

THE CASE OF A MISSING HELL: EXPLORING THE FILIPINO RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS THROUGH THE LENS OF EARLY FILIPINO NATIONALISTS

KENNETH CENTENO

The entanglement between political aspiration for freedom from Spain and the Filipino nationalists' attempt to establish the local identity finds its articulation in the rereading of the received Iberian faith. Employing the epistemics of loob and kapwa, the article argues that cultural milieu, national sentiments, and religious claims serve as key factors in gaining access to Filipino consciousness. Such is the case of Juicio Final, an 18th-century painting hanging on the wall of an old Franciscan church in Laguna. Though entitled as the Final Judgment, the depiction of the eternal damnation is nowhere to be found in it, in spite of the fact that the doctrine of hell has been embraced by the indios. This seeming aberration indicates that a proper understanding of the contours of the Filipino hagios vis-à-vis the local conception of theos has to be constantly viewed in the context of how the people define the elements of their ontos.

INTRODUCTION

One of the basic Christian doctrines regarding the afterlife has something to do with the belief on eternal reward in heaven for those who spent their life on earth doing good and pursuing the path of holiness. On the other hand, those who failed to practice Christian virtues and led a life of debauchery would be thrown into the fires of hell. When Spain started colonizing the Philippines and converting the peoples through intensive evangelization by the missionaries, this eschatological depiction of the afterlife became a powerful instrument in their two-mode approach: accommodation and abolition. Karl Gaspar, a Filipino anthropologist, wrote: “The former was employed when an indigenous belief could serve as a framework for introducing a Christian tenet and the latter when they thought when the belief originated from the devil and was labelled superstitious. Clinging on to the latter was then considered

sinful – part of the *abusos* and *supersticiones*; consequently, the friars did as much as they could to abolish what were considered part of the list.”¹

Though the success of the Spanish campaign to change the religious understanding and worldview of the archipelago is being attested by its present identity as one of the only two Christian nations in Asia, the indigenous world view has circumvented, in so many ways, the teachings of the conquistadores. Circumvention via “Translation” is a phrase coined by Vicente Rafael in rereading how Filipinos tried to grapple the foreign teachings in order to incorporate them into their own perspective and way of life.² The consequence, however, produces a rearrangement of the intended meaning. Such is the case of an early 18th century painting found in an old church in Paete, Laguna.

An antique painting hangs on the walls of a church in the small town of Paete. It depicts what the Christian afterlife looks like. The rendition is in typical Western flavor until one scrutinizes its elements. What is missing in the whole tableau, which was done by an unknown artist circa 1720, is the representation of hell. Imke Rath, a German scholar from Bremen, painstakingly explored the subject and explained: “In Christian art, the partition of the blessed from the damned is one of the key elements of Last Judgement paintings. This is not fully transmitted by the Paete painting

¹ Karl Gaspar, *The Masses are Messiah: Contemplating the Filipino Soul*, (Quezon City: Institute of Spirituality in Asia, 2010), 115.


² Vincente Rafael describes this strategy of translation as follows: “Translation, by making conceivable the transfer of meaning and intention between colonizer and colonized, laid the basis for the articulating the general outlines of subjugation prescribed by conversion; but it also resulted in the ineluctable separation between the original message of Christianity (which was itself about the proper nature of origins as such) and its rhetorical formulation of the vernacular...Tagalog conversion alternately supported and deflected the exercise of Spanish power to the extent that that power was formulated in a language other than that of its original agents.” See Vincent Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule*, (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press/Cornell University Press, 1988), 21.

because there is no hell where the damned are sent, therefore one cannot find damned either.”³

The “missing hell” pushes one to raise the following questions: Why is the concept of hell missing? How did the early Filipinos view and/or define the afterlife? Why is it that rituals and masses for the dead remain a very important part of their everyday life? In short, how does this “missing hell” fit in the whole spectrum of the Filipino understanding of the Sacred and the Divine? This paper aims to have a glimpse of the contours of the indigenous notion of sacred vis-à-vis the religious thoughts of three early nationalists (*ilustrados*), namely: Pedro Paterno, Jose Rizal, and Emilio Jacinto and try to fit, like a piece of jigsaw puzzle, the place of this “missing hell” into the Filipino religious Weltanschauung. Our search begins with Pedro Paterno.

