

In defense of Filipino values and norms: Debunking the ambivalence theory

Benitez Luzano Jiolito^{1*}

¹Cebu Normal University, Philippines

*Corresponding author: benitezj@cnu.edu.ph

ARTICLE INFO

DOI:10.46223/HCMCOUJS.
soci.en.12.1.2215.2022

Received: March 19th, 2022

Revised: April 28th, 2022

Accepted: May 27th, 2022

Keywords:

ambivalence; character traits;
Filipino values; norms; virtue

ABSTRACT

No nation has been so scorned for her values and norms by her own people, including the most educated of them, as the Philippines. This study critically peruses the ambivalence theory of Filipino values and norms to debunk its central claim that Filipino values and norms are ambivalent due to their inherent potential to be good and evil, right and wrong, virtue and vice, strength and weakness. Using as frameworks of analysis the sociological and psychological postulates of ambivalence as well as the Aristotelian notion of virtue, the perusal yields five paramount findings that sum up the errors of this theory. First, the problematic and dichotomic approach to Filipino values and norms as good and bad, right and wrong, weakness and strength, virtue and vice to warrant the forgone conclusion of ambivalence. Second, the epic confusion in which the transgressive attitudes, traits, and behaviors are deemed part of the defining features of Filipino values and norms. Third, Filipino values are blamed for or used to justify the negative attitudes, weak character traits, and misdeeds of Filipinos. Fourth, the proponents' negative and inconsistent interpretations of Filipino values and norms. Fifth, the sociological and psychological postulates of ambivalence and the Aristotelean concept of virtue do not support the claim of ambivalence. On the strengths of the findings, the ambivalence theory is effectively debunked. With the putative post-ambivalence period, comes the challenge to disabuse the minds of those who have credulously professed the ambivalence creed.

1. Introduction

No nation has been so scorned for her values and norms by her own people, including the most educated of them, as the Philippines. The view, that Filipino values and moral norms are ambivalent, such that they have the potential for good and evil, right and wrong, virtue and vice, strength and weakness, is peddled by many Filipino scholars and academics so that it has become a widespread belief among Filipinos (Aguas, 2016; Andres, 1981; Bulloch, 2017; Dy, 1994; Hong, 2019; Miranda 1992; Macaranas, 2018). This paper peruses the central claim of the ambivalence theory of Filipino values and norms to determine whether or not it is supported by the existing theories of ambivalence. It likewise argues that the claim of ambivalence theory is erroneous and unfounded.

Studies on Filipino values in the Philippines began in the 1960s. The earliest works dealt with Filipino values, personality, modernation, and culture (Tan, 1997). The succeeding decades saw a growing literature on Filipino culture and society. Benitez (2020, 2022a) classified different works on Filipino values and norms into four categories based on their primary objectives.

The first category consists of studies whose primary objectives are the understanding of the Filipino values system and analysis of the core Filipino value concepts. The works of Lynch and de Guzman (1973), Enriquez (1978, 1980, 1992), Mercado (1976, 1979, 1994), and Jocano (1997, 1998a, 1998b) are among the most important and influential, not only in this category in particular, but also in the literature on Filipino values in general. The second category, which represents the largest bulk of the works on Filipino values and norms, includes the studies of Kaut (1961), Bulatao (1992, 1964), Holnsteiner (1973), de Mesa (1979, 1986), Miranda (1989, 1992, 2003), de Guia (2005), and many others, who have profusely enriched the understanding of several Filipino value concepts. The third category appropriates certain Filipino value concepts into the field of moral philosophy as exemplified by the writings of Mercado (1976, 1979), de Castro (1995, 1999), Reyes (2015), Cleofas (2019), Tablan (2021), among others. Recently, some Filipino scholars have ventured into the integration of core Filipino value concepts into virtue ethics.

The fourth category, the central focus of this paper, consists of studies that are particularly critical of Filipino values and norms. This category banners the ambivalence theory of Filipino values and norms as exemplified by the works of Hong (2019), Macaranas (2018), Bulloch (2017), Aguas (2016), Miranda (1992), and Andres (1981), among others, who either claim or subscribe to the view that Filipino values are ambivalent. However, the focal tenets of the ambivalence theory of Filipino values are articulated in the works of Emerita Quito's *The Ambivalence of Filipino Traits and Values*, Patricia Licuanan's *a Moral Recovery Program: Building a People--Building a Nation*, and Vitaliano Gorospe's *Understanding the Filipino Values System* (Dy, 1994).

This study considers Quito, Gorospe, and Licuanan as the main proponents of the ambivalence theory of Filipino values and norms.

2. Theoretical framework

This paper critically peruses the ambivalence theory of Filipino values and norms to debunk its central claim. It contends that the claim of ambivalence on Filipino values and norms is erroneous and problematic. To achieve this objective, an expository synthesis of the works of the three major proponents of the ambivalence theory is presented. The central claim of the ambivalence theory and the arguments offered to support it is then evaluated according to the sociological and psychological postulates of ambivalence and the Aristotelian notion of virtue.

The choice of these frameworks is formally and substantially necessary. If, as claimed by the proponents, Filipino values are ambivalent, then it is only logical to evaluate it according to the existing and relevant postulates of ambivalence, namely, the sociological and psychological theories of ambivalence. Moreover, since it is further claimed that the Filipino values system is paradigmatically akin to the Greek ideal of moderation, then it is likewise fitting to evaluate this claim according to the Aristotelian notion of virtue, which is the most systematic philosophical account of the tenets of moderation.

