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FILIPINO BASIC ECCLESIAL COMMUNITY

between

LIMITATION

and

SELF- TRANSCENDENCE

A Lonergan-based Elucidation of Fundamental Spirituality

MARINA OBAL ALTAREJOS

Quezon City, Philippines
2007
FILIPINO BASIC ECCLESIAL COMMUNITY BETWEEN LIMITATION AND SELF-TRANSCENDENCE

A LONERGAN-BASED ELUCIDATION OF FUNDAMENTAL SPIRITUALITY

An academic essay in Theology

DOCTORAL THESIS

to obtain the degree of doctor
from Radboud University Nijmegen
on the authority of the Rector Magnificus, prof. dr. S.C.J.J. Kortmann,
according to the decision of the Council of Deans
to be defended in public on Friday, 11 January 2008
at 10.30 hours precisely

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SELF-TRANSCENDENCE

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een wetenschappelijke proeve op het gebied van de 
Theologie

PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor
aan de Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen
op gezag van de Rector Magnificus prof. mr. S.C.J.J. Kortmann,
volgens besluit van het College van Decanen
in het openbaar te verdedigen op vrijdag 11 january 2008
om 10.30 uur precies

door

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A worthwhile life, a life that is a work of art, is a life that is shared. This means that meanings and values in life are understood and put into action in genuine collaboration with others for the good of all.

As part of that shared life, I owe deep and sincere gratitude to the many people with whom I was blessed to have shared life in the course of writing this book; people, who shared their time, their thoughts, feelings, ideas, and their generous and loving support in various forms toward its completion.

In footnotes and even within the text itself, I have tried to acknowledge those who have helped me understand things better and taught me how to convey them more adequately. It is very clear that this book owes a significant amount of its content to Bernard Lonergan. It is a fact that not many people are able to immediately grasp what he was trying to impart, not only to the theological academy, but also to the church and to the wider human community. Perhaps this is because he was trying to address what is most fundamental for human understanding and living. Neither was it easy for me. But theologians such as Robert Doran, Sebastian Moore, Frederick Crowe, and especially Brendan Lovett, have helped me immensely to make the contribution of Lonergan more accessible to other students including Asians like me.

Grateful acknowledgments are due as well to Filipino historians Renato Constantino and Rafael Ileto, Filipino theologians Julio Xavier Labayen, Albert Alejo, and Dionisio Miranda, and to the many who have been involved in, and continue to work for, the promotion of basic Christian communities in the Philippines. Thanks too to Brian Gore, SSC for granting me an interview and sharing with me his experience with the people of the basic Christian communities of Negros.

Having mentioned those people involved in basic Christian communities in the Philippines, I feel that it is important, at this point, to state the names of some who have extended truly valuable assistance during the course of my field research in the Philippines. Arcadio M. Mejia, Jr. of St. Dominic Parish of San Carlos City, Pangasinan, has not only provided me with some necessary research materials concerning the Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) of the Philippines, but has also introduced me to these communities. His passion for the building and promotion of BECs as a way of reaching out to the people, especially to the poor, has, in one way or another, inspired me to research and write about them. In line with this, I would like also to thank the people of Simbaang Sankakaabay of San Carlos, Pangasinan who welcomed me into
their communities and treated me as one of their neighbors. Balbaleg ya salamat ed sicayon amin! Thank you too to Sarah de Vera, SFIC for allowing me to have access of the Northern Luzon-BEC documents and the SFIC Community in Baguio City for the generous accommodation provided.

Similar gratitude goes to the people of the Gagmay’ng Kristohanong Katalingban (GKK) of Tagum, Davao. Salamat kaayo! Contact with them was made possible by Patricio Donnie Aborde who provided me with accommodation while I was doing my research in the Diocese of Tagum and Federico Mantica who brought and introduced me to the people of the GKK. I wish also to thank the Lacal Family of Compostela Valley for warmly welcoming me into their home and Stichting Nijmeegs Universiteitsfonds (SNUF) for the financial assistance provided during my research in Baguio City and Davao City.

I wish to acknowledge as well the life shared by those with whom I had come in contact in the community beside the garbage dump of Batasan Hills, Quezon City, especially the one I fondly called Aling Romana.

The opportunity to study for a PhD in the Netherlands would not have been possible for me without Mary Thomas, who informed me about the availability of a PhD scholarship offered by the then Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen (KUN). She also helped me considerably in terms of financial resources needed for settling down in my first year in the Netherlands. Through her, I became the recipient of the generosity of the late Suzanne O’Callaghan. Without their assistance, it would have been really difficult, if not impossible, for me to travel abroad for the PhD Program in a foreign land.

I am also greatly indebted to the staff and faculty members of the Institute of Formation and Religious Studies then headed by Ann Rita Centeno, SSC as director and to the present president, Mary Corazon Demetillo, RGS for the recommendation and support. I would also particularly mention Cynthia Calubaquib for her help with the book cover design.

My sincerest gratitude to the administrators, faculty, and staff of the Graduate School of Theology, Radboud University Nijmegen led by its Director, Frans Wijsen and the Faculty of Theology, then headed by Peter Nissen as Dean, for all the assistance provided with regards to the PhD program, the scholarship, and other matters concerning my studies and stay in Nijmegen. To this, I would add the fatherly assistance and hospitality provided by Rogier van Rossum, SS.CC and Joop Vernooij, CsSR during my stay in Nijmegen College and Dominicus House respectively.

Grateful acknowledgment to the members of the Manuscript Committee composed of F. Maas, W. Derkse, and M. Plattig for their unanimous and immediate approval of the dissertation. And, of course, this would not have been possible without the patient and thorough guidance of my thesis promoters Toine van den Hoogen and Kees Waaijman and co-promoter
Brendan Lovett. Many thanks too to Robert Schreiter for taking time to read some parts of the dissertation and for providing helpful advice and to Ingrid Diaz-Wolters for willingly exerting effort to do the first translation of the summary of the dissertation into Dutch. This was later modified by A. van den Hoogen. I am also indebted to Stichting Sormani Fonds for financial assistance towards the printing of the book. Dank u wel!

The writing of this dissertation has not been without difficulties and has entailed some personal sacrifices. Nevertheless, I have been blessed with my family and with so many friends, whose encouragement has kept me moving forward, enabling me to embrace steadfastly the creative tension necessary for accomplishing the task.

Thus, these acknowledgments will not be complete without mention of the familial support imparted by the different Filipino communities in the Netherlands and in other parts of Europe. Space does not permit me to mention all their names individually. They know who they are and they know that I am sincerely grateful to them for treating me as one of their family. I am so blessed to have many nanays and tatays, titas and titos, ates and kuyas, who took very good care of me whenever there was an opportunity. It was also a bonus gift to have fellow Filipino students within the University with whom I was able to share the ups and downs of student life. Thanks to Dave D. Capucao, Gerard Francisco P. Timoner III, OP, Rico P. Ponce, OCarm. Marlon Lacal, OCarm, Julie Saguibo, SFIC and Edgar Adversario. Marami pong salamat!

I would like to thank as well the Columban Community in Dalgan Park, Co. Meath, Republic of Ireland for their living witness of the value of mission, especially in the Philippines. Go raibh maith agat!

It has been a blessing to have with me, all through the course of my writing, the grandmotherly presence of Helen Roberta Graham, MM the godmotherly presence of Megan McKenna, and the sisterly presence of Anthonette Mendoza, and Marilou and Maricel Ibita. I cannot and should not forget as well the grandfatherly support of Peter Leonard, SSC+ when I was preparing to leave for the Netherlands. God bless his soul.

The most significant source of encouragement, however, remains Brendan Lovett. He has been and continues to be both a lese meister and a lebe meister to me. I cannot thank him enough for the gift that he shares, the gift that he is.

Last but definitely not least, I thank God for the love poured out through my beloved family. This love that was revealed through them gives me direction and enables me to pursue the search passionately and with dignity and integrity within the movement of life that is life itself.
The writing of this book is lovingly dedicated in memory of my loving and beloved mother, Mrs. Bella Obal Altarejos. She has been the primary and powerful inspiration of this book and of most of the major tasks and challenges in my life. I have witnessed how the great love in her life that she showered on me and the entire family enabled her to surmount and shine through the many difficulties she encountered in her life. Her story will continue to guide the rest of my life and hopefully, through this book, can affect other people’s lives as well. There will be no end to her stories.

Definitely, all this would not have been possible without Divine Providence, the Mystery that governs the structure of emergence, and the Wellspring of all that is. It is only with the gratuitousness of Divine Love poured into people’s hearts that we can move forward creatively and appropriately within the greater scheme of things.

