

Understanding The Philosophy Of Buot-Loob-Nakem

Leonardo N. Mercado, SVD, Ph.D.
University of Santo Tomas
Christ the King Mission Seminary

Abstract: *What is loob, buot, nakem and its other Philippine counterparts? We think that the English translation equivalent is the inner self. This inner self embraces loob as the intellect, will, the feelings. They are also connected to the physical. Kalooban embraces the entire self. It is holistic and interior. It is non-compartmentalized. In other words, kalooban is the inner self.*

We have three concentric circles pertaining to the inner self, starting from the outermost, namely, body, soul and spirit. These three components are not compartmentalized but act as one. In the second concentric circle, the Filipino does not compartmentalize thinking, willing, feeling, and being ethical. In the third concentric circle again we see here the principle of holism, that kalooban embraces the holistic inner self.

Keywords: *Boot, Loob, Nakem, Inner Self, Metalinguistics, Philosophy of Language*

The Tagalog term loob (or kalooban) is related to all Philippine languages. Its Ilokano counterpart is nakem and while in Cebuano Visayan the term is buot. But the linguistic phenomenon can be extended to other Philippine languages because they are linguistic siblings. The term buot is also in Ilonggo, Waray or Leyte-Samarnon, Bicolano—among others. Since the Philippine languages are linguistic relatives, the concepts of buot, loob and nakem are inter-related. In order not duplicate and complicate things, in this paper we shall focus our attention on loob or kalooban. The topic is multi-disciplinary because it touches linguistics, philosophy and the other social sciences.

We shall proceed in three concentric circles. The outermost circle is about Filipino philosophical anthropology. The second circle is how loob interacts with the other human faculties. The third and innermost circle refers to loob itself. The innermost circle can better be understood if we look at loob from the outermost circle and then followed by the second circle.

I. ANTHROPOLOGICAL PHILOSOPHY AND LOOB

The outermost circle shows that a dominant feature of the Western philosophy of man or philosophical anthropology owes much to the Greek tradition, namely, that humans are composed of two elements: the body and the soul. In short, a dualism. We find this teaching in Thomas Aquinas and other medieval philosophers as well as in modern Western philosophy. Although modern western philosophy is not monolithic this dualistic philosophy is a main feature. Western philosophy mostly stresses the separation of body and soul, of the faculty of intellect and the will. We find this teaching in the philosophies of Descartes, Kant and other Western philosophers. Hence the expression, "do not let your intellect influence your will." Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), the famous French philosopher is known for his quotation: "Reason is the slow and tortuous method by which those who do not know the truth discover it. The heart has its own reason which reason does not know." Because thinking allegedly must be done without passion, Immanuel Kant (1729-1804) advocates pure reason. Much of Western dualistic philosophy stresses the distinction between the material and immaterial or spiritual. But English, as a representative of Western thought, distinguishes the psychic from the spiritual.

On the other hand, a dominant feature of Eastern philosophy teaches that humans are composed of body, soul, and spirit. The Semitic or Near-East philosophy as exemplified in biblical thought, holds that humans are composed of body (soma), soul (psyche) and spirit (pneuma or ruach, literally, breath). On the other hand, a common Western tradition is a dualism, matter and spirit, body and soul.

This view is shared in other Eastern philosophies. In Chinese thought, the two terms are p'o and hun. The physical nature of p'o is expressed in bodily strength while hun refers to a person's vital force as expressed in consciousness and intelligence. Zen Buddhism, a branch of Chinese philosophy, teaches that humans are composed of body, soul and spirit. Likewise Indian philosophy teaches that humans, who have the continuum from matter to spirit, namely, the physical body, an astral body or vital force and

the spirit.

We have explained elsewhere the family resemblance of Chinese, Taoist, Japanese philosophy of soul and spirit. Likewise Hebrew thinking—which is Near Eastern—reflects the oriental thinking of body, soul, and spirit.

