Filipino Virtue Ethics and Meaningful Work

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Abstract:
A number of paradigms have been proposed to understand the sources of meaningful work, but a non-Western approach has attracted little attention. This study aims to make a theoretical contribution toward an understanding of meaningful work from a virtue-ethics framework that is culturally meaningful and relevant to Filipino realities and their distinct cultural heritage. It develops a paradigm for a Filipino view of meaningful work that could guide both researchers and practitioners in business ethics by defining what is meaningful work, explaining why it is important, and presenting some examples of concrete measures that management can utilize to promote meaningful work in the Philippine workplace.

Keywords: Filipino Ethics, Virtue Ethics, Meaningful Work, Philippine Studies, Business Ethics

This study aims to make a theoretical contribution toward a Filipino view of meaningful work (MW) that could guide both researchers and practitioners in business ethics. Several studies indicate that MW has positive effects to both employee and organizational outcomes. It relates to employees' wellbeing, mental health and job satisfaction. On the part of the organization, MW promotes organizational citizenship and commitment, work engagement, increased productivity, increased level of motivation and performance, employee retention, and reduction of employee cynicism (Yeoman et al. 2019; Bailey and Madden 2016; Veltman 2016; Michaelson et al. 2014). However, according to Bailey and Madden (2016, 6) MW is a complex and a profound concept, "going far beyond the superficialities of satisfaction or engagement." Managing MW implies "a great ethical responsibility" on the part of the management, for MW is "an experience that reaches beyond the workplace and into the realms of the individual's wider personal life" (14). Because MW is about finding fulfillment in one's work, it is a normative and an ethical concept.

The idea that MW depends on some objective characteristics of work is based on erroneous assumptions (Tommasi 2020; Tablan 2019; Yeoman et al. 2019). A number of paradigms have been proposed to understand the sources of MW, but a non-Western approach has attracted little attention. Because some authors have argued that MW has positive valence that has eudaimonic rather than hedonic content, a virtue-ethics approach to MW has been used (Tablan 2019; Veltman, 2016; Beadle and Knight 2012). Virtues are character traits or dispositions to act that are essential in

order to live a good life. For Aristotle, our actions, when habitually performed have an enduring influence in the kind of person we become and in our overall well-being. Lack of virtues is a sign of deficiency in character. Virtue ethicists acknowledge that work and places of employment have profound influence in shaping our character and living a fulfilled life.

This essay develops a paradigm of MW from a virtue-ethics framework that is culturally meaningful and relevant to Filipino realities and their distinct cultural heritage that Filipino and global managers who have little familiarity with Philippine culture can consider as one of the models in measuring and promoting MW among Filipino workers. It analyzes the most common character traits that are indigenous to Filipinos and are exhibited in their daily activities and interactions as reported by different scholars who researched this topic. They are also observed among first generation Filipino immigrants and even among US-born Filipino Americans (Mina 2015; Aguila 2015; Sanchez and Gaw 2007). These virtues are *Pakikisama* (get along), *Bayanihan* (cooperation), *Pakikiramdam* (sensitivity), *Malasakit* (caring), *Hiya* (shame), *Utang na Loob* (gratitude), and Family Orientation.[1] I make no claim that all Filipinos carry these virtues. Due to Western influence and materialistic management, these virtues are diminishing in the workplace. However, "It is very unlikely," According to Lanaria (2013, 243) "that indigenous values which have withstood the vagaries and contingencies of history for centuries are about to be phased out in contemporary times by the forces of modernization and globalization." By focusing on Filipino Virtues (FV), I do not imply that Western virtues such as justice, courage, or prudence are unknown in the Philippines, this is obviously false. But the practice of Western virtues in the Philippines is also influenced by FV. Filipino worldview is described as collectivist that emphasizes interdependent self-construal. Courage for many Filipinos is less of a virtue if the goal is simply to further one's own benefits at the expense of others. Referring to justice, Sison and Palma-Reyes (1997, 1520) write, "The appeal to justice seems to be restricted either to legislation or to the courts, which is the arena different from that of business." Instead, Filipinos tend to be non-confrontational and prefer to "have recourse to arbitration procedures brokered by neutral third parties, such as elders."

A Filipino virtue ethics

Early scholars in Philippine studies, most of them are foreigners who are not familiar with virtue ethics as an interpretative option (Reyes 2015a, 150) regard FV as *values*. They did not have at their disposal the more recent scholarship that uses Aristotle's virtue ethics framework in interpreting non-Western ethical systems such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and African Philosophy. Nonetheless, many of them agree that these so-called Filipino values connote behavioral patterns and are sometimes designated as traits. While they are rooted in Filipino culture, they are not just cultural preferences but standards of goodness and a measure of one's character. But to consider them as *values* is a philosophical mistake (Reyes 2015b). Values are general beliefs that incline us to choose one way or another and normally pertain to goals like happiness, freedom, dignity, etc. "The problem with 'values' is that the concept is too broad, and is often simply conflated with the notion of something 'good' or 'important'. It also carries with it a very subjective understanding of

what constitutes a 'good'." (Reyes 2015a, 150) To identify something as a value does not explain what it is, but how we feel about it (Reyes 2015a). The subsequent value approach taken by Filipino scholars in developing a Filipino philosophy makes them vulnerable from attacks from foreign critics for trying to extract philosophy from culture.

Reyes argues that the more proper way of interpreting Filipino ethics is through the lens of virtue ethics. This avoids the shortcomings of ethical relativism commonly found in social sciences. Virtues are both descriptive and normative. They are not only descriptions of actual Filipino behaviors, they also establish standards of actions "learned in childhood, reinforced or modified in puberty and adolescence, and put to actual practice in adult life; they constitute the fundamental educational mechanisms that mold an individual into an acceptable member of ... society." (Jocano 1997, 115) The absence of these virtues is a sign of bad character, lack of refinement (rudeness) or education, and poor breeding, that can result in being looked down, censured or excluded from group. Like Aristotelian virtues, FV define appropriate behaviors, specifically in social relations, and determine the kind of person one is. They are applied to both actions and persons. As these standards are internalized, they become constant guides where one bases her judgments when met with moral problems and dilemmas, especially during those moments that require on-the-spot decisions. As Aristotle noted, virtues are our second nature. "Among Filipinos, these are a matter of fact, taken for granted, because they are what they are born into and grow up with. It is only when these behaviors come in conflict with Western ways that the Filipino gives them a second thought." (Pe-Pua and Protacio-Marcelino 2000, 57)

However, there are fundamental differences between Aristotelian and Filipino virtues. Aristotle's argument is predicated on the claim that we have a final end (*telos*) and virtues enable us to achieve it. If the human *telos* for Aristotle is *eudaimonia* (flourishing), in the Filipino context, this flourishing cannot be understood in the individual sense, but flourishing with and for *Kapwa* (others/fellow humans). FV promote, not necessarily excellences in human function or *arete* (this may be secondary) but excellences in human relations. The aim is to establish harmonious and reciprocal flow of social interaction and strong connection where all parties experience endearing and enduring relationships. Unlike Aristotelian virtues that can be divided into intellectual and moral, FV are rooted in *Loob* (core/deep inside), they have both rational and emotional contents.