So, together with this thanksgiving is the prayer that we may all continue the search, trusting the Mystery that all shall be well in all manner of things because God loves us first and God loves us no matter what. May the healing and creating Spirit be with us all always!
INTRODUCTION

Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs): dream or reality? This is the question that confronts most of the BECs of the Philippines today. Looking into the path that these communities have taken from a post-Vatican II Church in the sixties to the Martial Law years of the seventies and from the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II) to the Church of this millennium, it seems that the dream of a renewed Philippine Church – one that engages itself in the transformation of the society and empowerment of the poor and the oppressed through the formation and promotion of Basic Ecclesial Communities – is still very far from becoming a reality. “[T]he vision of a Church renewed, a new way of being church, still simply waits – even begs – for realization.” Though there are some who have succeeded in becoming the basic units of the local Church that they now are, still many communities have failed or have become disinterested and many more are struggling painstakingly to be the communities of faith that they are supposed to be. Many reasons are being given: enthusiasm is there only in the beginning; reshuffling of the clergy and animators weakens the communities; people are staying away from involvement; relationship among the priests, the religious and the laity; most of the communities are more like prayer groups and do not involve themselves with social issues.

The response to the above-mentioned problems demands attention not only from the leadership of society and Church, but also from the very people of the grassroots who comprise the communities. These problems are to be addressed by the whole of society. On the one hand, there are officials in the town-offices who want to become bosses instead of truly serving the people. There are leaders who compete among themselves for power and status instead of working for the common good of the society. Yet, on the other hand, there are the common people who simply accept evil and have given up their right to express what they are feeling and experiencing. They tend to leave everything to the few at the top, or simply resign themselves to the governing status quo. They deplore the domination but they assist it through their passivity. They suffer under the exploitation, but they perpetuate it.

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1 This is also the title of the book that resulted from the National Consultation on BEC held in Cebu City, Philippines on November 11-15, 2002. Josemarie Delgado, Manny Gabriel, Estela Padilla, and Amado Picardal (eds), BECs in the Philippines: Dream or Reality. A Multi-disciplinary Reflection, Taytay, Rizal: Bukal ng Tipan, 2004.
2 Orlando B. Quevedo, “The Church of the Future and the Role of BECs In It” in BECs in the Philippines: Dream or Reality. A Multi-disciplinary Reflection, 66.
3 Cf. O. Quevedo, “The Church of the Future and the Role of BECs In It” in BECs in the Philippines: Dream or Reality. A Multi-disciplinary Reflection, 9.
forever, because they are competing in the very same way among themselves.\(^5\) It is a vicious circle of domination and submission that has its roots in the colonial period. This reigning culture of silence and dependence will carry on forever, unless something can be tapped to counteract it.

The Basic Ecclesial Communities were understood to be the locus of such counteraction, where the main power or strength rests on the dignity and the activity which is common to all: there are no classes of the ‘learned’ and the ‘ignorant,’ for all have some knowledge and experiences to share. In the BECs, the poor are to be the ‘artisans of a new humanity\(^6\) and of a renewed Church, necessary for the transformation of the society. The poor are not simply the recipients of charitable projects that reduce them to begging. The poor, as human as anybody else, have the capacity to be active and creative participants in the transformation of a society, searching for liberation and for a good and dignified life for all. This is not to romanticize the poor here. As mentioned above, they have their own share in the ongoing domination and exploitation in society. But the poor have their “great moments and they, too, have shining spaces in their souls.”\(^7\) These moments and spaces can be the font of a spirituality that can provide the needed alternative to the reigning oppressive and exploitative situation.

Let me illustrate the two faces of the poor with a story. I used to go to Batasan Hills in Quezon City (Philippines) to visit a community living near the garbage dumpsite. Most of the families living in this place earn their bread (or, rice in the Filipino context) by scavenging for recyclable materials in the dumpsite. There was a woman there (I call her Aling Romana), who invited me to join her in her scavenging one day. She, alone, takes care of her mentally ill son and a grandson. She goes to the dumpsite twice a week to pick up some old textiles and clothes. She washes and repairs them and, then, sells them. Some of her neighbors are generous enough to buy these items from her. But at the end of the day, when there are still some of these items left, she usually searches out those among her neighbors who might have need of necessary clothing and could not afford to have them. She gives them away for free. Aside from this, she also sometimes helps neighbors feed the pigs, for which she is usually given fifteen pesos. She goes home happy, for at least she has something with which to buy food for her son and grandson. This is a story of the poor helping the poor. It is said that when the poor give to their fellow poor, they give of their very substance, reminiscent of the poor widow in the gospel (Mk. 12, 41-44). In so doing, the giver becomes materially diminished in a way. There is the Filipino saying “Isusubo na lang, ibinigay pa.” Roughly translated, what one is about to put into one’s mouth,

\(^5\) Cf. C. Mateo, “How to Maintain Small Christian Communities, or Basic Ecclesial Communities” in *FABC Papers No. 92i*, 1-11.

\(^6\) *Theology for the Artisans of a New Humanity* was the sub-title of Juan Luis Segundo’s first five-volume series.

one gives up for someone more needy: giving even if it hurts, literally. This is often said of mothers of impoverished families.\textsuperscript{8}

In this case, we can say that if there were to be a model of what we are putting forward here, that is, the spirituality that elicits the power of the poor to bring about an alternative situation for them and for the entire society, it will be that of motherhood. The very role of motherhood refers to a commitment, a willingness and ability to go through the demanding process of risking one’s own life and security for the sake of the children. This present project explores this complex process of self-giving. To what extent can we, human as we are, go through this process in committing ourselves to others who are not our own, especially if it is already our own life and security that is at stake? What is to be the fount of such commitment?

In responding to the above questions, the other side of the human face has to be taken into consideration. There is more than a little ambiguity attaching to our customary invocation of being ‘only’ human. To continue the story of Aling Romana, she also expressed that it was not easy to go to the dumpsite. There are those from this same community of scavengers whom she calls, “may-ari” (owners), who have the claim for the garbage being dumped in the area. Each garbage truck has a number and particular groups claim the contents of a particular truck for their own. She has to ask permission from them to go through the garbage and pick the materials she needs. There are those who would permit her but there are also those who would not allow her to even get near to the garbage, and so, she leaves empty-handed. Inauthenticity, far removed from the true meaning of being human, creeps into the heart and soul of even the poor.

**Significance of the Study**

Faced with the ambiguity described above, this project takes on a search for a possible creative and appropriate response – a possible counteraction that transforms these ambiguities to what will constructively and efficiently promote significant human living. The book supports the hope of the Basic Ecclesial Communities, especially in the Philippine context, to be a catalyst in the realization of such response and in carrying out an effective critical reflection on the process of the human quest for significant living. The Basic Ecclesial Community is chosen as the locus of that response because the Catholic Church of the Philippines has taken the formation and promotion of the BECs as her main pastoral thrust. The Philippine population is predominantly Christian. The Philippines, the only Catholic country in the Orient, has a strong religious tradition. On the average, people place more confidence in churches and their leaders than they normally do in other

institutions, such as those of the government.\textsuperscript{9} This implies that if there is to be a transformation of society, there is a dire need for the participation and the leadership of the church, in this case, the Catholic Church. For Filipinos, religion remains an important aspect of people's life. Another thing is that the BECs are meant to be local churches from the grassroots, where the principal actors, the so-called artisans of history, are the poor. The majority of Filipinos are poor.\textsuperscript{10} Therefore, if this majority is brought into action, made to commit and truly work for the common good, the impact on societal transformation is seen to be great, deep, and lasting. More than numerical superiority, people power is based on the concept that ordinary people can stand up and overcome the forces of oppression by coming together, relying on their unity and solidarity, as an authentic community. “Filipinos could liberate themselves from the most oppressive conditions if they have the courage to unite, the determination to act, the perseverance to struggle together.”\textsuperscript{11}

The challenge is how to go about this? The Filipino poor, having evolved from the culture of silence and dependence imposed by the colonizers and having internalized this into the Filipino psyche, have very low self-worth. Their self-image is eroded by their humiliating poverty. Poverty and suffering have left most of the poor too numbed to even desire the needed transformation, much less to continue the search for that which would bring about such transformation. There is also the possibility that, if they do have the spark of such desire for transformation, initiatives may come from false premises, thereby tending towards ideology. This is where the present project would hope to offer a genuine and significant contribution. It concerns that which is most fundamental in significant human living and that which touches the core of our human existence.


\textsuperscript{11} Benjamin Bagadion, Jr., “People Power in the Philippines,” \textit{Philippine Sociological Review Vol. 34} (January – December 1986), Numbers 1 – 4, 5. See this article for documentation of five instances of effective non-violent resistance, or people’s power, which took place in various parts of the Philippines during the 1970s. Mobilization came usually from the urban poor and the indigenous peoples of different ethnic groups. Although the Church was not involved in all cases, the article lists Church support as another critical factor in the success of the organizing efforts in the Philippines.
The project concentrates on what is fundamental to all spirituality. It focuses on the dynamics of the human quest for significant living, seeking the normativity inherent in those dynamics. Discovery of how the quest can be authentically pursued is essential because it is clear that something is far from right with the present situations. And since situations are not right, transformation is called for. But the condition of transformation happening in the social arena is its occurrence within the people who comprise society. Bernard Lonergan avowed that the deepest human wound is the darkness of the mind that corrupts human history and distorts human praxis. Conversely, Thomas Merton pointed out that “one who attempts to act and do things for others or for the world without deepening one’s own understanding of freedom, integrity, and capacity to love will not have anything to give others.” Moreover, redemption can only be found where the human search for meaning encounters its transcendent ground. The foundational reality that brings the healing community together and keeps it together, insofar as it is true to its origins, is a shared interior response to the Transcendent, which is mediated by personal interiority. The project proposes that authenticity in the quest is what spirituality must embody. Spirituality, being concerned with transformation, cannot be devoid of a consideration of God – its transcendent ground. Transformation, totally in keeping with the tradition, describes the intentionality of the entire spiritual way. There is such deformation in human living that reformation is needed. Reformation proceeds from God and humans cooperate in it. “Spiritual life is so designed that ‘the image of God begins to be reformed by [the One] who formed it, for it cannot reform itself in the way it could deform itself’.” Transformation in society occurs when authentic human beings participate and cooperate in their reformation.