The Sociological and Psychological Postulates of Ambivalence. The Merriam-Webster (2021) online dictionary defines “ambivalence” as the existence of “*simultaneous and*

contradictory attitudes or feelings (such as attraction and repulsion) *toward an object, person, or action*,” “*continual fluctuation* (as between one thing and its opposite),” and “*uncertainty as to which approach to follow*.” From the given definition, it is clear that ambivalence denotes the individual’s attitude or disposition toward something.

In *Sociological Ambivalence and Other Essays* (Merton, 1976), the prominent American sociologist, Robert K. Merton, hailed as the founder of modern sociology, traces the idea of ambivalence to Eugen Bleuler (1857 - 1939), a Swiss psychiatrist, who coined and introduced the term in the field of psychology. Accordingly, Bleuler distinguishes ambivalence as cognitive (contradictory ideas), volitional (conflicting wishes), and affective (positive and negative feelings). Bleuler considers ambivalence as the simultaneous presence of conflicting passions of love and hate toward a single object (Griffiths, 2021). Notably, Bleuler understands the concept of ambivalence as a psychological phenomenon, particularly in the context of schizophrenia. Prior to Bleuler, philosophical reflections on the human experience of ambivalence are already extant in the works of the seventeenth century French philosophers Pascal and Montaigne.

Merton (1976) explains that while certain types of psychological and sociological ambivalence are empirically related, they are nonetheless theoretically disparate. In a sociologically restricted sense, ambivalence refers to conflicting normative expectations emanating from socially defined statuses and roles. In this context, social structures, rather than psychological states, generate conditions that give rise to ambivalence. For instance, ambivalence emerges in a situation in which a police officer arrests a suspected drug lord who turns out to be a close friend. This situation produces a tension between conflicting demands associated with friendship and the proper discharge of one’s duty as a law enforcer.

Moreover, Merton speaks of a subset of sociological ambivalence which occurs at the crossroads of incompatible interests and values. For instance, conflicting values and interests may put scholars in an ambivalent situation when their professional values clash with the interests of their organization. In this context, sociological ambivalence arises from conflicting norms within a given social structure.

Berman (2012) describes ambivalence as the failure of individuals or society to distance itself from certain beliefs, feelings, or interactions that it claims to oppose or uphold. In *The Mendicants’ Rap Poetry: Critique from the Margins*, Benitez (2015) remarks that the existence of ‘mendicant rappers’ is a subterranean social reality that rebuts the society’s public profession of the values of justice, love, and solidarity. Blazina and Shen-Miller (2011) consider ambivalence as “*conflicted, uncertain, and paradoxical feelings*.” Weigert (Hillcoat-Nallétamby & Phillips, 2011) frames ambivalence as an emotional experience of contradictory feelings toward an object. Smelser (Hillcoat-Nallétamby & Phillips, 2011) posits that ambivalence is the simultaneous occurrence of “*attraction and repulsion, love and hate*” in an individual. In similar manner, Maio, Haddock, and Verplanken (2019) define ambivalence as a state of conflict in an individual who simultaneously regards an *object, idea, or person* in a positive and negative light.

Hillcoat-Nallétamby and Phillips (2011) reviewed the concept of ambivalence within the ambit of sociology of relations. Citing Bauman (1991), Giddens (1991), Beck (1994), and Smart (1999), Hillcoat-Nallétamby and Phillips (2011) cast postmodernity as a life that is characterized by conflict, contradiction, disorder, anxiety, and uncertainty due to its inherent tendency to abolish the ordering, normative elements of civilization. These postmodern conditions of life are said to cause manifold forms of ambivalence that are rather permanent than transitory (Benitez, 2022b).

Studies on ambivalence are by nature sociological and psychological. From the sociological point of view, Connidis and McMullin (2000a, 2000b) as quoted by Hillcoat-Nallétamby and Phillips (2011) argue that ambivalence should be framed within both the social structure and individual autonomy. Locating ambivalence within the social structure alone, as Merton had earlier suggested, denies the role of personal agency in social interactions. Besides, a great number of empirical studies on ambivalence has largely focused on interpersonal exchange. While studies on ambivalence assume socio-psychological perspectives, ambivalence itself is primarily a sociological phenomenon that stems from the social actors' actions within the network of social relations.

All things considered, ambivalence is a sociological and psychological phenomenon. As a sociological reality, ambivalence is brought about in an individual by conflicting interests, values, and norms as well as by situations in which the statuses and roles of social actors generate conflicting demands. Being a psychological fact, ambivalence is characterized by the simultaneous occurrence of conflicted, paradoxical, and contradictory beliefs and passions in an individual toward the same object. Undoubtedly, the notion of ambivalence does not apply to values, norms, and character traits because it pertains to the social actors' experiences under certain sociological and psychological conditions.

Aristotle's Concept of Virtue. Following Socrates, who integrated the exhortation "*gnothi seauton*" (Know Thyself), written in Apollo's temple at Delphi, into his ethical thought (Barakat, 2017), Aristotle exacted the notion of virtue as 'golden mean' from the Delphic inscription "*meden agan*" (Nothing in Excess). Aristotle stresses that the *phronimos* or the "practically wise person" possesses the "*orthos logos*" (right knowledge) of the "*kalon*" (morally beautiful) and the "*aischron*" (morally shameful, ugly) so that the *phronimos* acts accordingly by determining the course of moderation, the golden mean between excess and deficit (Meyer, 2008).