PEDRO PATERNO AND *BATHALISMO*

There is, most probably, no other Filipino thinker who went down to the annals of history as more bedeviled and reviled as Pedro Paterno (1857-1911) due to his political shrewdness. Borne to a wealthy Chinese merchant family, Paterno left the Philippines at a young age of fourteen to study theology and philosophy at the *Seminario Conciliar de Salamanca* and later took his doctorate in Civil and Canon Laws at the *Universidad Central de Madrid*. One can easily conclude that Paterno’s scholarly attempt has been largely ignored. Proof of this are his works that still need to be translated into English or Filipino. One of these is *Bathalismo* found in his book *La Civilizacion Antigua Tagalog*.

Paterno used the old indigenous *baybayin* script in presenting the local belief on *Bathala*, the name of the god worshipped by many lowlanders in the Tagalog and Visayan regions. Calling it as “*misterioso nombre*,” he wrote *Bathala* as 

³ Imke Rath, “Depicting Netherworlds, or the Treatment of the Afterlife in a Colonial Contact Zone: The Paete Case” in *Image – Object – Performance Mediality and Communication in Cultural Contact Zones of Colonial Latin America and the Philippines*, eds. Astrid Windus & Eberhard Crailsheim (Münster: Waxmann Verlag, 2013), 177.

3. His goal in introducing Bathala was two-fold: 1) to counteract the widespread perception that “*El Tagalog es idolatra*” and 2) pre-Hispanic Indios had a deep grasp on what Divine means. He noted, for example, that:

*“Bathala es sustancia unica, toda accion y passion, eternamente generado uno, como el uno generando dos, como el dos generando tres, como el tres generando todo el universo...Bathala es la tempestad destructora, y el incendio devorador, es el cataclismo con muerte. Principio de toda regla, de todo orden y de toda hermosura, absorbe en su seno todo espiritu; pero repele lejos de si todo espiritu malvado.”*⁴

Paterno even depicts the old Tagalog religion as highly organized by citing ranks among the native presbyters such as *Sonat* (Bishop), *Catalonan* (priests/priestesses) and the *Pangataohan* (prophets or soothsayers). He also criticized those who were denying that Filipinos did not have any religion because there were no edifices or temples found on the islands. Their ignorance, according to Paterno, made them blind to the ancient sacred sites and dismissed them as mere caves.⁵

Despite Paterno’s effort to present the ancient Filipinos as religious people with a developed philosophy or theology, he was very much maligned due to fatal fundamental error in work: his passion to impress his Western friends and readers made him careless with his data and even embellished them with his own created fictions. Such is the case for example of his interpretation of *langit* (cielo/heaven) and *casanaan* (*infierno*/hell). What he did was to simply juxtapose Western Christian concepts and find local

⁴ Pedro Paterno, *La Civilizacion Antigua Tagalog 1887* (Manila: TIP Linotype del Colegio de Sto. Tomas, 1915), 35. Translation: “Bathala is a unique substance, all action and passion, eternally generating one, as one generates two, as two generating three, as three generating the whole universe ... Bathala is the destructive tempest, and the devouring fire. He is the cataclysm with death, the Principle of every rule, of every order and of all beauty, absorbs every spirit in its bosom, but repels all evil spirit.”

⁵ Paterno, *La Civilizacion*, 64

equivalents or counterparts. Imke Rath has shown in her research that *casanaan* is not exactly hell in local understanding.⁶ In fact, a native speaker would use *impyerno* when referring to eternal damnation, which is simply a transliteration of *infierno*. What the medieval Christian theologian and philosopher Paterno did was to recast the scholastic metaphysical attributes of the Christian religion and made it as part of his *Bathala* discourse and the old Filipino beliefs. Furthermore, it also reinforced the Eurocentric vision of Paterno in equating the definition of civilization with how the West designates the boundaries. In his quest to present the Philippines to be an exotic land Paterno resorted to overblowing and exaggerating his claims.