The project also shares in contributing to the resolution of a methodological crisis, in this case, in the field of fundamental spirituality by

12 An initial context here is provided by B. Lonergan in Insight, A Study of Human Understanding, New York: Philosophical Library, 1970, 518-520 [Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, Vol. 3, Insight, A Study of Human Understanding, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992, 541-543] where he achieves explanatory perspective on the meaning of the spiritual. This initial context needs to be expanded in ways that occupy the early chapters of the present work.
18 Fundamental spirituality reflects on what is foundational in Christian life. On this foundation are based categories of spirituality, including aspects like form descriptions, social and political implications, and spiritual practice. See Seminar Spiritualiteit, A. Rotzetter [ed], Zürich, Einsiedeln ect 1979-1982, I, 9.
putting forward the contribution of Bernard Lonergan in methodology. Sandra Schneiders points out that the distinguishing formality of spirituality is its focus on ‘experience’ and this demands an interdisciplinary method. Transformative Christian experience, as such, is multi-faceted. Schneiders, therefore, emphasizes that spirituality, as a discipline, is intrinsically and irreducibly interdisciplinary. Theology, in this case, is primarily an analytical and critical tool for the understanding and criticism of spirituality phenomena. For Marie-Dominique Chenu, however, “an authentic theology is nothing other than a spirituality which has discovered the proper rational expression of its

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19 An emerging science of interiority owes much to the life-work of Canadian Jesuit, philosopher-theologian Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984). Lonergan spent ‘years reaching up to the mind of Aquinas,’ a period which he later defined more closely as ‘about eleven years of my life.’ His doctoral dissertation was entitled Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas. His real discovery in his encounter with Thomas Aquinas was the way Aquinas worked, questioned and thought and understood and thought again and judged and wrote as he, Thomas, labored to reach up to the mind of God. The greatest benefit, however, that Lonergan derived from his encounter with Thomas was his sense of God as mystery: “… in the transcendence of divine operation on free human wills, a little later in the mystery of the Trinitarian processions, and through his life to Method in Theology and beyond, in the welter of words that with other theologians it was his vocation to utter, Lonergan never lost what Thomas above all theologians could teach, that theology can be done, must be done, that when it is done, we are confronted with mystery and bow our heads in adoration.” In 1953, Lonergan wrote the Preface for Insight, which was not published with the book. In it was a phrase that describes the concern that guided his study of the vetera in Thomas Aquinas; it was his concern as he began his great work on the nova and wrote his great work, Insight: A Study of Human Understanding. He wrote in the Preface, ‘one has to strive to mount to the level of one’s time.’ The remote controlling context of the book is simplicity itself: Catholic thought is seven centuries behind the times, it must take a giant leap forward – un balzo innanzi, as Pope John XXIII would call it in the early days of Vatican II. This shows that Lonergan, above all, was not an intellectual recluse, as some would view him to be; on the contrary, he was what he came to see in Plato, not pure intellect but a reformer concerned with social decline. Two stages marked Lonergan’s climb to the twentieth century: first, the writing of Insight, which was a coming to grips on one side with the empirical gains of the scientific revolution, and on the other with the critical philosophy of Immanuel Kant; the second was his experiments in theological method, where he came to grips with the new human sciences and their concern for meaning and value, as well as with the questions the new historical consciousness was raising for Catholic truth. For the second stage, the product was Method in Theology, published in 1972 and containing the breakthrough to the eight functional specialties. Late in life, Lonergan would say, ‘All my work has been introducing history into Catholic theology’. ‘The whole problem in modern theology, Protestant and Catholic, is the introduction of historical scholarship.’ Even in old age he was still hopeful about the contribution of the Second Vatican Council to this problem: ‘The meaning of Vatican II was the acknowledgment of history’. Cf. Frederick E. Crowe, Lonergan, England: Geoffrey Chapman, 1992 from which all the quoted materials in this note derive.


Lonergan’s work on the operations of the human subject in the direction of psychology and introspection rather than the direction of metaphysics resulted in the grasp of our emergent conscious process as a structured dynamism issuing in operations on four levels of conscious intentionality. The insistence of the perceived need for a division of labor among different disciplines can be seen as grounding an operative global invitation to discover the levels of consciousness at the heart of Lonergan’s clarification of interiority. Lonergan constantly drew attention to what he called the ‘on-going, self-correcting process of learning’ operative in science, as in all human living.

The writing of the present work has been greatly facilitated by the extent to which the path that it follows has already been partly explored by some authors. Recent attempts to build reflective spirituality critically in the manner attempted here include Tad Dunne’s Lonergan and Spirituality: Towards a Spiritual Integration, which is dedicated to unifying the field of spirituality by recourse to the work of Lonergan. However, Dunne does not claim to be meeting the methodological issue. Another is Daniel A. Helminiak, who has long studied the work of Bernard Lonergan. His book, The Human Core of Spirituality: Mind as Psyche and Spirit, is dedicated to developing a reflective spirituality on the basis of Lonergan’s clarification of the dynamics of the human spirit. Unfortunately, he insists on a methodology that allows a treatment of spirituality apart from consideration of God. This, I believe, is not what Lonergan intended and worked on; for religious experience is very fundamental to the method that he developed. There is also Vernon Gregson’s Lonergan, Spirituality, and the Meeting of Religions, which emphasizes the foundational value of spirituality as a clear meeting point of the world’s religions.

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24 A recent work by an Asian that pursued an articulation of appropriate method in the reflective study of spirituality under Lonergan’s inspiration is a doctoral dissertation by Theresa Insook Kim, “Living Authenticity: Bernard Lonergan and the Method of the Theology of Spirituality,” Manila: Faculty of Theology, University of Santo Tomas, 2002. The objective of the work was to remedy the lack of method in the discipline of reflective spirituality (2), a contribution which would particularly help the important task of deepening appropriation of the founding charism of the congregation to which she belongs. See footnote no. 15, page 5 of the published version of her work (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2002).
26 In this sense, Lonergan shares with Karl Rahner (a fellow Jesuit) the quite specific experience to which St. Ignatius of Loyola wishes to guide and direct spiritual practice through his Exercises. Rahner says of his own theology that in it the experience of God is of fundamental and decisive importance. (See K. Waaijman, Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods, 485.)
In the Philippines, there are many written materials about the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines, but very few, if any, are dedicated to spirituality. Most of the materials regarding the BECs of the Philippines used in this present project, therefore, are documentations of the different encounters of BECs, both local and national. The Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines becomes one of the primary resources as it calls for an articulation of a mature spirituality of Filipinos through the empowerment of the laity in the context of the BECs (PCP II, LXXXVII). One item, though, that I perceive to refer to spirituality is Julio X. Labayen’s Revolution and the Church of the Poor, although it does not explicitly make reference to the BECs. In the book, Labayen alludes, in passing, to the work of Bernard Lonergan when he talks about the human spirit, which he defines as “the dreamer and the visionary in us! It gives us the power to dream an impossible dream and to gaze at an unreachable star.”

THE RESEARCH AIM

This project aims at establishing a relationship between human authenticity and spirituality and asserts the value of this relationship to the challenges to growth and empowerment in human communities, which in this case are the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines. It investigates how spirituality as a matter of lived authenticity is the more adequate climate for the counteraction mentioned above. This means that adequate solutions to the present crisis or crises that the BECs of the Philippines are experiencing have a spiritual foundation. Thus, we are engaged in a study of fundamental spirituality. The solutions are grounded on the movement of the spirit in people: how they discern, judge, and act. To sustain enthusiasm, to encourage involvement, and to mend human relationships in authentic community building, therefore, demand more than just skin-deep social analysis. Whatever is going on in the community or in the society has its roots in those who form and make community and society – the people who experience, understand, judge, decide what they are to make of themselves and of the communities and society they form. Thus, it highlights human performance and the authenticity that is required in it. The thrust of the spirit is the open-ended human unfolding, the basic human drive for meaning and purpose and appropriate relatedness among people, with the universe, and with the ground of our being – God. Appropriateness of judgments, of valuing, and of actions, demands authenticity.