Loob and *Kapwa*

A careful survey of literature about Philippine ethical discourse reveals two key concepts: *Loob* and *Kapwa*. *Loob* is generally regarded as the basic component of moral behavior, the center of indigenous interpretations of ethical concepts and principles (Agaton 2017). Understanding *Loob* has significant implications for understanding the person as well as the nature and morality of interpersonal relationships from a Filipino perspective. When asked, many Filipinos know what *Loob* is but they struggle on how to express it in English. Literally, *Loob* means *what is deep inside*,

thus it connotes interiority, the core of one's being. For Filipinos what is of value is the internal rather than external. It is in what is inside where one can find what is true, authentic and essential. To speak of one's *Loob* is to be authentic, it means to say one's deepest truth and conviction. Not to know the other's *Loob* is not to know the real person. *Loob* is "person's interior truth since this is the ultimate, organizing center of human reality. It is the very center of his humanity where his idea, beliefs and behavior lie and the true worth of a person is situated." (Agaton 2017, 60)

As the inner subject (as opposed to the outside, i.e. the object) and one's authentic self, *Loob* is said to be analogous to the Hindu concept of *Atman*, a term that refers to physical body, mind, reason, and vital principle. *Loob* is not distinct from the faculties of the person, and is inseparable from the body as long as she is alive (Mercado 1994). It has several dimensions: intellectual, volitional, emotional, ethical. Thus, *Loob* is a holistic concept that covers both emotion and reason, heart and mind – the totality of one's personal experiences, i.e. her wholeness. It transcends physical-mental or corporeal-spiritual dichotomies (De Castro 1999, 39). All persons have *Loob* in the sense that they have mind, reason, etc., - differences are external or outside – yet each person is affected by what is outside differently and uniquely.

Loob is a relational understanding of the person (Reyes 2015a). It is part of the essence of what lies within to be manifested or expressed outside. In a way, it is "what-lies-within-that-lives-without." (De Castro 1999, 39) *Loob* is sometimes translated as *will* because Filipinos use it to express desire or volition. But *Loob* as *will* is not the will in traditional Western philosophy that is the counterpart of the intellect, for the Filipino worldview is non-dualistic, it does not separate will from intellect or emotion from reason (Mercado 1994). As the inner subject, it can never be known as an object. Rebustillo (2017, 251) states: "*Loob* comes to be through its activity: without such activity *Loob* is not; it does not exist." If *Loob* is best expressed by the word will, it must be understood as *relational will* (Reyes 2015b) because *Loob* is known through relationship and interaction. Thus, "it is meaningless to investigate *Loob* without relating it to *Kapwa* and to the values and virtues that emanate from this 'tandem'" (Rebustillo 2017, 251).

Literally, *Kapwa* means *both* and *fellow*. For Pe-Pua and Protacio-Marcelino (2000), *Kapwa* is shared identity, the expression of the relational aspect of the person. They argue that it is not smooth interpersonal relationship per se as claimed by foreign scholars that Filipinos want to achieve, but unity of self with others. But in contrast to the Western view that defines the other as that which is opposed or different from the self and vice-versa, *Kapwa* is the synthesis of the self and the other. According to Bulatao (1992) the self-construal of Filipinos is contrary to the atomistic and autonomous view of Western orientation where self-governance is of prime value, while opening or sharing of oneself to others is a choice or an option. To define *Kapwa* in reference to the self and the other is already to assume a separation between the two, which is the thesis that *Kapwa* negates, for the meaning of *Kapwa* is that there is no self that is distinct and oppositional to the not-self/other.

There are two ways to interpret *Kapwa*. We can treat it as a contraction for the word *Kapwatao* (fellow human). This is the notion of *Kapwa* in a limited sense. "This term implies that

others should be treated as equals and with dignity. A person without this shared identity ceases to be human." (Edman and Kameoka 2000, 2) It is the obligation to treat the other as yourself, regardless of the other's individual characteristics or stature of power and privilege. Not to have the sense of *Kapwa* is the worst that can be said to a person, it refers to someone who exploits others for his own good. On the other hand, the word *Kapwa* in ordinary conversation is often attached to a noun. It is also used as a qualifier to an action word to suggest reciprocity. Its root words are *ka* (being related to) and *puwang* (space). By itself, *Kapwa* is vague and ambiguous but carries an innate ethical dimension for it suggests the notion of togetherness "that bridges a gap or eliminates a space between two beings. That being so, the term *Kapwa* appeals to accept the Other fellow-being who is similar to me, and at the same time different from me." (Meneses 2019, 8) *Kapwa* is only *Kapwa* from the outside, but in the final analysis *Kapwa* is also *Loob*.

In their highest level of expression *Loob* and *Kapwa* are inseparable. *Loob* is revealed through *Kapwa* while the latter opens itself and embraces *Loob* until the unity of all is achieved. This is the *telos* of Filipino ethics, the ideal expression of humanity and oneness where all *Loob* is one (*pag-iisang Loob*). This is the moral ideal and the Filipino view of the good life, which is highly collectivist. This oneness (*pag-iisang Loob*) is actualized and made perfect by virtues. Without these virtues "The *Loob* instead of fostering a loving relationship together with the *Kapwa* becomes an instrument of division and destruction." (Rebustillo 2017, 252) FV emanate from the *Loob* and are directed toward the *Kapwa*, and ultimately to his *Loob*. Like Aristotelian virtues, FV are guides or skills rather than clear-cut rules, they are situational but not relativistic. The correct exercise of these virtues will depend on the right context, the right time, and according to specific situations. FV are not good in and of themselves, they need to be moderated and directed to the right *telos*, otherwise they degenerate into emotionalism, passivity, favoritism and factionalism. In the final analysis, virtues reveal the kind of person you are, i.e. your *Loob*, and enhance your relationship with *Kapwa*.