JOSE RIZAL AND HIS PLEA FOR RELIGIOUS RATIONALITY

In contrast to Pedro Paterno, Jose Rizal (1861-1896) has captured the imagination and admiration of the Filipino people because of his academic achievements in European universities. His statue has graced local parks and those abroad – in Heidelberg, Madrid, Washington, New Jersey, Singapore, and so on. One striking feature in all these representations of Rizal, aside from his neatly combed hair and youthful look, is his black European coat.⁷ It is as if this coat, which is being looked upon until today by many Filipinos as a symbol of higher status in life, defines his whole character – a character that brought confusion, agitation, and rethinking among many Filipinos during the Spanish colonial times.

Wearing a thick coat in a hot tropical climate is unthinkable, yet people would never imagine Rizal without one. Rizal with an overcoat is a powerful symbol of both familiarity and foreignness to which the historian Vicente Rafael commented vis-à-vis the hero's second novel *El Filibusterismo*: "We can think of the

⁶ Rath, *Depicting Netherworlds*, 179-187.

⁷ Ambeth Ocampo took notice of this too and made a title out of Rizal's image. See Ambeth Ocampo, *Rizal Without the Overcoat* (Manila: Anvil Publishing, Inc., 1990).

filibustero's foreignness as a force of transmission that troubles social hierarchy."⁸ It is this ambivalent foreignness that became instrumental in Rizal's condemnation of Filipino popular religiosity. He minced no word in heavily criticizing the Filipino adaptation of Christianity, tainted by irrational indigenous beliefs.

According to the national hero, ordinary believers conceive God as "omnipotent, vindictive and rigid rather than merciful or compassionate, and seeker of justice."⁹ For Rizal, this contradicts the real image of the Christian God. Given the ordinary people's lack of capacity to engage in critical questioning of their faith vis-à-vis their idea of the Divine as something fearful, many of them according to Rizal would flock to seek intercessions of saints as their refuge of sanctuary. Foremost among these is the Virgin Mary. The common believer sees in the statue of Mary not as a symbol of her motherhood or her connection to the Son of God but as a powerful demi-goddess, such that "it is not the idea, in short, but the symbol that is venerated and adored."¹⁰

Another religious belief that Rizal found appalling is the materialistic conception of heaven. It is as if people lack the capacity to think of transcendence. Hence, his criticism may sting the sensibility of ordinary believers when he concluded that "there are some who imagine it (heaven) to be a land of cockfights, comedies, and conveniences; others, a realm of eternal music and brilliant light; still others, a sphere of lovely songs and delightful dances. Each one, in brief, conceives of Heaven in accordance with his tastes and aspirations."¹¹ This reechoes the confusion of Gerry Pierson, an Irish theologian, who once remarked: "It has always surprised me that the Philippines is the only Christian country in the heart of contemplative Asia and yet there is no tradition of contemplation here. If you are in a gathering of Asians and someone calls for silence, the Indians, Thais, Japanese all know

⁸ Vicente Rafael, "The Phantasm of Revenge" in *The Anvil Jose Rizal Reader*, ed. Ani V. Habulan (Manila: Anvil Publishing, 2011) 105-107.

⁹ Jose Rizal, "Estado de Religiosidad de los Pueblos en Filipinas," *Rizal's Unread Legacy*, trans. Juan Collas (Manila: Bookman, 1957), 54.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 56.

what this is all about...When Filipinos get together, they prefer to pray through song and dance.”¹²

Hell, on the other hand, was missing in the Filipino vocabulary, as noted by Rizal. It was, according to him, a later development in Catholicism. So, instead of extensively discussing it, he lampooned the Christian notion of hell as “the place for bad Catholics and all those who do not belong to the Catholic Church regardless of whether they are more just than Job or more ascetic than St. Paul.”¹³