In *Nicomachean Ethics* (Books II-V), Aristotle discusses two types of excellences, intellectual and ethical (Crisp, 2004). The intellectual excellences are developed primarily by teaching, while the ethical excellences are acquired through practice and habituation. The ethical excellences, also known as moral virtues, are determined by the intellectual virtue of *phronesis* or practical wisdom. *Phronesis* regulates moral virtues, which in turn regulate disposition, character and action. Aristotle defines virtue as the middle ground or the mean between two extremes, the vice of excess and the vice of deficiency. The virtue of courage, for instance, is the mean between the vices of boldness and fear. As a virtue, courage hits the mark of moral excellence, whereas cowardice and boldness miss the golden mean.

The Homeric ideal of moderation, or *meden agan*, finds its counterpart in the different values systems across the world (Aurell, 2017; Dy, 1994) such as the Roman "*in medio stat virtus*" (Virtue lies in the middle), the Buddhist and Confucian doctrine of the middle way, and the Filipino "*Hindi labis, hindi kulang, katamtaman lamang*" (Neither in excess, nor in deficit, but moderate). Since one of the proponents of the ambivalence theory of Filipino values and norms categorically claims that the Filipino concept of value is akin to the concept of moderation, then Aristotelian notion of virtue as golden mean is a fitting framework of analysis in examining the merit of the claim that Filipino values and norms are ambivalent.

3. Discussion

The critical view against Filipino values and norms is the charge of ambivalence. While many Filipino scholars and academics share this critical view (Aguas, 2016; Andres, 1981; Bulloch, 2017; Hong, 2019; Macaranas, 2018; Miranda, 1992), the writings of Emerita Quito,

Vitaliano Gorospe, and Patricia Licuanan, published in the book *Philippine Values in Education and Culture* (Dy, 1994), represent and articulate the principal tenets of the ambivalence theory of Filipino values and norms.

Emerita Quito's *The Ambivalence of Filipino Traits and Values* (Dy, 1994). Quito proposes to examine the “negative Filipino traits” and the “negatives in the Filipino psyche” in an attempt to cull out what she maintains to be positive and redeeming aspects of Filipino values. Notwithstanding the nobility of her intent, she immediately typifies the Filipino as negatively-oriented and a fault-finder, one, who not only emphasizes his/her “weaknesses, faults, and defects,” but also considers his/her standard as that of “smallness, averageness, and mediocrity.” In Quito’s eyes, the notions of grandeur and greatness are alien to the Filipino.

She follows through with a categorical claim that the Filipino traits and values such as *hiya* (shame), *ningas-cogon* (procrastination), *pakikisama* (group loyalty), *patigasan* (test of strength), *bahala na* (resignation), *kasi* (because, i.e., scapegoat), *saving face*, *sakop* (inclusion), *mañana* or “*bukas na*” (procrastination), *utang na loob* (indebtedness), and *kanya-kanya* (self-centeredness) are ambivalent. Quito demonstrates their ambivalence by singling out their positive and negative characteristics, as shown in the table below:

Table 1

Ambivalent Filipino values and traits

Positive	Values & Traits	Negative
peace of mind	<i>hiya</i> (shame)	inhibits action
indifference, peace, tranquility	<i>ningas-cogon</i> (procrastination)	lack of perseverance
absent of dissent	<i>pakikisama</i> (group loyalty)	condone evil for group peace, harmony
fight for one’s right	<i>patigasan</i> (test of strength)	stubborn, vindictive, irrational
trust in superior power, humility	<i>bahala na</i> (resignation)	laziness camouflaged as religiosity
seeing both sides; guiltless	<i>kasi</i> (because, i.e., scapegoat)	disowns responsibility
freedom from responsibility, guilt, embarrassment	<i>saving face</i>	avoids responsibility
cares for family, clan	<i>sakop</i> (inclusion)	parasitic dependence on others
absence of stress, tension	<i>mañana</i> or “ <i>bukas na</i> ” (procrastination)	indolence, no accomplishments
recognition of gratitude	<i>utang na loob</i> (indebtedness)	moral principles are violated for the sake of gratitude
care of oneself, family	<i>kanya-kanya</i> (self-centeredness)	self-centered, selfish

Source: Quito (1994)

Regrettably, Quito offers no definition of ambivalence, yet the examples and explanations she provides strongly amplifies an understanding of ambivalence as the coexistence of positive and negative characteristics in a value or trait. A value is ambivalent because it contains potentials for good and evil, right or wrong which are actualized in practice. The value

of *bahala na*, for instance, is positive in the sense that it exhibits humility and trust in a superior power, on the one hand, and negative in the sense that it demonstrates laziness garbed in religiosity, on the other hand. In like manner, a character trait has a potential to be a virtue or vice depending on how it is manifested. *Kanya-kanya* is positive when it is done for the sake of oneself and family, but it becomes negative when it is exercised for selfish reasons.