27 Fe Teresita Mendoza, a Filipina religious sister, wrote her PhD dissertation with recourse to Lonergan’s work, relating it to the task of forming the BECs in the Philippines towards interreligious dialogue. In it, she regards dialectic in Lonergan’s method in theology as an illuminating factor that can further the process of dialogue. Her work is titled: “Basic Ecclesial Communities, Authentic Formation and Interreligious Dialogue: A Lonerganian Perspective,” (Rome: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 2001).
28 Page 114 of the said book.
It is in this area that the work of Bernard Lonergan is primarily found to be of value and importance. His work, especially his work on method, provides the crucial help of enabling people to thematise wherein the authenticity of their performance consists. He shows that authenticity is achieved through self-transcendence. Self-transcendence, as presented by Lonergan, is the achievement of conscious intentionality, the dynamism of our search for truth and value which finds its ultimate fulfillment in being in love with God. Lonergan’s work on intentionality analysis is not the kind of introspection that dwells solely on the self. Rather, it is a process that is prompted by the experience of being loved (God’s gift of love). At that moment, the person realizes that to be human is not merely to exist. As beings beloved by God, our destiny is to live life to the full, the measure of which is how much of ourselves, our comforts and securities we are able to let go of to enable others to live life with dignity and integrity. The experience comes alive when we are confronted with the reality that something is not right, something is amiss in the way life in the world is going forward. We are confronted with suffering, oppression, injustice, and violence, of which we can either be the victims or the agents. The great crime of humanity, according to Rabbi Bunam, is that one can turn at every moment and yet does not do so. Our nagging conscience compels us to think and feel things through, and, thus, to act and do something. This is the flowering of a human being who is fully alive, that is, “homo vivens Gloria Dei” This, as I see it, is the heart of what Lonergan articulates as the process towards human authenticity that is achieved in transcendence. The crux of self-transcendence is the gift of God’s love, and the human response to this gift is the thrust of the spirit. Drawing from this, I can aver that spirituality, as response to the challenge of self-transcendence, is a matter of lived authenticity.

THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

There are two central questions that this present project needs to address. The first is concerned with whether Lonergan’s contribution can provide a framework pointing towards, perhaps even naming, what may be lacking within the Basic Ecclesial Community context in the Philippines, thus, creating a possible path towards meeting the challenges to growth and empowerment in the Basic Ecclesial Communities. Can documented materials about engagement in the BECs of the Philippines be understood and interpreted as expressions of “lived authenticity or inauthenticity” in the light of Lonergan’s elucidation of the term?

We have already pointed out above that though there are success stories of communities achieving their role – as loci for the empowerment of the poor,

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31 St. Ireneus.
thereby, exposing to critique the current situations of oppression, injustice, corruption, and other distortions in society – there are more of these communities who have failed in this regard. There are communities that were not able to sustain themselves and simply stopped existing. Others thrive only for the sake of their own private interests or for some form of ideology, far removed from the goal for which the Basic Ecclesial Communities are created and built, that is, the transformation of Philippine society to a situation of justice, solidarity, and integrity, a situation that approximates more closely the reign of God in the world.

The second critical question is related to this. To what extent does spirituality as a matter of lived authenticity locate its value and fundamental role in responding to this problem? A positive response to the first question would indicate how the project can be of service in enabling people to articulate and arrive at a possible method that will thematise the real dynamics behind the progress of communities, while assisting and helping other communities caught in the process of decline. This highlights the significance of a positive response to the second question: the central emphasis of this whole project is on the fundamental and central role of spirituality in any human collaboration that would respond to whatever crises we face today.

Putting the two questions together, the main question of the thesis is: How does a fundamental spirituality, understood within Lonergan’s approach to the doing of theology, systematically elucidate the challenges to growth and empowerment in the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines? The book is divided into three major parts and each part has its own guiding question. But all parts are governed by one methodology.

THE METHODICAL APPROACH

Documented works on the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines serve as representations of social and historical realities. For content analysis of the documents, the research employs an interpretative framework derived from the work of Bernard Lonergan, especially his *Insight* and *Method in Theology*. Sandra Schneiders, aside from stressing its being intrinsically and irreducibly interdisciplinary, also stressed the characteristically hermeneutical approach of the study of spirituality. This approach, according to her, must be understandable and meaningful in the present without violating its historical reality. She goes on to say that, by taking the anthropological approach to the discipline, spirituality is virtually coextensive with human transformative praxis. These requirements, constitutive of an effective interdisciplinary methodology in spirituality studies, are integrated in what Lonergan calls generalized empirical method – method that can embrace both the data of sense and the data of consciousness. This method is taken up in the

33 In his preface to Matthew L. Lamb, *History, Method and Theology* (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1978, xi), Lonergan explains how his own awareness of
present work. Its procedure will reflect the actual steps that Lonergan undertook in building from the basis of what he came to call “interiority” to the clarification of method in theology. The integration of the personal and communal aspects in community serves as the steering point for critical evaluation that will provide the way to a thematisation of lived authenticity. Crucial to the subsequent argument is the use made of the dialectical and spiritual dimensions of lived authenticity.

Lonergan defines ‘method’ as “a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results” and emphasizes that it is not a set of irreversible and static principles that are to be blindly followed but rather a framework of collaborative creativity. In Method in Theology, Lonergan uncovered the differentiated and distinct stages of the process from data to results in doing theology through the clarification of a complex eightfold reach. The doing of theology occurs in two phases: first is the listening phase – *oratione oblique* – retrieval or appropriation of the past, being in touch with tradition; second is the witnessing phase – *oratione recta* – the shaping of the future, participation in the historical moment. The first phase of doing theology involves four distinct specialties: research, interpretation, history, and dialectic. The second phase is made up of four more: foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications. Each of these stages is specified by the kind of intelligibility being sought and has its meaning *in function of* the larger project of doing theology. The italicised words signify the heart of Lonergan’s breakthrough to functional specialties, intrinsically related to one another. The project highlights the moments of foundations, systematics, and communications in Lonergan’s understanding of the theological task. This helps provide a methodological clarification of fundamental spirituality which relates it to lived context.

**The Research Design**

Part One deals with a thematisation of spirituality based on the explanatory elements in the work of Bernard Lonergan. It is a thematisation grounded on the authenticity in human performance in the context of the basic Christian community. It prepares the ground for addressing the above questions by first presenting that in Lonergan’s contribution which provides the contemporary mathematics and science “brought to light… a generalized empirical method that covers the learning process of common sense, the procedures of empirical science, the ways of historical scholarship, and the philosophical grounding of the objectivity of human knowledge. This grounding is placed in authentic subjectivity. It challenges the once seductive implementation of reason through experimental science. It invites thoughtful men and women to the self-understanding and self-appropriation that can follow from a heightened awareness of their powers of attention, their own intelligence, their own reasonableness, their own conscientiousness. It founds a methodology that not only accounts for the diversity of specializations but also stresses the historicity of their past development and promotes their future interaction and collaboration.”

34 *Method in Theology, 5 & xi.*
elucidation and tools needed for unearthing the answers to such questions and, thereby, for the achievement of the project’s objective. Thus, it includes the important concepts that Lonergan developed from *Insight* to *Method in Theology* which, in turn, were affirmed and made more explicit by Robert Doran, Sebastian Moore, and Brendan Lovett, among others. Such thematisation enables us to achieve clarity about what constitutes normative and authentic performance. This offers the grounding on which spirituality as lived authenticity can be articulated.

*Chapter One* deals with a clarification of the term ‘spirit’ and its explicitation into the field of spirituality and human authenticity. It refers to that which enables us to negotiate the movement of life in us. The Chapter presents the dynamic life of the human spirit as that to which the term ‘spirituality’ refers.°°°³ Lonergan never used the term ‘spirituality’ in carrying through his intentionality analysis. But since he has always worked on the most fundamental level, the real impact of his contribution is to effectively illumine the meaning of that term. With the dynamics of the human spirit as his base, his work cuts through the prejudices and dichotomies of contemporary confusions. Through his clarification of these dynamics, we are enabled to see how all authentic human performance in both knowing and doing promotes transcendence. Spirituality, derived from this core meaning of spirit and its dynamics, comes to be recognized as a matter of lived authenticity.

The dynamic life of the spirit reveals a drive and quest for meaning and direction. *Chapter Two*, therefore, proceeds to elaborate on the dynamics of the quest. Central to the quest is authentic human performance effected through the integrity of the scale of values and the kind of conversion undergone.

While the first two chapters address mainly the dynamics within an individual, the remaining chapters of Part One single out the notions that more directly relate to that of human communities and, subsequently, to that of the basic, and then Christian, communities.°°°³ This is in preparation for the second part that explores the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines. *Chapter Three* deals with establishing an understanding of authenticity in human community and then to an understanding of what an authentic basic community implies. *Chapter Four* explores the manner in which this authenticity is manifested in Christian community as an instance of the gratuitous and radical fulfillment of self-transcendence. The governing perspective of this Chapter is Lonergan’s clarification of religious experience as the gratuitous and radical fulfillment of our capacity for self-transcendence.

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°°°³ Julio Xavier Labayen holds the same ground in his lecture on “Incarnational Spirituality”, Infanta, Quezon, Philippines, 24 March 1990.