Rizal was pleading to his fellow Filipinos to use their reason in analyzing what they believe in. It is not enough to profess one’s faith, but to critically place this faith under the lens of rationality. Thus, defending himself against the accusation of his mother that he embraced atheism, he replied: “For me, religion is most sacred, most pure, most sublime, which shuns all human adulterations; and I believe that I would fall in my duty as a rational being where I to prostitute my reason and accept an absurdity...If someday I should catch a little divine spark called science, I will not hesitate to use it for God’s glory, and if in using my reason I should commit a mistake or make an error, God will not punish me.”¹⁴ Rizal’s stance, however, might be put into question for he himself could not escape his own “illogical” religious conviction, such as when he wrote: “It is a pious and laudable act to light a candle to an image in order to honor it with this exterior manifestation of religious fervor.”¹⁵ His own European gaze made his eyes selective in condemning which is irrational and which is not. Given his enormous popularity among Filipinos, it is quite ironic that his religious thoughts are hardly given attention. Why is this so? Does this point to some forms of disconnection between Rizal’s Western-based interpretation of the

¹² Gerry Pierson, “Popular Religiosity: A Philippine Experience” in *The Furrow* 42, no. 4 (April 1991): 232.

¹³ Rizal, *Estado de Religiosidad*, 56.

¹⁴ Rizal’s Letter to his Mother as quoted by Raul Bonoan, *The Rizal-Pastells Correspondence: The Hitherto Unpublished Letters of Jose Rizal and Portions of Fr. Pablo Pastells’s Fourth Letter and Translation of the Correspondence, together with a Historical Background and Theological Critique* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1994), 19.

¹⁵ Rizal, *Estado de Religiosidad*, 63.

sacred and that of the Filipinos? We now turn to our third interlocutor, the young Emilio Jacinto.

**EMILIO JACINTO AND BANAL NA KATWIRAN
(SACRED REASON)**

Not much is known about Emilio Jacinto (1875-1899), except that his scholarly and military career was cut short by an unknown disease which led to his death at the age of 23. Though he never set foot in any European university like Paterno or Rizal, his education in Manila gave him a good grasp of philosophical, theological, political, and cultural understanding of his own milieu. His essay *Liwanag at Dilim* serves as a superb example of his capacity for deep reflection. Nevertheless, one must be careful in reading Jacinto's work for he presented his religious thoughts by leading his readers into philosophical realm of Filipino Dasein.

Like Rizal, Jacinto was advocating his readers to discern well the difference between *liwanag* (light) and *ningning* (glitter): "Ang ningning ay nakasisilaw at nakasisira ng paningin. Ang liwanag ay kinakailangan ng mata, upang mapagwari ang buong katunayan ng mga bagay-bagay. Ang bubog kung tinatamaan ng nag-aapoy na sikat ng araw ay nagniningning; ngunit sumusugat sa kamay ng nagaganyak na dumampot. Ang ningning ay maraya. Ating hanapin ang liwanag, tayo'y huwag mabighani sa ningning."¹⁶ What one sees here is Jacinto's conception of rationality vis-à-vis reality that is comprised of two-fold definitions: (1) reason as pure logic that basks in premises and smooth flow of argumentations that lead and steer one to accept conclusions, and (2) reason that is tied up with ethical and moral choices as exemplified by the Filipino translation of rationality as *katuwiran*.

¹⁶ The source quoted here came from the appendix section as published by Rolando M. Gripaldo, *Liberty and Love: The Political and Ethical Philosophy of Emilio Jacinto* (Manila: De la Salle University Press, 2001), 116. Translation: "Glitter hurts the eyes and damages the sight. The eye needs light to grasp the reality of things. A broken glass glistens when illuminated by the radiance of the burning sun. It cuts the hand that dares pick it up. Glitter is deceptive. Let us search for the light; let us not be fooled by the glitter."