Patricia Licuanan's *A Moral Recovery Program: Building a People -Building a Nation* (Dy, 1994). In her article, Licuanan begins with an observation that after the EDSA of 1986, the Filipinos were back to their old wicked ways of *self-centeredness, disregard of common good, lack of discipline and rigor, colonial mentality, emphasis on form rather than substance, passivity, and reliance on leaders to take responsibility and solve the country's problems*. She then turns her focus onto the great challenge of economic recovery, reestablishment of democratic institutions, peace and social justice, changes in institutions and people, all of which are essential ingredients to building a people and nation. All these will happen if Filipinos reflect upon themselves, eliminate their weaknesses, and develop strength of character.

Licuanan identifies various strengths and weaknesses of the Filipino character traits. The *strengths* include *pakikipagkapwa-tao (interpersonalism), family orientation, joy and humor, flexibility, adaptability, and creativity, hard work and industry, faith and religiosity, and ability to survive*. The weaknesses consist of *extreme personalism, extreme family centeredness, lack of discipline, passivity and lack of initiative, colonial mentality, kanya-kanya (self-centeredness) syndrome, and lack of self-analysis and self-reflection*.

Table 2

Strengths and weaknesses of Filipino character

Strengths	Weaknesses
<i>pakikipagkapwa-tao (interpersonalism)</i>	<i>kanya-kanya syndrome (self-centeredness)</i>
family orientation	<i>extreme family centeredness</i>
hard work and industry	<i>passivity and lack of initiative</i>
flexibility, adaptability, creativity	<i>lack of self-analysis and self-reflection</i>
joy and humor	<i>colonial mentality</i>
faith and religiosity	<i>lack of discipline</i>
ability to survive	

Source: Licuanan (1994)

In fairness to Licuanan, she never categorically claims that Filipino character traits are ambivalent. Nonetheless, a consistent reading of her work reveals that she does view Filipino character traits as ambivalent. This reading is based on her description of certain character strengths and weaknesses that pertain to the same value or trait. Accordingly, *family orientation* is a strength for it not only provides a space for the expression of *deep and genuine love, commitment and responsibility* among members, but it is also a *source of personal identity, emotional, and material support*. However, *family orientation* becomes a weakness when it regresses to *extreme family-centeredness* which is antithetical to the value of community and common good. Moreover, Filipinos are hailed for their *hard work, industry, flexibility, adaptability, and creativity* but they also are ridiculed for their *passivity and lack initiative*.

Filipinos are known for their value of *pakikipagkapwa-tao*, but they are likewise frowned upon for their *kanya-kanya* (self-centered) mentality.

Vitaliano Gorospe's *Understanding the Filipino Values System* (Dy, 1994). Gorospe accentuates the existence of universally shared human values that are particularized in various societies and cultures. He likewise recognizes the common feature inherent in many values systems in the world, which is the idea of moderation, variously expressed in Greek as "*meden agan*" (Nothing in Excess), in Latin as "*in medio stat virtus*" (Virtues lies in the middle), in the Buddhist and Confucian philosophy as the doctrine of the mean, and in the Filipino normative thought as "*Hindi labis, hindi kulang, katamtaman lamang*" (Neither in excess, nor in deficit, but sufficient).

A section in Gorospe's article bears the heading "*Filipino Values: Ambivalence and Split-Level Christianity*." Under this section the author poses the question, "*Are Filipino values good or bad?*" to which he immediately offers the answer, "*The truth is that Filipino values are ambivalent in the sense that they have a potential for good or evil, a help or hindrance to personal and national development, depending on how they are understood, practiced or lived.*" Of the three authors under consideration in this paper, Gorospe offer the most straightforward assertion that Filipino values are ambivalent, and provides the clearest explanation why Filipino values are ambivalent.

Table 3

Ambivalent Filipino values

Positive	Values	Negative
risk-taking, trust in divine providence, self-reliance	<i>bahala na</i> (fatalism)	resignation, superstition, blind faith, fatalism, escapism
<i>kaunlaran</i> (progress)	<i>pakikisama, utang na loob, hiya</i>	<i>kabaluktutan</i> (crookedness)

Source: Gorospe (1994)

Gorospe (1994) regards *pakikisama* (getting along well with), *utang na loob* (indebtedness), *hiya* (shame), and *bahala na* (fatalism) as ambivalent because they can be used for *kabaluktutan* (crookedness) or *kaunlaran* (progress). To demonstrate their ambivalence, he analyzes the value of "*bahala na*," which he judges as positive in the *sense of risk-taking, trust in divine providence, and self-reliance*. The same value becomes negative in the *sense of false sense of resignation, superstition, blind faith, fatalism, escapism*. Hence, for Gorospe *bahala na* is clearly ambivalent because, just like all other Filipino values, it contains negative and positive elements. Gorospe levels the same charge against Filipino religiosity, echoing Bulatao's infamous phrase "split-level Christianity." Filipino Christianity is split and bipolar because it reeks of double standard morality and hypocrisy. Gorospe typifies this bifurcation in Filipino values as value (positive elements) and disvalue (negative elements). This distinction further cements his conviction that Filipino values are positively and negative charged, in a word, ambivalent.

The Absurdity of Ambivalence Theory. Are Filipino values ambivalent? Are Quito, Licuanan, and Gorospe correct?" Unfortunately for them, but fortunately for the Filipinos and their values, the resounding answer is "No!" A critical analysis of their claims will show why the charge of ambivalence against Filipino values and norms does not square with logic and the theories of ambivalence.