°°°³ The communities of faith that were started in the Philippines in the 60’s were first called Basic Christian Communities or BCC’s. In the 70’s, especially after the imposition of Martial Law in the country, the name was changed to Basic Ecclesial Communities. This will be discussed further in Part Two that dwells on the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines.
Central to this chapter is the elaboration of what faithfulness to the just and mysterious law of the cross entails.

Building on the grounds established in Part One regarding authenticity and spirituality, Part Two identifies the historical, contextual, and ecclesial backgrounds of some exterior and interior problems with which the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines are confronted. Part Two begins in *Chapter Five* by presenting an historical background of the emergence of the Filipino people. The focus of *Chapter Six* is a brief sketch of the Church in the Philippines and its role and implications to Filipino Christian spirituality. As the flow of the functional specialties of Lonergan’s method in theology indicates, historical accounts are necessary to establish foundations. Chapter Five gives due attention to the roots of poverty and oppression in the colonial period. As Chapter Six focuses on the emerging church, its primary concern is the spiritual development of Filipinos from the indigenous or native lay spirituality of the pre-colonial period to the Catholic Christian spirituality that most of the Filipinos of today have embraced. While Chapter Five can be seen as revealing the problem, Chapter Six considers the kinds of response that were given.

*Chapter Seven* is still a part of the above historical mapping, but is more concerned with the future. If Chapters Five and Six belong to the first phase of Lonergan’s method in theology where concern is with appropriation of the past, Chapter Seven, with its focus on the building and promotion of Basic Christian Communities as a new way of being church, is already moving us into second phase concern with the shaping of the future. The focus on the emerging church in Chapter Six carries through in Chapter Seven to the building of the Basic Christian Communities, a naming which came to be changed to that of Basic Ecclesial Communities.

The last part is in the form of an integrating summary and general conclusion. In the form of an integration of Parts One and Two, Part Three clarifies the extent to which the Lonergan-based elucidation of fundamental spirituality is able to critically analyse the challenges to growth and empowerment of the Basic Ecclesial Communities. Concerned about growth in the BECs, *Chapter Eight* points out the relationship between Lonergan’s contribution to the study of fundamental spirituality and its implications for the challenges to growth and empowerment of the BECs in the Philippines. The Chapter also takes on the three-fold conversion formulated by Lonergan to illustrate and elaborate how spirituality as lived authenticity may need to be promoted in the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines. The stages of growth in the Basic Ecclesial Communities, discussed at the last part of Chapter Seven, are taken up again here in order to clarify the process of transformation and conversion within the communities. As an excursus, this section on conversion includes an exploration of the linguistic resources of Pilipino (Tagalog) terms to establish the practical feasibility of transposing the analysis to the cultural context. Such transposition of the analysis is necessary to ensure effective communication to those who are the objects and subjects of this project – the people of the BECs of the Philippines. The Chapter then proceeds to elaborate on what makes for growth and
empowerment in the BECs: a genuine discipleship of Jesus Christ that would encourage involvement in social transformation, historical consciousness, and the learning process. Chapter Nine is for general conclusions. It begins by reviewing the most important areas in Lonergan's work that provide useful tools towards an understanding of the relationship between spirituality and authenticity and thereby clarifying what spirituality as lived authenticity means. Finally, indications for further complementary research, relevant to promoting the life of the basic communities, are offered.
Part I

**Thematising Spirituality in view of Basic Ecclesial Communities**

**Main question:** What explanatory elements in the work of Lonergan effectively thematise a fundamental spirituality adequate to the Basic Ecclesial Communities?
Part One is a thematisation of authenticity following the work of Bernard Lonergan, especially in his works *Insight* and *Method in Theology*. The argument runs as follows. The degree to which human beings are authentic determines the appropriateness of their response to the current distortions in human life. Since the invocation of authenticity can never be self-authenticating, the key question is whether it is possible to thematise in critical fashion wherein, exactly, authenticity consists. Following Lonergan, a positive answer is found in uncovering the normativity that belongs to dynamically emergent, historically conditioned, human spirit. It is here that we find the means of critically determining the presence or absence of authenticity in human performance. Fidelity to this normativity of our unfolding consciousness provides us with the basic meaning of spirituality. So conceived, spirituality is a matter of authenticity or unauthenticity. It is in this precise sense, viz., where spirituality is understood as a matter of lived authenticity, that this present work is principally a study in fundamental spirituality.

Human beings are endowed with sufficient capacity and potentiality to either make or unmake the world. We shape history even as history shapes us and so we are responsible for whatever our world becomes. Our unauthenticity in falling short of this responsibility gives rise to costly problems, bringing suffering and misery to the human family.

Though, as I mentioned above, Lonergan never used the term ‘spirituality’ in his work, he succeeded in providing an explanatory perspective on the reference of the term ‘spirit’ and its dynamics within the human person and community. It is within this perspective and clarification that the task of

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1 To preclude misunderstanding, a note on Lonergan’s meaning of normativity is in order. For him, to reach a normative theoretical framework on any problem was to achieve *explanatory perspective* on that problem. Explanatory perspective involves a system of basic terms where the terms are defined by their relations to each other, and the relations fixed by the terms, a matter then of implicit definitions.

In common parlance, anything ‘normative’ is usually thought of as involving value judgments, as opposed to ‘descriptive’ factual judgments. For Lonergan, the meaning of ‘normative’ involves no such opposition. To ‘descriptive’, however, he does assign a particular meaning that needs to be noted. For him, a descriptive account is one that treats in relations to ourselves and our senses. What is known in the common sense world (in Lonergan’s sense of the world) is known in a descriptive rather than explanatory way. Explanatory understanding grasps an immanent lawfulness or intelligibility or regularity in data as empirically apprehended.

It is this lawfulness as defining the intelligible relationships in phenomena perceived, that is referred to by the word ‘normative’. It does, of course, have implications for arriving at value judgments: it is a good thing to respect the normative natures of processes and things. (On implicit definitions see *Insight*, 37, 417, 460-61, 462, 516).

2 The word ‘unauthenticity’ is used by Lonergan to refer to people, while he uses ‘inauthenticity’ for things or objects other than the human. This present work follows the same distinction.
thematising authentic human performance is carried out in the first part of this book. What is found useful in Lonergan is that he was able to provide the modest but crucial assistance of enabling people to thematise wherein the authenticity of their performance consists. To point out, to make people aware of, their God-given capacity, notwithstanding their limitations, to change or transform death-dealing situations to life-giving ones, is not, in any case, to tell people how to do their own jobs or their own business. His invitation is to self-appropriation. If there is going to be a genuine breakthrough in people’s lives, it will be because people, deeply affected by what is going forward in the world, and strongly believing that, in God’s grace and mercy, they have the capacity to change situations and make the world a better place to live in, take the risks of getting involved and participating in God’s world in the making. The making of authentic human persons in authentic community is principally the working of God’s grace with the cooperation of human beings who desire the truly good and believe that they can do so within a community. Here, plainly, authenticity cannot be taught. It can, however, be learned through the dynamics intrinsic to being truly ourselves. These dynamics are at the heart of all Lonergan’s work. This is the reason his work is being resorted to in this present study on authenticity and spirituality. Given openness, the struggle with Lonergan’s work can enable a person to heighten her awareness of what makes for authenticity and its opposite in her own life.

It has to be emphasized that Lonergan worked on method in theology and, therefore, primarily addresses theologians. He is insistent that it is not incumbent on anybody to have to differentiate her or his consciousness in order to accept the Gospel, nor it is necessary for anybody’s salvation to achieve the self-appropriation to which Insight invites. On the other hand, he is equally insistent that such self-appropriation has become a professional demand on anybody who would undertake to do theology in contemporarily adequate manner. For the theologian to provide adequate help and guidance to the community of faith, she or he must struggle for such attainment, not with a view to teaching self-appropriation to the members of the community, but in order to mediate its fruits to their world. This is in no way to imply that the members of the communities are lacking in the level of self-appropriation that belongs to moral self-knowledge.\footnote{In a concluding 22-page scholion on the psychological analogy in Scripture in his doctrinal consideration of Trinitarian theology, (to appear shortly in English translation as the 11\textsuperscript{th} volume of his \textit{Collected Works}, University Toronto Press, under the title \textit{The Triune God: Doctrines}), Bernard Lonergan speaks of four manifestations of psychological reality. “The first is purely private, since it consists in the immediate data of consciousness. The second is public and common; for in the daily use of nouns and verbs there are a great many things that proceed from one’s interior experience and express it well enough for it to be understood by others who usually have the same or similar experience. The third is a psychological technique…. The fourth is systematic and philosophical.…. With this in mind, no one surely supposes that any but the first two of these psychological manifestations were experienced by the apostles.”} They may very well excel at that level. It is simply to state that this work is primarily a reach for explanatory understanding
of the dynamics relevant to the life of the basic Christian communities. As such it may be found relevant to those specializing in disciplines concerned with authentic and integral human development.