Zeus Salazar expounded on this topic as he traced the difference between the Filipino and Western concept of reason. Reason, Razon, or Raison, according to Salazar's research, has something to do with the act of calculation.¹⁷ Consequently, from the Western point of view something becomes 'reasonable' after weighing the pros and cons and not because the ethical demand or moral dimension is inherent in the very reason itself as the word *katuwiran* carries. That is why Jacinto presents true rationality as fundamentally and intrinsically connected with goodness and sacred morality ("*ang mga isip at akalang ano pa man ay hindi hihiwalay sa maliwanag na banal na landas na katwiran*"¹⁸). But then, *katuwiran* is part of the whole discourse of *Loob*.

So, what is *Loob*? The Filipino theologian-moral philosopher Dionisio Miranda defines it as follows:

"Essentially loob refers to a local or spatial interior, or to that which is not open to the naked eye. It carries with it the notion of invisibility, whether partial or total. The spatial sense renders intelligible not only nouns as *looban* (inner premises, yard, etc.), *lamang-loob* (innards) or *panloob* (underwear, but also verbs as *looban* (trespass, enter and plunder or rob by force). Even the temporal expression *sa loob ng* (within a time period) avails of the spatial metaphor...Eventually, however, *loob* primarily refers to a symbolic interior, and more particularly human interiority. Loob thus refers primarily to a core or a center."¹⁹

¹⁷ Zeus Salazar, *Bagong Kasaysayan*, 6 (Quezon City: Palimbagan ng Lahi, 1999): 49. NB: A quick verification from an online dictionary yields the following definition of rationality: "reason, rationale,' from Latin ratio 'reckoning, numbering, calculation; business affair, procedure,' also 'reason, reasoning, judgment, understanding,' from rat-, past participle stem of reri' to reckon, calculate,' also 'think' (from PIE root *re- 'to reason, count'). Mathematical sense 'relationship between two numbers' is attested from the 1650s." See https://www.etymonline.com/word/ratio?ref=etymonline_crossreference.

¹⁸ Gripaldo, *Liberty and Love*, 117.

¹⁹ Dionisio Miranda, *Loob: The Filipino Within A Preliminary Investigation into a Pre-theological Moral Anthropology* (Manila: Divine Word Publications, 1989), 1.

The Jesuit scholar Albert Alejo, however, took a step further. He contends that it is not only a spatial concept, but a relational one. *Loob* is not just a simple binary of *labas* (outside)²⁰, for when one begins to talk of, for instance, *ang aking kalooban* (my will), then the said binary collapses. Moreover, *loob* is comprised of two more dimensions: *abot-malay* (consciousness) and *abot-dama* (emotion or feeling).

Abot-malay might be translated as the act of the mind reaching something through consciousness. It is the subject of being aware of its own being, of things within and without him/her and the ability to reflect on their significance or meaning. Alejo describes it as “*ang aking loob bilang mulat sa aking katauhan, sa aking pagiging nandito, gumagawa, lumilikha, nakakipag-ugnayan.*”²¹ But he immediately pointed out that this consciousness of *loob* should not be seen as solipsistic. Rather, it is consciousness that is mindful, according to Alejo, of three things: the other (*malay-kapwa*), the world or that which surrounds *loob* (*malay-daigdig*), and the Divine (*malay-Maykapal*).

On the other hand, there is more to *abot-dama* than mere feeling or emotion. Elaborating on Estella Padilla’s lexical analysis of *dama*, Levy Lanaria wrote:

“For the Filipinos *dama* involves the whole person, her/his feeling yes but also intellect, opinion, experience, judgment. It is more akin with “integrated sensing.” This is so significant in the native culture that something is not held to be true if it

²⁰ Alejo argues: “Ang loob ay hindi basta ‘hindi labas.’ Ang tahanan ay hindi nailalarawan sa pamamagitan ng pagsasabing: basta iyong hindi bakuran, iyo na ang tahanan. Nanatili pa rin ang kahingian ng paglalarawan, na itanong: Ano ba ang loob? Ano ba ang mapasa-loob? Ano ang Manahan sa loob?” See Albert Alejo, *Tao pô! Tulôy! Isang Landas sa Pag-unawa sa Loob ng Tao* (Quezon City: Office of Research and Publications Ateneo de Manila University, 1990), 70-71. Translation: “*Loob* is not simply ‘that which is not outside.’ A home cannot just be described as ‘that which is not the yard.’ The point and question of inquiry remains: What is *loob*? What does it mean to be in the process of entering a *loob*? What does it mean to dwell in *loob*?”