Quito claims that Filipino values and traits are ambivalent because they retain elements of good and bad, right and wrong, vice and virtue. This claim is doubtful for many reasons. For

one, Quito's failure to define the terms *value* and *ambivalence* results in her erroneous inclusion of the concepts *patigasan*, *kasi*, *ningas-cogon*, *mañana*, *kanya-kanya*, and *saving face* in the category of values. Without question, these are not values. If at all, they are undesirable attitudes and behaviors. There is not a single credible study on morality and values that posits these negative attitudes (*patigasan*, *kasi*, *ningas-cogon*, *mañana*, *kanya-kanya*, *saving face*) as values. In fact, Filipinos who embody these attitudes and traits are frowned upon as undesirable, and they should be. Not only does Quito parade these wolf-like attitudes in sheep's clothing, but she likewise erroneously elevates them to the pedestal of value.

Moreover, Quito's description of the values of *hiya*, *pakikisama*, *bahala na*, *utang na loob*, and *sakop* ignores the well-established accounts of these values by prominent scholars which were already available during her time (Bulatao, 1964; *bahala na*, de Mesa, 1986; Enriquez, 1992; Holnsteiner, 1973; *utang na loob*, Kaut, 1961; *hiya*, Lynch & de Guzman, 1973; *pakikisama*, Lynch & de Guzman, 1973; Mercado, 1976; *sakop*, Mercado, 1979; Miranda, 1992).

Disregarding these studies, Quito bifurcates Filipino values into positive and negative polarities while conferring on them a rather arbitrary interpretation. Her earlier commitment to evaluate Filipino values and traits using what she calls an "oriental yardstick" has never fully materialized nor has she been able to clarify what she means by "oriental yardstick."

Most importantly, Quito's her assertion of ambivalence of the Filipino values and traits fails to garner any support from the psychological and sociological postulates of ambivalence. Likewise, the bifurcation of Filipino values and norms into positive and negative polarities does not cohere with the sociological notion of ambivalence, which posits ambivalence as a conflict between values and norms within a specific social structure (Merton, 1976). The same bifurcation of Filipino values and norms does not square with the psychological postulate of ambivalence which defines ambivalence as a simultaneous occurrence of conflicted and contradictory feelings and emotions in an individual (Berman, 2012; Hillcoat-Nallétamby & Phillips 2011).

Licuanan's discussion of Filipino character traits suffers the same ambiguity as Quito's. Licuanan lumps together such concepts as *pakikipagkapwa-tao*, *family orientation*, *kanya-kanya*, *religiosity*, *ability to survive*, *lack of self-analysis* and *reflection*, and *colonial mentality* under the category of "character traits." Certainly, these are not strictly character traits. Some of these are values, attitudes, and even skills. To be fair, Licuanan levels no explicit allegation of ambivalence on Filipino character traits. However, what she doesn't categorically state, she strongly implies. A consistent reading of her article reveals that she does view Filipino character traits as ambivalent. This reading is based on her description of certain strengths and weaknesses that actually pertain to the same value, trait, or attitude.

Accordingly, *family* is a strength, for it not only provides a space for the expression of *deep and genuine love*, *commitment and responsibility* among members, but it is also a *source of personal identity*, *emotional*, and *material support*. Surprisingly, the same trait becomes a weakness when it regresses into *extreme family-centeredness* which is antithetical to the value of community and common good. Moreover, Filipinos are hailed as *hard working*, *flexible*, and *creative*, yet they also are ridiculed for their *passivity* and *lack of initiative*. They are extolled for their value of *pakikipagkapwa-tao*, yet frowned for their *kanya-kanya* mentality. In Licuanan's terms, we may never know for certain whether Filipinos are self-centered (*kanya-kanya*) or humane and altruistic (*pakikipagkapwa-tao*); hardworking and industrious or passive and lazy (lack initiative); or whether they lack self-analysis and reflection or creative, flexible, and versatile.

Evidently, Licuanan regards Filipino character traits, values, and attitudes as ambivalent since they do simultaneously contain strengths and weaknesses. However, it is Licuanan's problematic and inconsistent characterization of those Filipino character traits that accounts for ambivalence rather than the traits themselves. Licuanan's view of ambivalence, as a disjunction of Filipino character traits and values into strengths and weaknesses, is inconsistent with the sociological and psychological postulates of ambivalence. Hence, her vicarious claim that Filipino character traits and values are ambivalent is bereft of any theoretical support.

Of the three thinkers, Gorospe makes the most categorical assertion of ambivalence and offers the most unambiguous explanation why Filipino values are ambivalent. In a way, Gorospe can be considered as proponent of the ambivalence theory of Filipino values *par excellence*. His position defines the standard of ambivalence theory of Filipino values. Gorospe strongly contends that Filipino values are ambivalent because "*they have a potential for good or evil, a help or hindrance to personal and national development, depending on how they are understood, practiced or lived*" (Dy, 1994; Gorospe, 1994). A critical appraisal of this thesis easily exposes its logical flaw. The potential for good and evil lies, after all, not in the values themselves but in the manner by which they are understood or practiced by Filipinos. Simply put, what Gorospe actually means here is that ambivalence is on the people, not on the values. Which goes without saying that it is ultimately not a case of ambivalent values but an instant of people misappropriating and misusing these values. The fact that people invoke Filipino values and norms in order to justify their negative attitudes, weak character traits, misdeeds, or immoralities does not necessitate the view that Filipino values are substantially wrong, vicious, and immoral. Gorospe fails to see this crucial distinction.