Lonergan’s concern was to promote a contemporarily adequate doing of theology. Adequacy here is defined in relation to meeting the dual challenge of developments in scientific understanding and historical scholarship in our times. When the doing of theology is governed by historical-mindedness, not only does theology in this new context move from being a deductive to what is largely an empirical science, it also necessarily becomes interdisciplinary. Lonergan’s organic systematisation of theology centers on conversion, thereby, placing emphasis on the practical and experiential aspect of Christian life on which theology reflects.\(^4\) This, as I see it, makes Lonergan’s work relevant to Christian life as a whole, which includes building authentic communities of faith that serve as a catalyst towards that alternative situation that more closely approximates the reign of God in human affairs.

These limited hints and pointers must suffice as introduction to Part One of the thesis. Chapter One highlights the relationships between authenticity and self-transcendence on the ground of Lonergan’s explanatory perspective on the human spirit. Chapter Two expounds on the elements that affect authentic human performance in the quest for meaning and direction in the movement of life. Chapter Three takes up what was expounded in Chapter Two to elaborate on authenticity in the communitarian level. Chapter Four, the culminating chapter of this part, extends the elaboration of authenticity to the context of Christian faith tradition by focusing on the central symbol of that tradition, the symbol of the Crucified and Risen One, and on its theological clarification as the just and mysterious law of the cross. Authentic Christian living, which the cross of Christ reveals, is a moment of the gratuitous and radical fulfillment of self-transcendence.

CHAPTER 1

AUTHENTICITY

The basic word ‘spirituality’ is rooted in the biblical semantic field of the Hebrew ruach or the Greek pneuma, roughly translated in English as ‘spirit’. Spirituality, in this sense, evokes a process, a movement of the spirit indicating a dynamic relation between the divine Spirit and the human spirit. Before an account of authenticity and spirituality and the relationship between them can be elaborated, it is fundamental to set down a clarification of the term ‘spirit’. This is our first task.

The meaning of ‘spirit’ is legion and, thus, can be taken up and understood in different perspectives. For Filipinos, for example, the term ‘spirit’ is more understood in the plural sense – ‘spirits’. In a manner that lacks an adequate English equivalent, ‘spirits’ are imagined by traditional Filipinos to be corporeal and to be treated as such, their invisibility notwithstanding. There are benevolent and malevolent spirits. But there is also hierarchy among the numinous beings to the extent that they are regarded as of high or supreme rank. These are the gods and goddesses, which are called in different names – such as Bathala for the Tagalogs, Diwata of the Subanon, and Kabunian of the Cordilleras, to name a few. Generally, it will be very difficult for customary Filipino thought to understand what a human spirit is, unless we elaborate on the spirit’s concrete manifestation in human reality. There is even no concrete and particular word for ‘spirit’ in the Pilipino language. I have never heard a Filipino saying, “ang aking espiritu” (my spirit), but only, “ang aking kaluluwa” (my soul), which relates more to the imagined invisible spirits, as in ‘my soul’ lingers even when I die. In this sense, ‘spirit’ for a Filipino refers to something that is beyond the grasp of our physical reality but nevertheless affects everyday life. It refers to that which is invisible and transcendent and manifests itself by the effects it has on the visible and physical world. In school, Filipinos learn from religion classes of an Espiritung Banal, which translates to the Holy Spirit. By this, we can deduce that a more effectual understanding of ‘spirit’ for most Filipinos has to essentially include a consideration of God. Spirituality – the thrust of the spirit, the movement of life in us – touches the core of human existence, that is, humanity’s relation to the Absolute.

Here, in this present work, an appeal is made to Lonergan’s explanatory perspective on the term ‘spirit’. Let me just make a short clarification as to the reason of the choice of such an appeal in anticipation of sceptical

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apprehension as to whether Lonergan can provide the necessary perspective and aid for the realization of the task at hand. The arguments are clear: he is a Westerner and an intellectual presumably remote from the concern for what is going on in the lives of ordinary people. How is he ever to speak to the poor, much more to the Filipino poor of the Basic Ecclesial Communities? Lonergan, himself, was well aware that his formulation is culturally determined and so he anticipates endless future refinements and complements on this. But since what is being brought forth to formulation is the dynamic structure of consciousness, which makes people to be people, that is to be identified as transcultural, which is operative in the generation of all cultures. What is transcultural is the reality of the dynamism of human intelligence and love. I mentioned above that Lonergan has always worked on the most fundamental level; fundamental in the sense that it can embrace the differences in cultural contents, for it focuses on that which people of every culture most deeply share – the normative dynamics of human consciousness. This allows a possibility of cross-cultural communication.

It is in these same dynamics of human consciousness that Lonergan’s clarification of ‘spirit’ is situated. But why ‘spirit’? In ordinary usage ‘the human spirit’ is how we refer to that in us which has us reaching towards achievement, towards self-transcendence. In his concern with emergent human consciousness Lonergan is seeking to identify how it is that we search for direction in the movement of life in which we find ourselves immersed. People strive to live meaningful lives even when placed in the most appalling circumstances, circumstances such as those of the woman in my opening story above. They strive to make something meaningful out of what others would consider impossible circumstances, thereby transforming mere existence into authentic and significant living. They creatively discern a meaningful response to the situation in which they find themselves. The dynamics whereby they effect such every-day discernments is what Lonergan is concerned to bring into explanatory perspective under the heading of spirit. With a contemplative eye, discernment leads a person to look at her or his life journey and envisions its perfection.\(^8\) This ‘looking at one’s life’ and this envisioning is, in Lonergan’s elaboration, first and foremost, a response to God’s love poured out into people’s hearts. This means that it is not merely passive and personal alone but rather is, at the same time, a dynamic and onerous task that is always directed towards a communal concern. It impels one to attend more closely to one’s experiences and distinguish right from wrong, to make judgments as to what is true or not, and to make decisions on what actions are to be performed. Thus, discernment is the way of the spirit, a way towards transcendence and perfection. Coming to know spirit, therefore, is equivalent to a self-appropriation of one’s conscious knowing within the wider context of conscious living in a continuously changing world.

Thus, the first Chapter is devoted to elaborating a critical understanding of the term ‘spirit’. This understanding is a crucial aid in human life’s undertaking of the difficult path of achieving transformation through self-transcendence.

Self-appropriation reveals that the way to self-transcendence involves a process constituted by understanding what we experience, being reasonable in judging this understanding, and finally evaluating fairly and discerning appropriately so as to be open to friendship and solidarity. Self-appropriation can only occur in undergoing the process just named. The process must be undergone in order to understand more deeply the meaning of being human within the emerging universe and help provide the needed human response for participation in the ongoing project of God’s world in the making. As participants in the furtherance of the human search for truth and life, our personal fidelity to the insistent demands of the dynamics of our own consciousness, that is, the thrust of the spirit in us constitutes the authenticity that is required of us. This, I submit, is not negotiable. In one way or the other, we have to respond to the insistent demands of the spirit in us. To be human, to belong to the human family, fidelity to these dynamics of the spirit is to be responded to, embraced, and lived.

1.1 THE OPEN STRUCTURE OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT

1.1.1 The Dynamism of the Spirit and the Notion of the Spiritual

The meaning of the word ‘spiritual’ in the present cultural context is largely nominalist and heavily overtoned by good and bad religiosity. On the bad side, there is an abundance of stuff on ‘out-of-bodiness’ and ‘neardeathology’ that is just naïve realism run riot. Spirituality becomes interpreted as a phenomenon of withdrawal from the external, physical world. It is interesting to know that for Filipinos, spirituality, though there is no native term for it, is always associated with the divine – how one relates with the divine and, thus, determines the way one relates to the world. This has been mentioned above, where ‘out-of-bodiness’ is more associated with the soul (kaluluwa) rather than the spirit. To be ‘spiritual’ then means being close to the divine, listening to the spirit within and manifesting it in words and actions.

A friend once told me that I am very spiritual. I asked what she might mean by that? Is it not that as human beings, we are all material and spiritual at the same time? If I am not spiritual, then I am not human. But she did say, ‘very spiritual.’ Can spirituality be measured then? In the 17th and 18th century Europe, there was a dichotomization between higher and lower forms of spirituality, where a spiritual person is someone who is “more abundantly and more profoundly a Christian” than others. This dichotomization has affected even the Filipino understanding of the term since majority of Filipinos are Christians. I would argue, however, that Christianity as a faith tradition is not the measure of what spirituality is all about. Rather, to be spiritual implies that my inner dynamics are in full force and this is revealed by my presence, of who I am as revealed to another at a particular moment. The full embodiment

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of our inner dynamics, therefore, is to be spiritual. To be spiritual is to espouse the dynamics of the human spirit.

Previously, I made mention of the ambiguities of human life. These ambiguities are laid bare in suffering, in human violence, in acts of injustice and oppression. So, how do people live with these ambiguities? Is it possible? Life itself shows that it is. It is possible because human beings are capable of understanding, of discernment, of decision, and of love. This is because humans are not merely matter, but both matter and spirit. The presence of the spirit in people makes life intelligible in the midst of its many ambiguities. This is the reason why human beings strive to go beyond merely existing and search for the meaning and significance in living.\(^\text{10}\) How can an Aling Romana in the story at the beginning of this book, for example, move on with life and find meaning in it – this meaning which she finds in being able to provide food on their humble table so that her son and grandson will not pass a single day hungry, to have enough of their daily needs and, at the same time, being able to share something to her more needy neighbors in the midst of her family’s own poverty? She can because she is attentive to the prompting of the spirit in her and responds to it. What makes the human response appropriate, one that is truly beneficent; in other words, authentic? To answer this question is to grasp the normative dynamics of the human spirit.