Pakikisama

Lynch was one of the first anthropologists to study *Pakikisama* among Filipinos. He explains *Pakikisama* as "a facility at getting along with others in such a way to avoid outward signs of conflict: glum or sour looks, harsh words, open disagreement, or physical violence. It connotes the smile, the friendly lift of the eyebrow, the pat on the back, the squeeze of the arm, the word of praise or friendly concern." (Lynch 1962, 89) This word is derived from the Tagalog *sama* – to go along with, "the lauded practice of yielding to the will of the leader or majority so as to make the group decision unanimous. No one likes a hold-out." (Lynch 1962, 90) For Saito (2010) *Pakikisama* implies friendliness and affinity. By using indirect expressions and euphemism, showing pleasant or jovial attitude, keeping things vague or ambiguous, hiding one's feelings, avoiding confrontation, harsh words or disagreements – stressful situations are avoided. "In short, the emphasis is placed on getting along with others and making concessions to them, being sensitive to their feelings and making every effort to be agreeable in the face of difficult circumstances, even to the hurt of oneself." (Mulzac 2007, 86)

The above descriptions focus on conflict and isolation avoidance. It implies that *Pakikisama* is being passive and "conceding to the wishes of the collective" (Sanchez 812) just to preserve camaraderie. The emphasis on going with the flow ignores the fact that *sama* in Tagalog also connotes solidarity. According to (Jocano 1997, 65-66) *Pakikisama* "is a willingness to subordinate one's own interest in favor of others, in the spirit of harmony, friendship, cooperation and deference to majority decision so that group goals can be easily achieved." It can be considered as a cardinal virtue because it is interconnected with and is an essential ingredient of other virtues since it involves sacrificing one's individual interest and cooperating for the sake of the common good. It means to prioritize the collective good over one's individual advantage or benefit. Not to show *Pakikisama* is a betrayal of trust. It means a person cannot be relied upon or trusted because she is only thinking of her own welfare. Through *Pakikisama* a trusting relationship is built where individual members of a group know that they have some people to depend on, a kind of relationship that is not based on material needs.

Pakikisama is indispensable in the workplace. Even if the workload is heavy or difficult and work conditions are wanting, Filipinos are often happy because of positive co-worker relationships (Rungduin 2014; Ilagan 2014). "Further, when they are comfortable to each other problems at work would not become a burden as they believe there are other employees who can help them." (Abun 2018, 7579) Many Filipinos will go out of their way in order to assist a co-worker even if they do not get anything from it. Being a good worker involves not just technical competence but interpersonal skills as well. In fact, making *Pakikisama* in terms of possessing excellent interpersonal skills is considered by Filipinos as job-related (Ilagan 2014). Like other virtues, the exercise of *Pakikisama* depends on context and situations. It can be as trivial as smiling, taking breaks together or sharing meals, or as profound as sacrificing one's convenience, possessions, or priorities in order to help another in times of need or crisis. In business, it could also mean recourse to arbitration procedures brokered by third parties, such as elders, in order to find a win-win solution and avoid lengthy and expensive litigation (Sison and Palma-Reyes 1997, 1520). Thus, it is not only a mechanism for conflict avoidance, but also for conflict resolution (Rungduin 2014).

Bayanihan

The most common image that depicts *Bayanihan* is that of a house being lifted and transferred to another location by volunteers. This image is both metaphorical and literal. Literal because in many rural villages, this is how people move their houses. Metaphorical because the essence of *Bayanihan* is to work together to make sure the project will get done. In modern-day setting, this could be construction or maintenance of irrigation canals, harvesting or planting, livelihood projects, or community chores. Such activities bring together people from all walks of life – everyone is doing their part, no matter how big or small. Those who are physically able can carry loads, others can provide refreshments, some are entertainers, etc. *Bayanihan* also involves taking turns so others can rest. Today, it is widely practiced both in its original model – house

moving, and in many voluntary and civic projects. It need not be community directed project as it may involve business sector or non-government organizations.

While *Pakikisama* happens in daily interaction, *Bayanihan* is aimed at a specific project – its fast and efficient completion through self-help and cooperation. This cooperation may be solicited or voluntarily given, but in either case no renumeration is promised except perhaps, that the whole undertaking is accompanied by a festive atmosphere through sharing of food and drinks, jokes, stories, and music. Like carrying a house, *Bayanihan* projects usually involve manual labor. The idea is to unite people in a common task because what cannot be done by a single individual is accomplished by the group. To practice *Bayanihan*, donation of money is not enough. The participant must at least be physically present, for *Bayanihan* is about sharing one's time, labor and talent.

Pakikiramdam

This refers to an interpersonal skill that manifests Filipinos' heightened sensitivity that helps them navigate social dealings in a culture where not everything is expressed in words, or expressed directly. It is described by Filipino psychologists as an "emotional a-priori" that involves sensitivity to non-linguistic. Darwin and Teresita Rungduin (2013, 19) state that *Pakikiramdam* has both affective and cognitive domains since it involves "sensing the situation, including the feelings and thoughts of others and anticipation of action" in order to determine the appropriate way of interaction.

Of all FV, *Pakikiramdam* is probably the one most frustrating to many foreigners. In relating with strangers, Filipinos often pass a stage of *Pakikiramdam* or *sensing* each other. In stark contrast to the frankness or straight talk common among Americans, Filipinos have the tendencies to beat around the bush, use euphemism, engage in small talk, and use indirect expression or passive rather active voice. The interplay of verbal and non-verbal cues can cause bewilderment or confusion to non-Filipinos. Fluency in English or even in one of the Philippine languages may not be enough to comprehend whether a Filipino is agreeing or disagreeing.

Reyes (2015b) compares *Pakikiramdam* with Aristotle's prudence, but with qualified difference. Unlike prudence, *Pakikiramdam* is directed toward the *Loob* of the *Kapwa* and has both rational and emotional content. *Pakikiramdam* is a relational virtue, it is a kind of "shared feeling or shared inner perception" (Reyes 2015a, 149). It is a combination of empathy and emotional intelligence – to feel and understand the *Loob* of the other (*Kapwa*), which cannot be known directly. Like other virtues it is a skill that can be developed with time, careful attention, and deliberation through socialization and constant interaction. *Pakikiramdam* is needed when relating to someone who is still a stranger. Between friends or when there is intimacy, *Pakikiramdam* happens spontaneously.

In the workplace, *Pakikiramdam* has several implications. Unlike American familiarity where bonding is quickly established with shake of hands, managers should take the extra mile to get along and know their workers as individuals as well as their personal circumstances.