There is an obvious, rather almost scandalous, inconsistency in Gorospe's assertion. He is all too willing to deplore the enigmatic nature of Filipino values and norms and blames them for the disvalues (negative attitudes and misbehaviors) of the Filipinos. He attributes responsibility on the values themselves rather than on the social actor. However, in an uncharacteristic twist, he does not blame Christian morality for the immorality and hypocrisy of Christian Filipinos. Instead, he blames the people. He blames the Filipino values (normative standard) for the moral depravity of Filipinos. Yet, he blames the Filipinos, not the Christian morality (normative standard), for their immorality and hypocrisy. Gorospe may well be right in attributing responsibility (hypocrisy and immorality) to the Christian Filipinos. This is consistent with the principle in general ethics, which states that an act, moral or immoral, is properly attributed to the doer of an act under the conditions that such an act is done knowingly, freely, and voluntarily (Pilsner, 2006). However, Gorospe is wrong and inconsistent in ascribing responsibility (negative attitudes and misbehaviors) on Filipino values.

Gorospe's crucial mistakes leads him to the unfounded and erroneous claim of ambivalence of Filipino values and norms. More importantly, his dichotomization of Filipino values as evil or good, help or hindrance, and value or disvalue does not comport with the literature of sociological and psychological ambivalence.

Aristotle's Concept of Virtue and the Theory of Ambivalence. As stated earlier, Gorospe affirms the close affinity of the Filipino values system with the ideal of moderation in the Greek, Roman, Buddhist, and Confucian axiology. The concept of moderation finds its equivalent in the Filipino ideal of *katamtaman* (moderate). The notion of *katamtaman* is consistent with Aristotle's concept of virtue which is understood as the middle ground between the vices of excesses and deficiency. In fact, the Filipino saying "*Hindi labis, hindi kulang, katamtaman lamang*" (Neither in excess, nor in deficit, but moderate) rightly resonates this Aristotelian understanding of virtue.

To be consistent with the Aristotelian notion of virtue, Filipino values must be understood as rightly standing in the middle. As such, they are always right, good, and positive. Any attitudes, traits, and behaviors that fall short or exceed the bar of Filipino values should be judged as *kalabisan* (excess) or *kakulangan* (deficiency). When Filipinos fail to practice the values and norms of *kagandahang loob*, *pakikisama*, *utang na loob*, *bahala*, and *hiya*, their failure must be described as *kulang* (deficient) or *labis* (excess). The Filipinos' failure to embody the ideals of the *katamtaman* (moderation) should not be construed as part of the defining features of Filipino values and norms. Nor should Filipino values and norms be blamed for their moral failures. Aristotle is unambiguous, vices do not define virtues; vices are a failure to practice virtues (Crisp, 2004). The virtues cannot and should not be blamed for the existence of vices or vicious individuals.

Gorospe, Quito, and Licuanan fail to sustain this important Aristotelian notion of moderation in their claim of ambivalence. In their view, Filipino values are soiled, unstable, and ambiguous because they contain both the virtuous and the vicious. By comingling the elements of *kalabisan* and *kakulangan* with *katamtaman*, these renowned thinkers have effectively rendered the Filipino heart as a cesspool of moral decay. Gorospe, in particular, makes this colossal contradiction when he frames the Filipino values system in the context of *katamtaman* (moderation), yet goes on to undermine its integrity by poisoning it with the hemlock of *kalabisan* and *kakulangan*. Prominent as these thinkers are in the Philippines, their views have easily influenced many Filipino scholars and common folks. In fact, the view that Filipino values are ambivalent have been taken for granted and widely accepted as though gospel truth that provokes neither questions nor doubts. This view is anti-Filipino for it desecrates the Filipino soul.

Lamenting this erroneous and unfair characterization of Filipino values, the prominent Filipino anthropologist, Felipe Landa Jocano, explains that what many scholars and ordinary folks falsely call as “*negative values are actually actions violating the standard of proper behavior but are rationalized in the context of existing values*” (Jocano, 1997). In a study in *Defense of Hiya as a Filipino Virtue*, Lasquety-Reyes (2016) noted many scholars conferred the Filipino value of *hiya* (shame or embarrassment) with negative and ambivalent interpretations. Roces (1991) frames the concept of ambivalent behavior among Filipinos due to unresolved apparent conflicts between different sets of values. Roces' view of ambivalence is consistent with the sociological postulate of ambivalence.

It turns out, rather ironically, that it is the very conceptions and interpretations of the proponents of the ambivalence theory norms that are negative and vague and *not* the Filipino values and norms themselves. More importantly, the central claims of the ambivalence theory of Filipino values and norms do not find any support from the sociological and psychological postulates of ambivalence nor from the Aristotle notion of virtue.

4. Findings

The perusal of the central claims of the ambivalence theory of Filipino values, norms, and traits as propounded by Quito, Gorospe, and Licuanan yields *five* paramount findings. These findings sum up the crucial errors that refute the claim of ambivalence.

First, the arbitrary descriptions of Filipino values, attitudes, and traits. These descriptions do not only ignore the existing literature of Filipino values as provided by Filipino social scientists, but purposively follow a dichotomic approach of good and bad, right and wrong, weak and strength, virtue and vice in order to warrant a forgone conclusion of ambivalence.