A common feature or family resemblance runs throughout the Filipino groups from north to south. The Ilocanos have two terms for soul, namely *al-alia* (or *ar-ria*) and *karkarma* (meaning vigor, energy, strength, power, ghost). *Kararua* means double or twin. Other terms are *kadua ti biag* (life partner), *kakuyog* (companion).

Among Tagalogs, *kaluluwa* refers more to the soul of a deceased person whereas *kakambal* (twin) refers to that of a living person. Cebuano Visayan also distinguishes the two terms: *kalag* and *kaluha*.

In short the philosophy of *kalooban* is related to the Asian philosophy of soul and spirit. Now let us proceed to the second concentric circle.

2. LOOB AND THE OTHER FACULTIES

Loob as intellectual, volitional, emotional, and ethical can have bodily expressions because the body reflects *kalooban*. We have shown the many usages (Mercado 1994:19-40) of the philosophical and physical correspondence. Depending upon the usages loob can be intellectual, volitional, emotional or ethical and have a corresponding physical counterpart. The Filipino holistic view of the self is seen in the following expressions which cover body, soul, and spirit. Tagalog offers the following examples.

As intellectual: *pasasaloob* (thought) is physically *pasasapuso* (to put in the heart). *Hindi maatim ng kalooban* (against the conscience) physically is *hindi masikmura* (cannot stomach). *Loob-bata* (child-like thinking) is *bait-bata* or *payak na mag-isip* (child-like thought).

As intellectual:

pagkakaloob (judgment),
saloobin (attitude),
salooob (suspicion),

As volitional:

the Lord's Prayer says: Sundin ang loob mo (your will be done).
 Loobin (to allow, to permit)
 kusang loob (voluntary)
 mahulog ang loob (to fall in love) is physically mabulag
 (literally, to get blind). Buong-loob, wholeheartedly is taos-puso,
 or mula sa puso

As emotional:

malakas ang loob (to feel brave or courageous)
 Buong buo ang loob (courageous)
 Laki ng loob (pride)

As ethical:

utang na loob (gratitude)

We find the same phenomena in Cebuano Visasyan and Ilocano. In other words, the Filipino does not compartmentalize thinking, willing, feeling, and being ethical.

Moreover, loob can also be expressed physically. The following samples may illustrate our point:

As emotional, bigat ng loob (ill-feelings for an intractable person) is also bigat ng dugo. Kahinaan ng loob (fear) is also kahinaan ng tuhod (literally, weak knees). May sama ang loob (to get angry) is physically may tinik sa puso. (having a thorn in the heart).

As ethical bukas ang loob (charitable) is physically bukas palad (literally, open palms of the hand).

The physical aspect is particularized in the intestines or bituka.

Bituka and Strength

An important part of the body is the bituka (intestines). Being physically hurt is not serious if it is "malayo sa bituka" (literally, far from the intestines). The cultivation and protection of the navel chakra is important in karate and martial arts because the navel chakra is source of strength. Followers of martial arts focus on the navel chakra as the focus of their strength.

Hindu thought has terms which refers to the seven energy

center or chakras. Of the seven centers, important is the energy center which is 1.3 inches below the navel. It refers to the navel chakra. The word “bituka” can refer, for example, to siblings who are called *kautol* or *kaputol* (or *utol* in short). In Cebuano Visayan siblings are called *kasumpay ug tinai* (literally, joint intestines) because they share the same intestines. The Ilocano counterpart is *kabagis*. The expression *hindi masikmra* (cannot stomach) means that something is psychologically and physically revolting.

What are the connections between *kalooban* and some forms of asceticism? The goal is to attain power (*bisa*) which is done through ascetic practices like meditation. That some Filipino practitioners practice flagellation, crucifixion, fasting and other forms of hardship are aimed to attain power. We also find similar phenomena in other Asian cultures. Once they attain a “possession”, they can pierce their bodies without experiencing pain. The same is true of yoga and kung fu practitioners.