Constant presence of the management on the shop floor and daily discourse are important to establish good rapport. Oftentimes managers only talk to their employees when there is a problem or to discipline them. While Filipino employees do not want to be ignored, direct communication or being straight to the point does not always work. Managers must try to avoid anything that can cause negative emotion even if they are not obvious, for negative emotions in the workplace make it difficult for Filipinos to become productive and concentrate in their work. On the other hand, positive feelings encourage effective work habits (Rungduin 2014, 96). This does not mean that management cannot give any negative criticism if it is necessary, but it should always be accompanied by positive feedbacks and reinforcements. Fact to face interaction should be preferred over emails and memos. If possible, managers should facilitate training and development workshops, rather than rely on external consultants, in order to foster trust and credibility. Because it takes time to truly get to know the *Loob*, companies should discourage frequent transfers of managers.

Malasakit

This is the virtue of selfless concern for other's well being though caring, emotional involvement, compassion, and commitment without demanding anything in return. To be a perfect virtue, it needs to be related to other virtues like *Pakikisama* or *Pakikiramdam*. Like *Pakikiramdam*, it has an affective element, it means being able to feel the pain of the other as a result of misfortune, or as an outcome of your own wrongful behavior. Thus, *Malasakit* is often translated as emphatic caring. Although *Malasakit* comes during times of tragedies, it is also practiced in daily activities. It is all about alleviating pain, even if no successful solution is found to a problem. Unlike *Pakikisama*, *Malasakit* does not involve reciprocity and it can be directed to non-persons (institutions or physical objects) and even to strangers and enemies. It is a virtue that is shown to anyone, including those who do not deserve our caring, and even to those who do not ask to be cared for or be helped. Still *Malasakit* is *Kapwa*-oriented like other virtues because the idea is to treat the other the way you would like to be treated, or to treat the possession of the other as if it were your own possession.

Malasakit effects a sense of ownership among workers. Workers who have *Malasakit* to company properties will care for them the way they care for their own personal belongings. So, if you do not want to willfully destroy your personal property that is the product of your own sweat, you do the same to company properties. Co-workers are treated as if they were family members, clients are regarded as friends. This will minimize or eliminate discrimination, sexual harassment, office bullying and other harmful and counterproductive behaviors. With *Malasakit*, workers will go extra mile to satisfy clients and customers and will avoid wasteful or irresponsible use of company resources. They will not only relate with each other as family members do, they will also treat the office as their own home where they live and grow together as persons, not simply a place to work from 8 to 5.

Utang na Loob

Rungduin et al. (2016) explain that *Utang na Loob* has a multi-layered meaning as it connotes reciprocity, gratitude, acknowledgement, and appreciation that may be given to the giver who may be a person, an organization, or a country, and extended to those who are close to the giver. Examples of instances that generate *Utang na Loob* are: borrowing money, receiving food or help during times of needs or calamities, asking help in harvesting rice, looking after one's children, or being helped in finding job. But because the "debt" (*utang*) is from within (*Loob*), it is not debt in the sense of expecting to get the equivalent of the good deeds done or the material thing given. What is owed is intangible and thus cannot be repaid by material things, i.e. it is understood to be non-repayable. "The magnitude of the feeling of indebtedness depends on the gravity of needfulness of the person" (Agaton 2017, 63) and not on the worth of what is given. The key concept here is not the word *utang* (debt) but *Loob*, what is owed is not money but goodwill. There is an implicit expectation in the consciousness of the receiver that the act of goodness will be returned, but at the same time she knows that such act cannot be paid equally or fully. *Utang na Loob* is both conditional and unconditional (Rungduin 2016, 14).

Utang na Loob is often misunderstood as a kind of unwritten contract for mutual advantage (*quid pro quo*). In his study, Reyes clarifies that it is not a commercial transaction because the sense of obligation is "self-imposed" rather than a result of external pressure. A demanded *Utang na Loob* is not a virtue. Just like other virtues, it emanates from within (*Loob*) and must be expressed freely out of goodwill. It is a virtue of the receiver, not the giver. The goodness that is done to a person should bring out the goodness of the *Loob* of that person. When one gives, there should be no strings attached, otherwise it rules out *Utang na Loob*, and the giving and receiving becomes a mere commerce rather than a virtuous interaction.

Utang na Loob often signifies an ever present sense of obligation because it creates a cycle of return of favor since the act of gratitude creates the return of kindness that creates a sense of indebtedness on the original giver, who is now the recipient of the act of kindness. This is due to the fact that what is owed is immaterial so no amount of money can fully repay it, not because the giver is always expecting something in return. "By no means does utang-na-loob indicate that all favors thus invoked must be granted; a diplomatic, sincere, and honest explanation may be used to convey non-compliance with a request." (Mina 2015, 21) Not every good act generates *Utang na Loob*. A good act that is done with ulterior motive, or for the sake of profit, or when a person is being paid or benefiting for doing a service does not merit *Utang na Loob*. "In effect, it is understood that *utang na loob* is a communal trait that is seen between those who helped and those who were helped." (Rungduin et al. 2016, 22) The goal of *Utang na Loob* is to strengthen *Kapwa* relationship, not the repayment of favor per se. It is not "merely a debt to be repaid to a good or kind deed previously done by someone. It is a priori being responsible to someone in the name of human solidarity." (Lanaria 2013, 249) For Pe-Pua and Protacio-Marcelino (2000) a better rendering of *Utang na Loob* in English is solidarity because it ultimately strengthens the bond

that ties Filipinos to their family, community, or country. *Utang na Loob* is a way of recognizing our dependence on others to live a fulfilling life.

This virtue has broad manifestations in organization. It creates relations between different groups or bridges social classes, as well as serves to redistribute/balance resources and workload (Lorenzana 2015, 9). The gender, age or social status of the giver is irrelevant. A network of people is necessary for the attainment of all goals, particularly in business. *Utang na Loob* promotes an expanding and self-sustaining solidarity that encourages workers to share and help whoever is in need. In addition to strengthening contractual obligations, *Utang na Loob* goes beyond contractual reciprocity or professional engagement as it adds emotional and personal dimension to the latter. On the other hand, *Utang na Loob* may be an occasion for conflict of interest as employees might feel obligated to return favors to clients and suppliers at the expense of the firm's interest. But this should not be the case. *Utang na Loob* is both a social norm and a communal trait that includes responsibility for the common good. "A collaborative expectation of people does not necessarily consider the benefactor to receive expected terms of repayment but rather, prosocial behavior as part of the community is much anticipated from the beneficiary." (Rungduin et al. 2016, 22) Finally, when employees are promoted or given salary increases, management should emphasize that these are based on merit and company productivity, and not a kind of gifts that employees must repay with *Utang na Loob*.