Second, the misconception of Filipino values which comes in the form of an epic confusion between the Filipino values and norms (as a standard of what is right, good, virtuous, and desirable) and the negative attitudes, weak character traits, and misbehaviors (that deviate from that standard). These transgressive attitudes, character traits, and behaviors are erroneously deemed part of the defining features of Filipino values and norms rather than their adversative specimens. Merging the normative standard and its violations is a serious logical and factual mistake.

Third, Filipino values and norms are not only blamed for the deep moral malaise that afflicts Philippine society, worse, they are also used to justify the same moral decay.

Fourth, ironically, the proponents' conception of Filipino values and norms vague, negative, and inconsistent.

Fifth, most importantly, the central claims of the proponents of the ambivalence theory of Filipino values and norms fail to garner any support from the sociological and psychological postulates of ambivalence. Moreover, the Aristotelian notion of virtue decisively refutes the ambivalence claims.

5. Conclusion

Under the weight of the findings, the ambivalence theory of Filipino values and norms is decisively debunked as it crumbles into the ground of absurdity. The claim of ambivalence fails to garner any support from the sociological and psychological postulates of ambivalence. Aristotle's concept of virtue defies it. The ambivalence view is fatally flawed, but more importantly, it is inimical to the Filipino moral ideals and unfair to the Filipino people. It rears the social malaise of defeatism that cripples the Filipino's ability to believe and be proud of themselves as a nation.

In the putative post-ambivalence period, there is an urgent need to disabuse the minds of those who have credulously professed the ambivalence creed. The ways to move forward are manifold. The challenge for a critical interrogation of the problems concerning Filipino values and norms outside the lens of ambivalence is both important and imperative. The repudiation of the ambivalence perspective will most likely pave the way for fresh and genuine understanding of the normative ideals of the Filipino people as well as a candid recognition of the spiritual malaise and moral decadence that afflict this nation. There too is the challenge to examine the moral dissipation that afflicts the country's social institutions. The role of education is indispensable. These, among other things, await the vigorous interests of Filipino scholars.

It is worthy of note, however, that the conclusion arrived at in this study is limited to the theory of ambivalence as advanced by its proponents, and precludes other substantially different conceptions of ambivalence of Filipino values and norms.

References

- Aguas, J. J. S. (2016). The Filipino value of *pakikipagpagkapwa-tao* vis-à-vis Gabriel Marcel's notion of creative fidelity and disponibilit . *Scientia: The Research Journal of the College of Arts and Sciences*, 5, 17-39.
- Andres, T. Q. D. (1981). *Understanding Filipino values*. Quezon City, Philippines: New Day Publishers.
- Aurell, M. (2017). *The lettered knight: Knowledge and aristocratic behaviour in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries*. New York, NY: Central European University Press.

- Barakat, Z. M. (2017). *From heart of stone to heart of flesh: Evolutionary journey from extremism to moderation* (Vol. 17). Bavaria, Germany: Herbert Utz Verlag.
- Benitez J. (2022a). An Inquiry into the Problems Concerning Filipino Values and Norms. *Recoletos Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, 10(1), 39-50. <https://doi.org/10.32871/rmrj2210.01.03>
- Benitez, J. (2022b). Who Are We to Judge?': Pathologies of Moral Judgement. *CONNEXION Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 11(1), Article ID: 258088. Retrieved from <https://so05.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/MFUconnexion/article/view/258088>
- Benitez, J. L. (2020). *Filipino values and moral norms: An inquiry into the problems concerning their validity and efficacy* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Silliman University, Dumaguete City, Philippines.
- Benitez, J. L. (2015). The mendicants' rap poetry: Critique from the margins. *CNU-Journal of Higher Education*, 9, 231-240.
- Berman, N. (2012). *Passion and ambivalence: Colonialism, nationalism, and international law*. Boston, MA: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.
- Blazina, C., & Shen-Miller, D. S. (Eds.). (2011). *An international psychology of men: Theoretical advances, case studies, and clinical innovations* (Vol. 7). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Bulatao, J. (1964). Hiya. *Philippine Studies*, 12(3), 424-438.
- Bulatao, J. C. (1992). *Phenomena and their interpretation: Landmark essays, 1957-1989*. Manila, Philippines: Ateneo University Press.
- Bulloch, H. C. (2017). Ambivalent moralities of cooperation and corruption: Local explanations for (under) development on a Philippine island. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 28(1), 56-71. doi:10.1111/taja.12173
- Cleofas, J. A. (2019). *Towards a practical and empirically grounded account of utang-na-loób as a Filipino virtue*. Retrieved February 08, 2022, from <https://archium.ateneo.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1013&context=philofaculty-pubs>
- Crisp, R. (Ed.). (2014). *Aristotle: Nicomachean ethics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- de Castro, L. (1995). *Ang utang na loob bilang konsepto ng etika*. Quezon City, Philippines: CSSP Publications.
- de Castro, L. (1999). Kagandahang loob: Love in Philippine bioethics. *Eubios Journal of Asian and International Bioethics*, 9(2), 39-40.
- de Guia, K. (2005). *Kapwa: The self in the other*. Pasig City, Philippines: Anvil Publishing.
- de Mesa, J. (1979) *And God said, "Bahala na!": The theme of providence in the lowland Filipino context*. Quezon City, Philippines: Maryhill School of Theology.
- de Mesa, J. (1986). Loob and prayer. *Ministry Today*, 2(1), 42-50.
- Dy, M. B. (Ed.). (1994). *Values in Philippine culture and education* (Vol. 1). Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy.
- Enriquez, V. G. (1978). Kapwa: A core concept in Filipino social psychology. *Philippine Social Sciences and Humanities Review*, 42(1/4), 100-108.