²¹ *Ibid.*, 86.

is not felt (*hindi nararamdaman*). *Dama* is not merely an inward sentiment; to be true to itself it must lead to *damay* (help). Helping others depends on how one ‘feels with’ (*pagdama*) with their condition.”²²

Dama then is a form of knowledge that demands not only logical processes but even the involvement of the entire human constitution – senses, emotions, mimics and gestures, intuitions, etc.

Malay and *dama* function as barometers for *katuwiran* that discerns which is good or evil. Now, *katuwiran* that is informed by *malay* and *dama* becomes the basis of what Filipinos call *pakikipagkapwa* (the act of relating to another). Dr. Virgilio Enriquez, the acknowledged father of Filipino Psychology, counts as one of the pioneers in exploring the meaning of *Kapwa*. He rejected the English loose translation of *Kapwa* as “others.” *Kapwa*, from Enriquez's point of view, surpasses the impersonal meaning of other. Rather, he sees *Kapwa* as someone who mirrors my very own being. A person is capable of compassion or empathy because it sees itself in the very being of the other. Corollary to *Kapwa* is *dangal* (dignity) which the person recognizes as present in the other.

“[T]he Filipino word *kapwa* is very different from the English word “others.” In Filipino, *kapwa* is the unity of the “self” and “others.” The English “others” is the recognition of the self as a separate identity. In contrast, *kapwa* is a

²² Levy Lanaria, “The Filipino Family – Lights and Shadows: Challenges to the Domestic Church” in *Asian Horizons* 7, no. 2 (June 2013): 250, https://www.academia.edu/26045890/THE_FILIPINO_FAMILY_LIGHTS_A_ND_SHADOWS_Challenges_to_the_Domestic_Church. Last sentence of the citation quoted by Lanaria from Estela Padilla, “BEC Spirituality,” in *BECs in the Philippines: Dream or Reality A Multi-Disciplinary Reflection* (Taytay, Rizal: Bukal ng Tipan, 2004), 277-278.

recognition of shared identity, an inner self shared with others.”²³

In somewhat poetic language the German scholar Katrin Müller-de Guia extended the sense of *Pakikipagkapwa* in the way one approaches *daigdig* or nature. Using the concept of *Sambilog*, a contraction of two words *isa* (one) and *bilog* (circle), she noted in her research how Filipinos, who are very much aware of their connection with nature, consider themselves as mere part of one whole creation.

“Invocation of a sacred name (referring to mother nature) implies respecting the other being’s existence from the bottom of the heart. It means sharing the same space, the same breath, the same heartbeat. *Pakikipagkapwa!* Fusion overrides all contrasts. No killing, no biting, no poisoning. Only oneness, *pakikiisa*. Joining force. Combining vitality. Adding potential. Together as one. *Sambilog*.”²⁴

This perspective of considering nature as *kapwa* has also been appropriated by several thinkers in addressing the pressing environmental issues vis-a-vis how the native Filipinos’ animistic beliefs on *Anito* (might be roughly translated as the souls of the forefathers still residing in forests, streams, mountains, etc.) prior to colonization period. This belief persists among Filipinos who would pray to *anitos* asking for forgiveness if they would have to cut trees or say *tabi-tabi po* (“please let me pass”) when passing through some wild bushes. They might be disturbing the peace of the fellow unseen beings and offend their *loob*. On this stance Jose Hernandez concluded:

“Therefore, we can surmise, there is a deep relationship between *Anito* and *Pakikipagkapwa*. *Pakikipagkapwa* acknowledges another person as

²³ Virgilio Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology The Philippine Experience* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1992), 43.