What is the connection between power (*bisa*) and *loob*? The nexus is mirrored in colloquial Tagalog, “*Low-bat ako ngayon*”, literally, “My battery charge presently is low” meaning, that “Since I am weak, therefore I need recharging.” In the aforesaid expression, power has to be recharged. How is the recharging of one’s psychic battery done? Meditation as a way of acquiring strength. Just as electricity “charges” or gives new power, the Filipino word *view* believes that the universe (such as stones, caves, trees, clouds) is full of power, this power can be tapped through asceticism (such as through meditation). Such is the rationale behind ascetical practices like self-flagellation during Holy Week. Getting strength is through asceticism (Mercado, 2003: 27-28).

This type of asceticism is related to the practitioners of martial arts who consider the energy center as around one inch below the navel (or the navel chakra). The expression “*malayo sa bituka*” (far from the intestine) shows the connection.

We have shown that *buot-loob-nakem* has many dimensions: as intellectual (as *inpagbuot/pagkakaloob/nakem*), as volitional (as in the Lord’s Prayer---*sundin ang loob mo*—your will be done)

From the survey of Eastern models share one thing in common: that man is the totality of body, soul, and spirit. The Eastern models all differ from the Western dichotomy of body and soul. We hear Western expressions like “Hate sin but love the

sinner.” Or, “do not let your heart influence your head” (meaning, that thinking should be devoid of physical matters). However, the English language captures some of the nuances of the oriental thinking. In English the spiritual and the psychic have shades of differences and similarities.

Although man has a soul and body, only the former survives in the afterlife. However, the various eastern philosophies are not the same in the finer points. Both the Chinese and Indian models show a continuum from matter to spirit. (Mercado 1991:298)

What is the reaction of other Filipino scholars to my study on kalaooban? In his doctoral dissertation at the University of Santo Tomas Bataan (2014) evaluated the reaction of other Filipino scholars. Their reactions may be classed into two groups: negative and positive. According to Batoon, those belonging to in the negative side are Emerita Quito, Alfredo Co, Nicanor S. Abueg, Feorillo Demetrio III, Andrew Gonzalez. Those in the positive side are Dionisio Miranda, Albert Alejo, Florentino Timbreza, Virgilio Enriquez, Felipe Landa Jocano.

Besides metalinguistic analysis and phenomenology of behavior, we have used a third method of reaching the Filipino philosophy of loob. It is comparative oriental philosophy which is based on family resemblance. Although each member of a family is unique, its members also reflect something in common, such the way of speaking, certain mannerisms, and even physical features. For instance, we have seen that the Hindu, Chinese, and Javanese have similar practices on the existence of power, which has different names: prana in Hindu thought, ki or chi in Chinese and Japanese thought (Mercado 2013:29-31).

In the first concentric circle, we have seen the Filipino philosophy of three elements, body, soul, and spirit. This conviction differs from the Western dualism of soul and spirit. In the second concentric circle, we have seen that loob can mean intellect, will, being ethical. As having seen the past two concentric circles, let us go to the third and innermost circle about the philosophy of kalooban..

III. PHILOSOPHY OF KALOOBAN

This inner self embraces loob as the intellect, will, the feelings. They are also connected to the physical. Kalooban embraces the

entire self. As we mentioned earlier (Mercado 1974), loob is holistic and interior. It is non-compartmentalized. In other words, kalooban is the inner self.

We have seen the three concentric circles, starting from the outermost, namely, body, soul and spirit. These three components are not compartmentalized but act as one. In the second concentric circle, we saw that the Filipino does not compartmentalize thinking, willing, feeling, and being ethical. In the third concentric circle again we see here the principle of holism, that kalooban embraces the holistic inner self.

The kalooban as intellectual can have bodily expressions. Thus hindi maatim ng kalooban (against the conscience) is physically is hindi masikmura. As volitional, bakal na kalooban (stubborn) is matigas ang puso is pusong bato (stony heart). As emotional bigat ng loob (ill-feelings for an intractable person) is bigat ng dugo (heavy heart). As ethical bukas ang loob (charitable, caring) is bukas-palad (open hands).