- Enriquez, V. G. (1980). *Philippine world views: The Filipino weltanschauung in languages, literature, popular culture, visual arts, and other fields*. Manila, Philippines: Philippine Psychology Research House.
- Enriquez, V. G. (1992). *From colonial to liberation psychology*. Quezon City, Philippines: The University of the Philippines.
- Gorospe, V. R. (1994). Understanding the Filipino values system. In M. B. Dy (Ed.), *Values in philippine culture and education* (pp. 63-68). Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy.
- Griffiths, C. (2021). *The ambivalence of gay liberation: Male homosexual politics in 1970s West Germany*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Hillcoat-Nallétamby, S., & Phillips, J. E. (2011). Sociological ambivalence revisited. *Sociology*, 45(2), 202-217. doi:10.1177/0038038510394018
- Holnsteiner, M. (1973). Reciprocity in the lowland Philippines. In F. Lynch & A. de Guzman (Eds.), *Four readings on Philippine values* (pp. 69-92). Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila.
- Hong, Y. (2019). *A theological understanding of power for poverty alleviation in the Philippines with special reference to US-based Filipino protestants in Texas*. Retrieved January 25, 2022, from AsburyTheological Seminary website: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2360&context=ecommonsatsdissertations>
- Jocano, F. L. (1998a). *Filipino prehistory: Rediscovering precolonial heritage*. Quezon City, Philippines: Punlad Research House.
- Jocano, F. L. (1998b). *Filipino social organization: Traditional kinship and family organization*. Quezon City, Philippines: Punlad Research House.
- Jocano, F. L. (1997). *Filipino value system: A cultural definition*. Quezon City, Philippines: Punlad Research House.
- Kaut, C. (1961). Utang na loob: A system of contractual obligation among Tagalogs. *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, 17(3), 256-272. doi:10.1086/soutjanth.17.3.3629045
- Lasquety-Reyes, J. (2016). In defense of hiya as a Filipino virtue. *Asian Philosophy*, 26(1), 66-78. doi:10.1080/09552367.2015.1136203
- Licuanan, P. B. (1994). A moral recovery program: Building a people-building a nation. In M. B. Dy (Ed.), *Values in Philippine culture and education* (pp. 35-54). Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy.
- Lynch, F., & de Guzman, A. I. (Eds.). (1973). *Four readings on Philippine values* (4th ed.). Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila.
- Macaranas, B. P. (2018). *A philosophical review of Filipino values: Ambivalent values*. Retrieved September 30, 2020, from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Juan-Macaranas/publication/349991771_A_PHILOSOPHICAL_REVIEW_OF_FILIPINO_VALUES_AMBIVALENT_VALUES/links/604a59d3a6fdcc4d3e57ef9d/A-PHILOSOPHICAL-REVIEW-OF-FILIPINO-VALUES-AMBIVALENT-VALUES.pdf
- Maio, G. R., Haddock, G., & Verplanken, B. (2019). *The psychology of attitudes and attitude change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd.

- Mercado, L. (1976). *Elements of Filipino philosophy*. Tacloban City, Philippines: Divine Word.
- Mercado, L. (1979) *Elements of Filipino ethics*. Tacloban City, Philippines: Divine Word.
- Mercado, L. (1994). *The Filipino mind*. Retrieved September 30, 2020, from The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy website: <https://www.crvp.org/publications/Series-III/III-8.pdf>
- Merriam-Webster. (2021). *Ambivalence*. Retrieved February 08, 2022, from www.merriam-webster.com
- Merton, R. K. (1976). *Sociological ambivalence and other essays*. New York, NY: The Free Press.
- Meyer, S. S. (2008). *Ancient ethics*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Miranda, D. (1989). *Loob: The Filipino within*. Manila, Philippines: Divine Word Publications.
- Miranda, D. (1992). *Buting Pinoy: Probe essays on value as Filipino*. Manila, Philippines: Divine Word Publications.
- Miranda, D. (2003). *Kaloob ni Kristo: A Filipino Christian account of conscience*. Manila, Philippines: Logos Publications.
- Pilsner, J. (2006). *The specification of human actions in St Thomas Aquinas*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Quito, E. (1994). The ambivalence of Filipino traits and values. In M. B. Dy (Ed.), *Values in Philippine culture and education* (pp. 57-61). Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy.
- Reyes, J. (2015). Loób and kapwa: An introduction to a Filipino virtue ethics. *Asian Philosophy*, 25(2), 148-171. doi:10.1080/09552367.2015.1043173
- Roces, M. (1991). Cultural conflict as a framework for interpreting Philippine postwar history. *Asian Studies Review*, 15(2), 94-102. doi:10.1080/03147539108712782
- Tablan, F. (2021). Filipino virtue ethics and meaningful work. *Humanities Bulletin*, 4(1), 20-40.
- Tan, A. L. (1997). Values research in the Philippines. *Philippine Studies*, 45(4), 560-569.