²⁴ Katrin de Guia, *Kapwa The Self in the Other Worldviews and Lifestyles of Filipino Culture-bearers* (Pasig City: Anvil Publishing Inc., 2005), 40.

'hindi iba' (not an outsider). And because s/he is not an outsider, s/he belongs to a family and takes part in the goodness and striving of the family to achieve *kaginhawahan* (well-being). Corollary to this position is the recognition that a departed one as Anito remains not as 'hindi iba' (outsider)."²⁵

LOCATING THE MISSING HELL

Given this notion of *loob* and *pakikipagkapwa*, hell then is practically an impossibility for the indigenous mind, since God itself is *Ka-loob* (one who is united with us through *loob*).²⁶ One can negotiate and plead for mercy and compassion. God, for many Filipinos, is not simply an Absolute that is quite distant. It is no wonder then that one of the most beloved beliefs of Filipinos until now is the offering of regular masses for the dead, for they believe that their prayers can release the poor souls of their loved ones.

This belief goes back to the ancient portrayal of death. It usually depicts a person, together with another person, rowing a boat. Inside the boat are all the provisions provided by their loved ones (see *Manunggul* burial jar). If ever their destiny would end up in a place of darkness and struggle due to their past sins, all the living relatives would have to offer sacrifices as part and parcel of appealing to the god/s of death and a sign of solidarity to their brothers and sisters. Thus, there is no permanent eternal condemnation.

Hornedo would later label this as the compenetrating existence of the visible and invisible,²⁷ that makes up the Filipino idea of *santinakpan* (one created world). In this case, the binary of

²⁵ Jose Rhommel Hernandez, "Manipulasyon o Pakikipagkapwa: Ang Ugnayang Tao-Anito sa Sinaunang Pananampalatayang Pilipino/Manipulation or Pakikipagkapwa: Person-Anito Relationship in the Ancient Philippine Religion" in *Malay* 27, no. 1 (2014): 92 in <https://ejournals.ph/article.php?id=8068>. NB: researcher's translation.

²⁶ See Edmundo Pacifico Guzman, *Creation as God's Kaloób: Towards an Ecological Theology of Creation in the Lowland Filipino Socio-cultural Context*. PhD Diss., Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 1995, 91-92.

²⁷ Florentino Hornedo, *The Favor of the Gods Essays in Filipino Religious Thought and Behaviour* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2001), 4-5.

natural-supernatural collapses. What persists is the act of negotiation-in-relations. The festive-like atmosphere of All Saints Day and All Souls Day attests to this notion. Dead relatives are visited, not only to remember them, but also to pray for the release of their souls if they are suffering in their present location or state.

The role of *loob* and *pakikipagkapwa* vis-a-vis the Filipino worldview are the elements that Rizal and Paterno failed to account for in their analysis of the Filipino religious beliefs. Their idea of the sacred has been heavily Westernized that they forgot to take a second look at the very roots of Filipino religiosity. On the other hand, Jacinto employed *loob* and *kapwa* to evaluate Filipino religious convictions, specifically in pursuing goodness and *banal na katuwiran* (sacred reason). These two elements serve as lens from which the idea of the sacred springs is. Thus, the Filipino understanding of the sacred is grounded on concrete relations, and not simply on the binary of immanence-transcendence. In fact, the sacred is something very material!

Hell, for the indigenous mind, erupts when the relation with the self, with the other, with the world, or with the Divine breaks down. This form of hell might be exemplified by the experience of a local chieftain fighting for their ancestral lands in the Northern Philippines during the Marcos dictatorship in the 1970s. Turning the table of discussion against the government representatives who were asking for land titles as proof of the tribe's ancestral ownership of their land, Macli-ing Dulag told his adversaries: "Such arrogance to say that you own the land, when you are owned by it! How can you own that which outlives you?"²⁸ This statement led to his brutal murder on the 24th of April 1980. Macli-ing Dulag died but his vision of harmonious human-nature relation survives.