Family orientation

Nothing is more important to Filipinos than the family – no other institution in the Philippines commands as much commitment, sacrifice and affection as does the family. The family is not only the basic unit of Philippine society, it is also the primary socializing force. It is in the family that the Filipino individual is born and grows into a mature adult. Major decisions are made in consultation with family members. Young Filipinos choose the career that is favored by their family as parents are expected to finance the education of their children until college or graduate studies. Unlike other Western cultures where children are pushed to early autonomy, independence is not a matter of urgency in the Philippine culture. In some cases, this is not an issue at all. Children are not expected to leave the family home, fend for themselves and find their own place in the world. Instead, most of them help in the farm or family business and at times, contribute to the education of their younger siblings, and continue to live with their parents until marriage or even when they have families of their own. In many cases, Filipino households are multi-generational. Family orientation has a strong influence in business organizations in the Philippines where family corporations are plenty and are very successful. The pervasiveness of family also underscores the constitution of Philippine political dynasties, "even religious organizations are not saved from the encroachment of family interests" (Ramirez 1984, 43).

Sociologists tend to focus on the "close" term in the expression *close family ties* that is commonly used to describe Asian families. The Filipino family, however is not "close knit" in the

sense of being rigid and exclusive. While parenting is mostly done by parents, responsibility is often shared by other relatives and even by the eldest sibling. Family roles and relationships are negotiated rather than fixed. The head of the household could be the parents, grandparents, or one of the siblings. Filipino family is characterized by diffusiveness and non-specificity of relationships. Filipinos tend to use the term family (*mag-anak*) ambiguously as it refers to a "system of reckoning relationships among members of the group either by blood (consanguineal), by affinity (in-law) or by *compadrazgo* (ritual)." (Jocano 1997, 90) When this relationship is established, one is accepted as *kapamilya/hindi ibang tao* or *one of us*. Not to be a family member is to be *ibang tao* i.e. outside the group or *not one of us*, something like a stranger. In addition to one's immediate and distant relatives – the family network extends to include relationships created through social alliances like weddings or baptisms. Relationships are not exclusively consanguineal but multilinear and intertwined: your uncle could also be your godfather in baptism, and this will make the latter both a brother and *compadre* of your father. Even long-time family friends are addressed as uncles or aunties both as a sign of respect and acceptance to the family circle.

While family orientation can be considered a value (a conception of what is good or object of intentional feelings) we can also consider it as a virtue in the Philippine context as it requires specific behavioral patterns or dispositions. "It provides the people with a uniform and specific frame of references for their actions. Through recognized relationships, as indicated by kinship terminologies, they know what behaviors are appropriate or inappropriate for what kind of interactions; what social etiquette is necessary and what to disregard" (Jocano 1997, 92). What is essential in virtue ethics is the cultivation of character. In the Filipino context, this cultivation takes place in the family. To recognize someone as a family member is to treat that person in a certain way. Respect for the elderly is expressed by placing their hands in one's forehead, using *po* and *opo*, and showing *Malasakit* when they are old. Family members should be willing to make personal sacrifices for each other and through this, the virtue of *Pakikisama* is harnessed. "In small barrios, or within a family setting, *Hiya* forces a web of self-censure which ranges from the maintenance of family harmony to the prevention of acts of violence." As parents exert their best efforts to raise and educate their children to give them a better life, the latter manifests *Utang na Loob,* which serves to further strengthen the binding relationships of love, loyalty, and *Pakikisama.* Children are expected to take care of their aging parents when they are already grown up. Thus sending parents to home care is not common in the Philippines because to do so by their children is not to have *Utang na Loob*.

Cultivation of virtues in the family is both deliberate – through oral instructions and systems of reward and punishment, or indirect i.e. through examples and daily interaction. Through the widely accepted practice of extended family and the mechanism of seniority where older members have greater authority and command respect and obedience from younger members, virtues are handed down from generation to generation. Those who show these virtues are admired and emulated as being "good people" by other family members, and this in turn, reinforces such

behaviors for the following generations. Character is cultivated by acquiring these traits, and since these traits have something to do with family dynamics, these are relational and interactive. Family relationship becomes the reference point in gauging the exercise of these virtues. "As he begins to participate in the adult world, the child learns further that he can engage in harmonious relations with other members of the community through the reckoning of kinship ties which exist between them." (Jocano 1997, 117) Eventually these traits are internalized and become a stable part of one's *Loob*.

In the Filipino context, to treat the other virtuously is to treat them as if they were part of family. This is how the other becomes *Kapwa*. The common expression is *hindi iba* (not a stranger). The family is not only the setting where virtues are cultivated but the reference point as well or the measure of excellence in practicing them. It is in the family that Filipinos learn the value and significance of human relationships, it is here where they grasp the deep meaning of *Kapwa*.[2] Much has been said already about the self-construal of Asian cultures, i.e. self is collective. For Filipinos, self-identity is construed in reference to belonging or being a part of a family. Philippine family functions "in a complex process of a natural support system of reciprocity and mutual caring to which the individual's concept of self is strongly subsumed." (Sanchez and Gaw 2017, 812) To be a *Kapwa*, i.e. to treat the other the way you like to be treated, is no different from treating the other as if she were a member of your family.

Hiya

Filipino philosophers often disagree about the essence of this virtue and whether it is a virtue at all. *Hiya* is commonly translated as shame, sense of inferiority, modesty, or sense of propriety. It is often depicted as a kind of inhibition or fear of making mistakes or losing face in public as a result of having a low sense of worthiness or self-esteem. It inhibits competitiveness and arrests one's actions (Sanchez and Gaw 2007, 812) that may result in withdrawal behavior. Because of *Hiya*, one is hesitant to express her views to avoid being laughed at or embarrassed. Some describe *Hiya* as deference to authority, a kind of feeling when one is face to face with someone of greater authority or importance. Bulatao (1992) explains that *Hiya* is a painful emotion felt during occasions perceived to be dangerous to one's ego: e.g. when one is unable to pay debt, fulfill promise / obligation, or unable to live up to others' expectations.