As spiritual beings, we are oriented towards the universe of being. We know ourselves as parts within that universe and guide our living by that knowledge. Such is the comprehensiveness of the spiritual. Its reach is the universe of being. It is in virtue of that reach that humanity can know not only the universe but that the universe can bring forth its unity in the concentrated form of a single intelligent view. The reach, not of our attainment, but of our intending is unrestricted. Perfection of the spiritual does not only require that the intelligible be understood, but also that affirmable truth be affirmed and lovable good be loved.\(^\text{11}\)

Our reach, that is, the universe of being, in reality remains a becoming. It is always incomplete because it is a continuous process. That is why the dynamics of the spiritual are unrestricted. We are but dust in the vastness of the universe. Our physical existence is limited. Yet by intelligence and feelings, humans are given the capacity to understand the order that makes everything hang together, that limitations are necessary to enable others to flourish in their own time, that there is a greater and wider order to which each one of us is only a part and that, in order to maintain this order, the part that is entrusted to us must be done and done well. Our meaning as human beings transpires in this activity of understanding. The spiritual is incomplete as long

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\(^\text{10}\) But the thrust of the spirit is primarily corrupted by limitations that situations may impose. This is the case of most poor people. But it can as well be corrupted by different kinds of bias. See section 3.1.2 below on Dialectic of Community for forms of bias elaborated by Lonergan.

as it can inquire; in contrast to the material, which is necessarily incomplete
simply in virtue of the contingency of its existence. As the center of sensitive
experience, intelligibility is material. As the center of the transformation of
sensitive experience by the imposition of an intellectual pattern, and as the
origin and ground of inquiry and insight, it emerges as spirit.

1.1.2 The Structure

A whole has parts. The whole is related to each of the parts, and each of
the parts is related to the other parts and to the whole. But not every whole is
a structure. A whole is a structure when every part is determined in virtue of
its functional relations to the other parts. A structure possesses certain
inevitability in its unity that the removal of any part destroys the whole, and an
addition of any further part would render the whole absurd. A sentence,
being formed by words that are related to each other, for example, is in itself a
structure especially with regards to the meaning that it has to convey. The
addition of a word, which does not belong here, or the removal of a necessary
word, will make the sentence either absurd or destroy the whole meaning of
the sentence. By contrast, in the case of a bottle of ink, there are no parts that
relate to each other and to the totality in a manner needed to speak of a
structure.

From the beginning of scientific development in the realm of physical
theory until its expression in the quantum theory of the 20th century, we learn
that the whole is always greater than the sum of the parts. This means that
each part cannot just be taken in isolation without its relations to the whole and
to the other parts. The interplay of the parts may be compared to the
movements of a dance. We can only learn the movements by participating in
the dance itself. It is only by participating that we learn what the dance is all
about. It is the same way with the structure of the human spirit. As a
structure, it forms a normative pattern of operations, enacted in different levels
of consciousness. Each level is distinct from the others but cannot function
without its relation to the others. And, it is only by doing the operations that
the whole pattern is grasped. The operations are experienced not singly but in
their relations for they are not merely conscious operations but parts of
conscious processes. It is imperative to understand the parts in order to
understand the unitary whole, but the meaning of the parts is determined by
the meaning of the whole.

The structure of the human spirit is an open, ongoing, progressive, and
cumulative process, consisting of a normative pattern of operations. Operations have objects. By the operation, we become aware of the object,
the intended object. Operations also have subjects, the operators. The

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13 Lonergan articulates these operations in terms of transcendental imperatives. See section 1.3 below on the Transcendental Imperatives.
operator operates consciously. She gives her whole attention to the objects as attended to. The emergently structured process of the human spirit is, therefore, both intentional and conscious.

As structured dynamism, the human spirit moves through different 'levels' of intentional consciousness. This movement through levels yields the normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results, which Lonergan refers to as transcendental method.\textsuperscript{14} There is the empirical level, which refers to the data of the sense. Then, there is the intellectual level of understanding yielding a possible intelligibility through insight. The rational level of reflection and judgment results in the determination of truth or falsity, certainty or probability; and finally the level of responsibility, wherein we deliberate for possible courses of action and make decisions. Only through fidelity to the dynamic movement of emergent consciousness through the sequence of sublating\textsuperscript{15} moments does the human spirit achieve its purpose.

The structure of our emergent consciousness is that of compound knowing. Compound means a conjunction of several distinct activities into a single knowing. The compounding is the work of the transcendental notions. Many elementary objects (any cognitional operation) are constructed into a single compound object, and in turn, the many compound objects will be ordered in a single universe. As elementary objects are constructed into larger wholes, as many operations are conjoined in a single compound knowing, so too the many levels of consciousness are just successive stages in the unfolding of a single thrust – the \textit{eros} of the human spirit.

The human spirit is substantial and common to human nature and human activity. It is responding to the thrust of the spirit that makes us human. Spirit is intrinsic to humanity, so that all truly human activity is, in one way or the other, spiritual. Responding to the thrust of the spirit is the human capability of self-transcendence. It is by self-transcendence that we come to our fuller self, we emerge as persons and meet one another in a common concern for values. Judgment of values and the decision to act based on these judgments enable us to organize a way of human living which can either promote life for us and others or impede the fruitful movement of life in us and in others in community. Response to the thrust of the spirit in us has to be on the basis of human perceptiveness and intelligence, reasonableness, and responsible

\textsuperscript{14} Cf. B. Lonergan, \textit{Method in Theology}, 6-16

\textsuperscript{15} Lonergan stresses that his use of the notion of sublation follows that of Karl Rahner (1963, 40) and not that of Hegel: that is, “that what sublates goes beyond what is sublated, introduces something new and distinct, puts everything on a new basis, yet so far from interfering with the sublated or destroying it, on the contrary needs it, includes it, preserves all its proper features and properties, and carries them forward to a fuller realization within a richer context.” (\textit{Method in Theology}, 241).
exercise of freedom. Spirit makes us one human race. It is the ultimate source of human solidarity.\textsuperscript{16}

1.1.3 Open and Dynamic

The structure of the human spirit is materially dynamic inasmuch as it is a pattern of operations. It is formally dynamic for its dynamism is not restricted to the parts. Rather, it calls forth and assembles the appropriate operations at each stage of the process. As a whole, it is in itself self-assembling and self-constituting.\textsuperscript{17} This doubly dynamic structure is open-eyed: attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible. Openness as a fact is the inner self, the self as ground of all higher aspirations. As an achievement, it is the self in its self-appropriation and self-realization. But it is also a gift; and as a gift, it is the self, entering into personal relationship with God. This openness is the historical unfolding of the human spirit.\textsuperscript{18} Its openness and dynamism lies in its never-ending striving for a fuller and richer apprehension of the yet unknown or incompletely known totality, whole, universe. Our conscious intending goes beyond what is given or known. It inquires into everything and everything about everything. A higher viewpoint emerges in an insight that arises from the operations performed according to the old standards and is experienced in the formulation of new ones. As open and dynamic, the operations of our conscious intending anticipate the total set of relationships expressed in the movement.

It is this openness and dynamism of the human spirit, promoted by insights, that brings us to knowledge, to the intelligibility of what is. Intelligibility is intrinsic to being human. In the universe of being, there is a potential intelligibility of empirical objects that makes experience a necessary component of our knowing, a formal intelligibility makes understanding a necessary component, and an actual intelligibility makes judgment a necessary component.\textsuperscript{19} But these are components of our knowing: it is through the conscious dynamic movement of these emergent moments, governed by our questions, that a virtually unconditioned is affirmed in judgment. So, besides the threefold intelligibility grasped, there is the intelligence that does the grasping. “Besides the potential intelligibility of empirical objects, there is the potential intelligence of the disinterested, detached, unrestricted desire to know. Besides the formal intelligibility of the unity and laws of things, there is the formal intelligence that consists in insights and grounds conceptions. Besides the actual intelligibility of existences and occurrences, there is the actual intelligence that grasps the unconditioned and

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\textsuperscript{16} Cf. B. Lonergan, “Natural Right and Historical Mindedness,” in A Third Collection, 169-183.
posit being known." As human beings, we not only are but can also know ourselves. The intelligibility that is known is also enacted intelligence. It has to be distinguished from the intelligibility that can be known but is not intelligent. Intelligibility that is not intelligent and intrinsically dependent of the empirical residue is material. Intelligibility that is intelligent and intrinsically independent of and therefore, unconditioned by, the empirical residue is spiritual. The material and the spiritual constitute the unity of the human. As knowers, we must be conscious empirically, intelligently, and rationally. On the side of the object, unity is manifest inasmuch as the experience is also understood, and the understood is also affirmed. On the side of the subject, the one that inquires and understands must be identical with the one that experiences, and the one that reflects and grasps the unconditioned must be identical with the one that both experiences and understands. Having achieved knowledge of what is, we move to conscious freedom and conscientious responsibility. To deny intelligibility therefore, is to run counter to the spontaneous anticipations of the human intelligence. The subject, according to Lonergan, is a dynamic unity, who is driven by an underlying eros of the spirit towards self-transcendence. The fulfillment of our thrust to self-transcendence is “a dynamic state that fulfils the basic thrust of the human spirit”.