The foregoing linguistic evidence illustrates the link between the body, soul, and spirit. It shows the Filipino concept of kalooban as holistic, that loob can be intellect, will, emotion, ethical.

Loob and Budhi

There is a problem which needs clarification, namely, on the relationship between loob and budhi. Budhi is a loan word from Sanskrit which means the faculty of discernment. The Indonesians also borrowed the term as used in the expression, utang bodi for utang na loob in Tagalog. Miranda (2003:67) thinks “that loob and budhi can be understood as the interchangeable sources of those activities, or sense of those qualities.” But the equivalence of budhi and loob appears to be true only to Tagalog, not to Cebuano Visayan and Ilocano.

But why is budhi not in Cebuano Visayan and Ilocano? In Cebuano Visayan budhi is limited to “betray a faith or trust” (Wolff 1972:150). We have shown that Tagalog has a special usages of loob which are not found Cebuano Visayan and Ilocano. While the three languages concur on the usages of buot, loob, and nakem as intellectual, volitional, emotional, ethical, there is an area where Tagalog differs, which is loob as spatial. Some

examples are the following: sa loob ng bahay (inside the house), saloobin (to interiorize), kaloob-looban (innermost), taimtim sa loob (intimate), laman-loob (gizzard, entrail). But these aforementioned examples of loob as budhi are only found in Tagalog, not in Cebuano Visayan and Ilokano. In short, the three Philippine major languages, namely, Cebuano Visayan, Tagalog and Ilocano basically agree on the philosophy of buot-loob-nakem.

Non-compartmentalized thinking

The non-compartmentalization of the faculties as reflected in the linguistic evidence shows that kalooban does not compartmentalize the faculties. According Pascal (1653) in his *Discourse sur les passions de l'amour*:

There are two types of mind... the mathematical, and what might be called the intuitive. The former arrives at its views slowly, but they are firm and rigid; the latter is endowed with greater flexibility and applies itself simultaneously to the diverse lovable parts of that which it loves.

The expression “is endowed with greater flexibility and applies itself simul-taneously to the diverse lovable parts of that which it loves” applies to the Filipino mind as allied to the philosophy of kalooban. The aforementioned three concentric circles, a basic theme in harmony and inter-relatedness. The outermost circle shows the non-dualism of body, soul, and spirit. In the second circle, we have seen that kalooban interacts with intellect and will. The expression, “hate sin but love the sinner” does not resonate to the holistic Filipino mind. A 1972 consensus of Filipino scholars states:

The Filipino looks at himself as a self, as one who feels, as one who wills, as one who thinks, as one who acts: as a total whole—as a “person,” conscious of his freedom, proud of his human dignity, and sensitive to the violation of these two (Mercado 1972:205).

What then is loob, buot, nakem and its other Philippine counterparts? As based on the exposition above, we think that the English translation equivalent is the inner self.

Recommendations

Of the three major Philippine languages, namely, Cebuano Visayan, Tagalog and Ilocano, the Ilocano group has the most organized and systematic conferences. The Ilokanos have their annual regional and international conferences. Its twelfth international conference of the Center for Philippine Studies is scheduled for November 16, 2017 at the, particularly with the University of Hawaii at Manoa. We recommend that the Ilocano initiative be copied in other parts of the country.

In Metro Manila, the department of psychology of the University of the Philippines is strong in its study of kalooban. I am not aware of other universities and college including major seminaries which play attention to this topic.

Universities and colleges in the whole country may also sponsor regional studies. Colleges and universities in the Visayas and Mindanao, specially faculties of philosophy and the social sciences, are encouraged to sponsor conferences on the theme of buot. The Bicolanos may also link themselves with the Visayan group or be on their own. The Kapampangans may either form their own group or join the Tagalogs. With such regional conferences, the harvest will be a literature of the philosophy of kalooban.

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