The distinction made by Reyes (2016) between passive and active meanings of *Hiya* is helpful in understanding it as a virtue. Although these two are not mutually exclusive, misinterpretation happens when they are confused and conflated. As passion, *Hiya* is a negative and passive emotion that is felt when one is in an uncompromising situation or has done a socially unacceptable action. Because of this *Hiya*, Filipinos will spend money or extend help or hospitality to visitors although they do not have enough, even to the extent of borrowing money just to avoid the negative feeling. But in an active sense *Hiya* involves skills for not offending anybody. As a virtue *Hiya* is not passion or an affective state. Reyes offers two definitions of the virtue of *Hiya*, one particular

"a virtue of a person that prevents other people from suffering" (2016, 76) and a more general one: "a virtue of a person that controls individual wants for the welfare of the other person." (77)

To understand *Hiya* as a virtue, Reyes compares it to the virtue of temperance (*temperantia*) of Thomas Aquinas, a way of controlling one's inclination or impulses. Temperance "involves a habitual self-control and restraint, especially when it comes to natural bodily desires of food, drink and sex." (Reyes 2016, 67) While close to temperance, what makes *Hiya* different is that like other FV, it is relational. *Hiya* is about showing consideration, its "temperance towards others" to promote their welfare, rather than merely temperance to achieve mastery of oneself. Not to have *Hiya* is to be inconsiderate to others, to think only of oneself or one's benefits, and to satisfy only one's own needs or desire without consideration for the needs of others, e.g. eating all food in the table and not leaving something for others. Like temperance, *Hiya* plays a central role in the exercise of other FV. Recall that for Aristotle, virtues can turn into vices because they both belong to the same continuum. Excellence in action lies in a choice lying in the mean relative to a situation as determined by practical wisdom. *Hiya* is a kind of self-censure to avoid overacting or inaction. Without moderation, *Pakikisama* can turn into group thinking and submissiveness, familism into nepotism, and *Bayanihan* into passionate but short-lived commitments. Excess of *Utang na Loob* can compromise one's judgment that may lead to corruption or bribery.[3] *Pakikiramdam* and *Malasakit* are often misinterpreted as "innate aversion to rational structures." When too much, they degenerate into sentimentalism and subjectivism exhibited in popular culture in the form of TV melodramas and romantic ballads. While this is self-evident among Filipinos, perhaps the lack of appropriate terms in the Filipino language to express excess or defect of these virtues makes it hard to conceptualize or identify with precision their moderateness. *Hiya* involves a kind of empathy, to feel how others would feel in the same situation. "In general, the virtue of *hiya* is a quality of one's *Loob* that makes him control or sacrifice an individual desire for the sake of the *Kapwa*'s welfare. ... To be called *walang hiya* (without *hiya*) means that you are only thinking of yourself, of how to satisfy your impulses and desires, even at the cost of your *Kapwa*." (Reyes 2016, 165) With *Hiya*, one tempers his desire to act, express his views, or say what he means in order not to offend or hurt *Kapwa*. It requires placing oneself in the shoes of the other and assessing what is the appropriate manner of acting or feeling from that vantage point, in consideration of time, context, and situation.

Filipino virtues and meaningful work

To provide Filipinos with MW, managers must recognize that they have particular needs and desires that must be met (Abud et al. 2018; Lamoya et al. 2015; Angeles et al. 2015). "Many individual moral dilemmas that arise within business ethics can best be understood as arising from a tension between the type of person we seek to be and the type of person business expects us to be." (Hartman et al. 2018, 87) Filipino workers' needs are other-oriented (Lamoya et al 2015; Ilagan 2014). Among other things, they want "belongingness and perceived family, opportunities

for growth and development, being challenged by task and opportunities to meet other people" (Rungduin 2014, 89). Consistent with many studies on the topic, MW for many Filipinos is not simply about collecting paycheck. For them, "coworker relations is an integral part of how they view their job." (Ilagan 2014, 137) Professional relations are embedded in personal relation while economic transaction is personalized. Meaningful relationships in the workplace – the quality of relationship with co-workers and the sense of belonging to an organization – is important (Ilagan 2014, 122). Filipinos rate career related needs as low in importance, this implies that many Filipino workers will sacrifice a challenging career for the sake of family or personal relationship. This is not to say that designing work to be interesting and challenging is unimportant. But in providing Filipinos with MW, positive co-worker relationship is as important as the nature or complexity of job tasks. Even in the issue of employee loyalty, Filipinos tend to be loyal workers because they want to preserve personal relationships that are created in the workplace. On the other hand, negative relationship in the workplace is the strongest source of dissatisfaction and turn-over, especially in relation to perceived unfairness, neglect or failure to understand the personal circumstances of employees, conflict with colleagues, and berating or shaming employees in public (Rungduin 2014). Promoting MW is more than practicing justice and fairness. For Filipino workers, fairness is expressed and felt through harmonious relationship (Rungduin 2014).

Understanding Filipino culture and getting to know the defining characteristics of Filipinos and their ethical system is important, especially for foreign managers and entrepreneurs who want to do business in the Philippines or who work with Filipinos abroad. FV are *Kapwa*-oriented, which means that they are about relationality and reciprocity. Filipinos expect everyone, even foreigners to treat them in accordance with these virtues. Even if Filipinos understand that people of different cultures do not have high regard for these virtues, they will feel hurt or offended if they are treated otherwise. FV set the standards of human behavior per se and shape Filipino social interaction, especially in the workplace where they spend most of their waking hours. For most Filipinos, foreigners who speak frankly are blunt, those who are too forward or overconfident have no *Hiya*, and the lack of *Pakikisama* is a defect in character. To gain respect from Filipinos, managers whether foreigners or not must show *Malasakit* to their employees. This means caring for them personally, not to treat them as mere instrument of production.

Promoting MW also has positive benefits to businesses in the Philippines, for "organizational support is believed to be influenced by relationships employees have in their organizations." (Rungduin 2014, 94) Studies done on effective management in the Philippines indicate that successful firms are those that have formed effective relationships, not only with customers but also with employees, suppliers and dealers (Angeles et al. 2015; Lamoya et al. 2015; Gupta and Kleiner 2001). More than competent and visionary leadership, quality of relationship, especially between managers and subordinates, is very significant in achieving team effectiveness among Filipinos. "Rather than just being able to work together, Filipinos place a premium on

being able to exchange personal experiences and stories" (Alafriz et al. 2014, 118). FV can create better interaction in the company and minimize tensions and interpersonal conflicts that interfere with the operation of the company or its overall growth and productivity. They are indispensable moral guides for building and cultivating personal relationships (Lorenzana 2015, 10). A Filipino who experiences MW is a highly participative and engaged worker. FV create the type of workers who will provide the most return on investment to the company, they "mold workers to become more competent in terms of their knowledge, skills and attitude" (Adanza 2014, 3). Knowing what makes work meaningful for Filipinos will also enable managers to align company goals and priorities with employees' vision of a good life, and develop effective and culturally sensitive human resource management strategies. Further, since virtues involve skills, FV that enhance interpersonal skills and empathy are very relevant in service-oriented professions in health care, hotel and restaurant industry, communications, education, public relations and public service. *Kapwa* orientation is said to be the root of Filipino hospitality that is very important in the travel and tourism sector.

