability with commitment. This is the notion of *disponibilité* that we relate with *pakikipagkapwa-tao*. *Disponibilité* or availability is related to the problem of promising or giving and

²⁷Otto Friedrich Bollnow, "Marcel's Concept of Availability," in *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel: The Library of Living Philosophers*, 17, edited by Paul Arthur Schlipp and Lewis Edwin Hahn, (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1984), p. 182.

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 183.

keeping one's word. To give our word and keep our promise is to dispose of – or commit our future. We can only promise something whose fulfillment we can guarantee. Hence giving one's word and keeping one's promise cannot be based on feelings and moods for they are often out of our control. Giving our word therefore is only permissible within the limits of our "availabilities." But availability for Marcel is not just a commitment in the future; it is associated with the claim of another concrete human being upon someone. Availability to someone for Marcel entails a kind of presence which means absolute availability. Presence as absolute availability is "an unconditional readiness to make the appropriate response;" for Marcel this readiness as presence is "the state of being present in a fully conscious manner."²⁹ Pakikipagkapwa-tao then should be a kind of presence that is ever available; it must be an unconditional readiness to respond to the kapwa.

The term "presence" is used in different contexts although each connote a "here-ness" that indicates whether or not a person is "here." Two people who are sitting side by side each other in a room might not be present to each other, and friends who miles apart speaking on a phone might have a stronger awareness of being together. There is mystery in presence, according to Marcel, because presence can transcend the objective physical fact of being-with each other. Pakikipagkapwa-tao as presence and *disponibilité* is concerned with recognizing the self as a being-among-beings, and acknowledging the relevance of others' experiences to the self, as a being; it evokes shared experiences.

Since non-verbal presence is possible then pakikipagkapwa-tao as a kind of non-verbal presence is possible and this becomes possible through "communion". Communion with other human person beings is possible because of the sharing of ourselves, that is, of who we really are. Such notion is the same as Buber's notion of the I-Thou relation where ontological communion is understood as the free expression of those who are able to give and receive freely to each other. Because of this free and mutual giving of self, genuine dialogue is possible. Pakikipagkapwa-tao then is a form of dialogue and communion which is expressed as a free reception of the other (kapwa) to oneself (sarili), and vice versa.

Disponibilité or availability is distinguished from its

²⁹Ibid., p. 185.

opposite which is indisponibilité or unavailability. According to Marcel to be unavailable is to be preoccupied with one self. He explains that this unavailability is inseparable from a certain kind of self-centeredness which is even more primitive and radical than self-love;" self-love is just a manifestation of unavailability. Unavailability is an inner inertness that consists in the inability to respond to an appeal. Hence if pakikipagkapwatao is to be available and be constantly present its opposite is pagkamakasarili, that is, to be self-centered. Pagkamakasarili is indisponibilité or unavailability which results from an individual seeking fulfillment through the objectification of the self. To be makasarili - unavailable, is to be preoccupied with the self as an object; it means to be self-centered in such a way as to exclude the possibility of engaging with others as subjects.³⁰The makasarili or unavailable person is characterized by absorption with one's self, whether with his own successes and accomplishments or his own problems. This can only give the person temporary satisfaction because he could "used up" by all of the things by which he attempts to define himself: job, family, poor health, indebtedness, etc. Marcel compares the encumbered, unavailable life, to a handwritten draft of a manuscript. Just as the clutter of editing marks on a draft disables the author from figuring out what is important to the central ideas, the encumbered self no longer has access to her own point of view. The result is frustration, apathy, or distrust in oneself or others. Pagkamakasarili as indisponibilité or unavailability is the stiffening of the self and the hardening of the categories with which we conceive the world and others.

Concluding Remark

The Filipino value of pakikipagkapwatao as a form of intersubjective relation arises when we recognize the other – kapwa as a somebody not as a something; it blossoms when we discover the deep and individual quality of another person – our kapwatao. To overcome the ambivalence of pakikipagkapwatao we need to see it from the perspective of the Marcelian notions of creative fidelity and disponibilitate. Pakikipagkapwatao based on creative fidelity entails a constant presence, a

³⁰See Marcel, *Being and Having*, p. 74 and 78.

commitment to actions which draws the person closer to others; it entails spontaneity and a genuine feeling for the other. But pakikipagkapwa-tao should not only be seen as a commitment. Pakikipagkapwa-tao is a disponibilitate or availability; it is to be open to another person which evokes a communion and sharing of experiences and self. The world would be a better place to live in if there are persons who live the value of pakikipagkapwa-tao in the spirit of creative fidelity and disponibilitate. Our kapwa-tao will not be a “burden” or “hell” if there is pakikipagkapwa-tao based on creative fidelity and disponibilitate.

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