Dulag's resistance is reminiscent of an earlier folk hero who defied American colonialism - Felipe Salvador, the founder of *Santa Iglesia*. A firm believer that earthly political cause cannot be dichotomized from celestial salvation, Salvador admonished that one must engage in intense prayers and penance, so as to gain *liwanag* (light) that lends a sense of meaning to their existence and

²⁸ See *Dulag, Macli-ing* in <http://www.bantayog.org/dulag-macli-ing/>.

powers that would sustain them in their fight for justice.²⁹ The Divine is another *Loob*³⁰ whose mandate is to align one's own *loob* with what is benevolent and just, lest one is thrown into the fires of *infierno* (hell), which is an integral part of the Christian soteriology. The dread of eternal damnation induces great fear in the consciousness of an *indio* as this horrible image projects not only the possibility of the destruction of the self (*loob*) which offers no reconstruction.³¹ One may reread, nonetheless, that the fiesta-like atmosphere of local cemeteries during the month of November might be construed as an unconscious defiance to the received faith while celebrating unwittingly the successful arrival of a departed loved one at the other side of life (*maluwalhating pagtawid sa kabilang buhay*), especially if the deceased is a person of *mabuting loob* (beneficent).

Like many early nationalists who faced their executioners with tranquility, Salvador accepted his fate with gladness. His final words echo the crucified Christ who, knowing that he was about to meet the Father in heaven, entrusted his family to faithful followers:

*Huwag kayong umiyak. At sa pagka't ito'y huling oras na, ipagdasal ninyo ako. Kayo na ang bahala sa inyong buhay. Kayo na ang bahala sa aking mag-iina, Ako ay tatanggap ng kamatayang matamis sa aking loob.*³²

²⁹ Reynaldo Ileto, *Pasyon and Revolution Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1979), 233-237, 248.

³⁰ See Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism*, 124.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 179-182. NB: Rafael noted that more than the impossibility of the reconstitution of the self, the anxiety of being thrown into the fire of hell comes from the "imagined fear of being cut off from a source of protection that would enable one to carry out exchanges with the outside figure of authority," which is no other than 'Mother' Spain.

³² Ileto, *Pasyon*, 249. Translation by Ileto: "Do not weep. And because this is my final hour, say some prayers for me. Take care of yourselves. Take care of the mother and her children. I am an out to embrace death which is sweet to my loob."

CONCLUSION

It is a given fact that many Filipino thinkers, like their own Asian intellectual counterparts, continue to have difficulty in wiggling out from what Indonesian essayist and humanities professor Goenawan Mohamad calls “the Sartrean gaze.”³³ Pedro Paterno and Jose Rizal are without doubt great thinkers who did their best to contribute to analyzing Filipino religious beliefs. Paterno, in all his eagerness to show to the Western world that pre-Hispanic Filipinos had an organized religion just like the famous ancient civilizations of Egypt or Persia or Europe, mixed up the elements of Christian faith with indigenous beliefs.

Rizal, on the other hand, put into use Western philosophy in heavily criticizing many Filipino religious practices. Both thinkers consequently failed to grasp the uniqueness of Filipino religiosity. It was Jacinto who was able to present a bigger picture of how *indios* make sense of their faith through his strategic use of indigenous philosophical-anthropological paradigm of local epistemics. Consequently, this understanding contributed to the aspirations of local leaders in their pursuit of justice and freedom.

So, is hell really missing from the *Paete* painting? It is absent for those who fail to read it from the perspective of a Filipino religious worldview. It is, however, alive and vivid in a different way, when one gazes at it with an eye that sees the dynamics of *loob* and *pakikipagkapwa*.

Kenneth Centeno

St. Vincent School of Theology

Tandang Sora Ave., Quezon City

kenneth.centeno@adamson.edu.ph

³³ Goenawan Mohamad, “Ali’s Asia, Ka’s Border” in *The Community of Asia: Concept or Reality*, eds. Urvashi Butalia, Jong Won Lee et al. (Pasig City: Anvil Publishing Inc., 2006), 15.