Currently, managerial focus to create MW is task or skill oriented i.e. elimination of monotonous jobs, job enrichment, job rotation or by improving job-fit. These may be necessary but not sufficient as Filipino workers are more relationship than task-oriented (Alafriz et al. 2014). According to Prof. Franco of Ateneo University (2010) "it is still possible that employees will find meaning in their work even in the most tiresome or monotonous one, provided that workers are given opportunities for friendships and camaraderie." Many believe that workplace relationship is something that grows naturally over time. On the contrary, like other personal relationships, those in the workplace are never instantly or instantaneously established, they develop gradually and progressively. FV provide ways to cultivate and nurture workplace relationship. Since virtues involve practice, they can be developed and cultivated. Aristotle points out that there is a kind of loop between virtues and human behavior. Virtues promote and improve human behavior but as human behavior improves, these virtues are also enhanced and developed. We acquire virtues through practice and the more we practice them, the more we become the kind of person who exhibits these virtues. Once FV are cultivated in the workplace, a corporate culture is built that reinforces these virtues.

Rather than through institutional or formal mechanisms, the most effective way for management to cultivate FV among workers to improve interpersonal relationship is by giving the right example. In virtue theory, role modeling is important. "The motivational theory of role modeling asserts that an organization, company or society for that matter can achieve bigger and greater value if the leaders running it are exemplary individuals commendable enough to be imitated from among the subordinates." (Agaton 2017, 64) Part of *Hiya* as passion is showing high regard and deference to one's superior. Thus, business leaders in the Philippines enjoy great respect, influence, and adulation. Consciously or not, they are always leading by example. Out of *Hiya* Filipino follows a leader who is willing to walk the talk.

The first step is for management to learn the dynamics of FV, and this is best done through personal interaction with Filipinos. As mentioned, Filipinos build relationships by passing through a stage of *Pakikiramdam* that takes time until a sense of trust and intimacy is established between parties. Communication must involve deep listening and mutual sharing while giving careful attention to non-verbal cues like eye contact, facial expression, hand gestures, body language, pauses, and voice intonation in order to avoid any potential source of friction. The goal is to explore similarities, connections, common interests, and shared understanding of each other (*Kapwa*) that will give access to each other's *Loob*. Until the interaction approaches this level, resort to intermediary or go-between – a common acquaintance who is known and trusted by both parties is sometimes employed. Filipinos tend to complain less and are reluctant to say no or refuse (most of them would rather say they will think about it), expecting instead the interlocutor to be sensitive enough to intuitively grasp what they actually feel. This is also their way of expressing that they are flexible and are willing to compromise. Thus, communication should be open and continuous, but a deadline for making final decision must be set. Managers must be patient in encouraging Filipinos to express themselves and pay careful attention when they convey job dissatisfaction. Since most Filipinos are non-confrontational, they will just endure the problem or vent it out on social media or co-workers (Rungduin 2014). When they decide to take the active approach, it means that the problem has worsened.

Once positive bonding is established in the workplace through *Pakikiramdam*, it leads to *Pakikisama*, which exerts a strong influence in Philippine work culture that makes it personalist, consensual and collectivist rather than impersonal, competitive and individualist. Respect of worker's autonomy should be counterbalanced with efforts to foster teambuilding and solidarity. Organizing workers into smaller units would foster better interaction and cooperation that would minimize anonymity. Working as a team encourages constant communication, collaboration, interdependence, and mutual respect and understanding. Individual rewards are important in terms of promotion or salary increases, but managers must not forget the importance of promoting teamwork and linking rewards with group/department/overall company performance as well. Studies indicate that generally, human resource practices adopted in collectivist cultures in Asian countries such as stock ownership plans, flexible job boundaries, lower overall pay dispersion, internal recruiting, assignment of targets to departments rather than individuals, scheduling of general assembly meetings, seniority system and consideration of *soft skills* in employee evaluation and promotion work well in managing Filipino workforce.

Stakeholders throughout the organization are guided to a large extent by the "tone at the top." Managers have a very influential role in shaping the firm's culture. There are several ways by which managers can incorporate FV in the corporate culture. *Bayanihan* can be promoted through corporate outreach programs and community involvement. Rather than just setting up disaster funds, it is better to harness *Bayanihan* in the company by organizing relief operations to help members of the community who are victimized by natural calamities,

which are quite often in the Philippines being a tropical country. This will also manifest that the company has the virtue of *Malasakit*, and further enhance this virtue to its employees. Because of *Hiya*, "Filipino is extremely sensitive to any kind of personal affront such as being criticized publicly, shouted at, berated, derided, humiliated, or any form of adverse confrontation." (Mulzac 2007, 84) Once embarrassed, they will be reluctant to express their mind, ask relevant questions, or participate in group discussions. Employee evaluation should be constructive and given in a personal, discreet and informal manner rather than direct and confrontational. Darwin and Teresita Rungduin observe that (2013, 29) when an offensive behavior is done against them, most Filipino workers take it at the emotional level rather than assert and assess their self objectively. Management needs to emphasize to them that even in healthy families, conflicts occur. If something unfair happens to them in the workplace, the company has a formal, transparent, and procedural grievance mechanism that they can use to resolve the issue and prevent it from escalating.

Supporting one's family is the major reason why many people work, not just Filipinos. If money is the number one extrinsic motivator, this is only because Filipinos use their salaries to provide for the maintenance and education of their children and extended family. Filipinos prefer to spend on their families before themselves (Ilagan 2014). Many Filipino workers are married and have children, single lifestyle is not culturally valued. Family motivation also enhances energy when intrinsic motivation for work is low. In addition, family provides strong support system to many workers that help them cope with and withstand emotional problems and tensions they experience in the workplace.

The first way to implement the virtue of family orientation is through work-life balance. Work-life balance is defined as "any relationships between dimensions of the person's work life and the person's personal life." (Edralin 2012, 202) It is "the satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict." There are several possible ways that work-life balance can influence MW. (1) Spillover phenomenon where problems at home affect work performance. (2) Relationships at work extend outside the workplace and become personal relationships too. (3) Non-compartmentalization in our search for meaning – pursuit of MW is part of the general pursuit of meaningful life. Work-life balance is a growing concern today especially that in most families both husband and wife have careers, it becomes very challenging to simultaneously fulfill work responsibilities and responsibilities at home – which include not only taking care of the children but also of elderly dependents. Family problems may have negative spillover in the workplace in terms of tardiness or absenteeism, not being fully functional or being in a bad mood. Some workers quit their job or find jobs near their home to spend more time with their families. For Filipinos, company loyalty is only second to family.

The fear that putting family first is harmful to organizational productivity is unfounded. On the contrary, work-family conflict lowers job satisfaction and increases turnover intentions. Family support is needed in order for workers to cope when conflict between work and family demands arises. The challenge for management is to see to it that personal and corporate goals,

interpersonal and professional relationships, are closely aligned, rather than in conflict. This will motivate employees to work harder. Direct involvement of managers in personal problems of their workers may not always be advisable, but they can offer compensation package that addresses their family-related needs, in addition to decent salaries. In their study Kim and Ryu (2017) find that Filipinos prefer compensatory time-off, child care policy, health care, life insurance, paid sick leave, and job security. The last is very important for Filipinos. Because of *Utang na Loob*, they tend to exhibit employment loyalty. However, many workers who support large families live from one paycheck to another. For Filipinos, providing for siblings and aging parents is not a burden but an opportunity to practice *Utang na Loob*. The mere thought of losing their jobs can cause them anxiety. We can also add here housing benefits, family medical leave, educational benefits for children, and flexible work schedule. Filipinos like to work overtime because it is a significant source of extra income, but it is also important to get time-off/reduced hours during traditional festivities in order to celebrate them with families. Excessive time demands that require working on weekends should be eliminated or minimized.

The second way to implement family orientation is to develop a family culture in the company. Indeed, many Filipinos consider the business organization they work with as their second family (Angeles et al. 2015). Their social environment affects their perception of their work environment (Rungduin 2014, 90). The firm is a social union rather than a mere instrument. It is not simply a place to work but a venue where workers know each other, grow together and develop their potentials. Filipinos love to be treated like family members. They also expect to find social and emotional support in the workplace, especially during difficult times. Like the parent-image in the family, business leaders are supposed to be nurturing and firm, able to show *Pakikisama* and *Malasakit* and at the same time, capable of disciplining members who are stubbornly self-centered and uncooperative. Management should welcome employees when they share family concerns at work. While they are not expected to solve personal problems of their employees, the mere act of listening, coupled with comforting words and expression of empathy is already an example of *Malasakit* of managers that employees will deeply appreciate. Family culture may imply a paternalistic style of management but it does necessarily mean micromanagement or tight control (Selmer and Corrina 2001, 138). Out of *Pakikisama* Filipino workers can take initiative. *Utang na Loob* motivates them to honor their obligations while *Malasakit* discourages unproductive behavior in the office.

There are other ways management can develop family culture in the firm. As *Pakikisama* Filipinos like to talk and share and they rarely eat alone. Shared spaces where workers can interact should be maximized. While participative management is encouraged, Filipinos show preference "to participate in institution-related tasks that are not part of their regular workload" so that they can spend more time with their colleagues (Rungduin 2014, 94). This can be done through company celebrations, employee recognition ceremonies, sports fest, civic activities and annual retreats. It is good to involve family members in these activities to strengthen the ties among the families of

employees. *Bayanihan* can also be enhanced by encouraging voluntarism in organizing these events. In addition, managers are usually invited to be godparents in baptism or confirmation or wedding sponsors (especially when co-workers are married to each other), making work relationships become part of employees' kindship system through the *compadrazgo* practice. Overtime, an authentic family culture is created that is expansive and inclusive as it extends outside the workplace. The result is that just like the family, the company becomes a significant unit of the community it serves.

Conclusion

FV have both strengths and weaknesses. Managers can use these virtues to motivate Filipinos in executing company principles, vision and mission and in the process, provide them with meaningful employment and harness their potentials. At the same time, they should avoid their pitfalls by paying attention to their excesses. The challenge is for mangers to acquire the practical wisdom needed to find the right balance, and according to Aristotle, this comes through theoretical learning coupled with hands-on experience. They must not lose sight of the concept of *Kapwa* and direct these virtues toward their telos, which is the well-being of the company and the unity of everyone's *Loob*. Outside this context, unless they are *Kapwa* oriented, they lose their essence as virtues and may even turn into vices.

What we accomplish in this essay is to develop a Filipino virtue-ethics framework that defines what is MW, explains why it is important, and contains some examples of concrete measures that management can utilize to promote MW. This research is not exhaustive. Empirical studies are needed across industries that measure the presence of these virtues in Philippine companies so that the paradigm we develop can be fully operationalized.

Endnotes:

1. Filipino writers struggle to find equivalent English concepts for these terms. Following Philippine scholars, I use terms that are derived from Tagalog – the basis of the Filipino national language. Among many linguistic subgroups in the Philippines, Tagalog is the dominant economically, politically and culturally. Different ethnic groups in the country have their own indigenous rendering of these concepts. Language itself is a carrier of meanings and that the literal translation does not fully capture the nuances of the Filipino terms. They lose their actual cultural and behavioral meanings when translated (Rungduin 2014; Rungduin et al. 2013). Thus, I will consistently use Tagalog words after giving a rough literal translation in English the first time they appear in this essay.

2. This is not to say that the Filipino family is perfect. Like other institutions it is subject to human frailties, imperfections and external treats (economic, technological, global influences). But since for majority of Filipinos, the family is the most dependable psychological support system and the only institution to rely on in the absence of social safety nets usually provided by the government like adequate retirement benefits, unemployment insurance, institutional care for elders, universal health care, and affordable education, the Filipino family manages to be both resistant and resilient in the face of challenges, and when necessary, makes concessions and compromises to remain the bedrock of Philippine society.

3. An essential component of *Utang na Loob* is the concept of golden mean or moderation. Not

having it, one becomes ungrateful – a moral defect. Excessive *Utang na Loob* however, becomes a kind of blind loyalty or obedience in order to return a favor. In fact, most Filipinos will not accept favor or help in order to avoid having *Utang na Loob*. The implicit understanding is that it should not be overused or abused. To demand *Utang na Loob* is looked down, it is a manifestation of being shameless or no *Hiya* because it is taking advantage of people who are in need.

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