1.1.4 Human Authenticity

The embodiment of our understanding of the world, manifesting it in our responses to life, putting it to work, is the flowering of human becoming and marks the path towards human authenticity. This is also the path towards holiness, achieved in discernment, where life’s experiences are put to question simply because we believe in a God who loves us no matter what. From this experience of being loved, we are animated and urged to love others and ourselves and is manifested in good works, in acts of mercy and compassion. Lonergan refers to this as the transformation of falling in love. Our response to love reveals the truth or falsity in our judgments of values, which has its criterion in the authenticity or lack of authenticity of one’s being. The development of knowledge, together with the development of moral feeling, heads to the existential discovery, wherein one discovers oneself as a moral being. We realize that we not only choose between courses of action but also in so doing, make ourselves authentic or unauthentic human beings. “One has to prove oneself equal to that moment of existential decision and one has to have kept on proving it in subsequent decisions, if one is to become an authentic human person.” With this discovery, there emerges in our consciousness the significance of personal value and the meaning of personal

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responsibility. We have to grow in sensitivity and responsiveness to values if our humanity is to be authentic. We grow in authenticity when we begin to apprehend values which were formerly overlooked.

Human existence can be authentic or unauthentic, and Lonergan speaks of two different instances of this. One is the minor authenticity or unauthenticity of the subject with respect to the tradition that nourishes her or him, where there is passed a human judgment on subjects. The other is the major authenticity or unauthenticity that justifies or condemns the tradition itself. Here, history and, ultimately, divine providence pass judgments on traditions. Our answers to particular questions, such as questions on being or identity, can be correct or mistaken. There will exist a series of points in which they are what the ideals of tradition demand, yet there will be another series in which there is a greater or less divergence. These points of divergence are overlooked from a selective inattention, a failure to understand, from an undetected rationalization. There are the differences in identification, which we are unaware of and the unawareness is unexpressed because there is no language to express them. Therefore, we use the language of tradition. But the usage of the language is inauthentically appropriated, and so the language is devalued, distorted, corrupted. Now, though this happens only in scattered individuals, it may occur as well in large scale. When this happens, the words are repeated, but the meaning is gone. In this case, the unauthenticity of an individual becomes the inauthenticity of a tradition. This how a single individual carries a distortion to the whole of tradition. On the contrary, in authenticity, any single individual has a crucial role to the play in the genuine development of a tradition.

Authenticity describes the human act of understanding that correctly grasps the ongoing expression of the human spirit. It is a description of human life itself, a project that we work out constantly and continuously. It is the orientation of every human act. Unfortunately, we can mistakenly interpret what the human spirit really is and this leads to inauthentic living. Thus, the idea of drifting is a key point of contrast used by Lonergan to clarify the notion of authenticity. He writes,

The mass of unauthentic humanity lacks the courage to take the risk of thinking things out for themselves. It lacks the resoluteness that decides and the fidelity that stands by its decisions.  

It is said that before one stands firmly on solid ground, one must be certain that she or he is standing on the right ground. The problem, however, lies on ascertaining the ground that we are standing on. This, I believe, is what Lonergan tries to emphasize when he talks about authenticity. His main concern is the process of ascertaining. It is a fact that we cannot be certain always of making the right decisions, yet, it is still worthwhile and truly essential to make some efforts to perform the arduous task of self-

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25 See B. Lonergan, Method in Theology, 80.
appropriation, the narrow door that would lead us to the authenticity that is necessary to make the world a better place, not only for us but, more so, for the rest of the world.

And so, we are called to have the courage to take risks and not to become drifters. A drifter is one who has not found oneself, has not yet discovered one’s own deed, and so is content to do what everyone else is doing. She has not yet discovered her own will, and so is content to choose whatever everyone is choosing. She has not yet discovered a mind of her own, and so is content to think and say what everyone else is thinking and saying. In other words, the drifter is somebody who violates the transcendental precepts, unable to develop into the authentic subject that reaches the goal in existential decisions and in fidelity to those decisions.

Human beings achieve authenticity in self-transcendence. As has been mentioned before, at the point of judgment, self-transcendence takes on a new meaning. Judging whether or not this really is so or if that really could be, self-transcendence not only goes beyond the subject but also seeks what is independent of the subject. The concern and the goal is not only what seems or what appears to me, but what is so. At this point, self-transcendence is still cognitive, still in the order of knowing and not of doing. In the final level of questions for deliberation, self-transcendence becomes moral, asking about objective value. Living our moral self-transcendence is a “possibility of benevolence and beneficence, of honest collaboration and of true love”. We become authentic persons in a human society. This transformation of the individual can lead to the transformation of the society in collaboration with others. The authenticity of the subject becomes the condition for the authenticity of intersubjectivity, which in turn, becomes the condition for the authenticity of culture. The formulated transcendental imperatives help lead people to direct their energies in ways that could lead to this transformation. This is one of the reasons why we have models like heroes and heroines and saints. We have to tell the stories of people, who in their own ways were able to overcome difficulties and evils in their midst, creatively transforming death-dealing situations to life-giving ones. Stories have to be told to encourage people about the possibilities of such transformation. Lonergan summarizes authenticity in his writings as honesty, integrity, attentiveness to experience, and overcoming distorted communication through faithfulness to the transcendental imperatives: be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible, and be in love. Robert Doran points out that in Lonergan’s later works, he has given prominent emphasis to love as the power that renders sustained authenticity or self-transcendence possible. It is worth mentioning here again the fact that in the process of self-transcendence there is the tension between the self as transcending and the self as transcended, and

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28 Cf. B. Lonergan, Method in Theology, 104.
29 B. Lonergan, Method in Theology, 104.
that the way forward is to live this tension creatively: human authenticity is never some pure and serene and secure possession. There is the dialectical character of human development, which is the precise opposition between authenticity and unauthenticity. This is the reason why Lonergan developed the very idea of method. The unique meaning of method in his work takes its stand on discovering what human authenticity is and showing how to appeal to it. It is not infallible, simply because human beings are easily unauthentic. Neither does it attempt to dictate to people how to live their lives for normative performance cannot be dictated by another. It could not exist apart from the authenticity of my own act of knowing. The sole place of normativity is human authenticity. The issue of authentic performance cannot be by-passed. It is in and through the self-appropriation of our own knowing that we come to thematise our authentic performance and to recognize why it is authentic. Nothing could promote authentic human performance except the heightened awareness that enables us to identify what makes for authenticity and its opposite. This clarification about what constitutes normative performance can prevent any ideological tendency that can destroy societies. This also brings to the fore that normativity does not derive from any cultural expression. What alone is normative are the transcendental exigencies constitutive of human authenticity, which is an embodiment of our natural right.31

The highly complex business of authenticity and unauthenticity must replace the overly simple notion of the will as arbitrary power. Arbitrariness, for Lonergan, is just another name for unauthenticity. He discloses that to think of the will as arbitrary power is to assume that authenticity never exists or occurs.32 What makes people conceive the notion of pure intellect or pure reason is the fact that cognitional self-transcendence is easier than moral self-transcendence. This, however, does not mean that cognitional self-transcendence is at all, easy. If we are to achieve authenticity that can transform societies, we need much more objective knowing that we commonly feel ready to absorb. For life is not easy to grasp at all. I have noted above the ambiguities of being human. Later, I will discuss the different kinds of bias on which Lonergan elaborated. Many of us, especially when we find personal comfort and security in life, choose never to put that comfort and security at stake; we take it for granted even if it deprives others of their own opportunity of comfort and security. Life becomes a survival of the strongest and the wealthiest. More often than not, the wealthy, those who are given more opportunity to acquire higher education, may be more capable of thinking further on the movement of life in them. However, their thinking tends to result more in theories and is usually to their own advantage. This is not authentic cognitional self-transcendence. Authentic cognitional transcendence must always be guided by moral self-transcendence. Thus, authentic cognitional transcendence is always a fruit of moral transcendence. Objective knowing is the fruit of authentic subjectivity.

32 B. Lonergan, Method in Theology, 122.
1.1.4.1 Authentic Subjectivity

In relation to what was mentioned above, it is useful at this point to elaborate further on the momentous conclusion to which Lonergan comes. Authentic subjectivity is the ground of true objectivity. True objectivity is the fruit of authentic subjectivity. Objects are treated always in relation to the corresponding operations of the subject and vice versa. Empirical human sciences, for instance, are objective in so far as their practitioners act with appropriate attention to human authenticity, aware of the fact that the investigation of the data is affected by the personal or inherited authenticity of the investigators. Orthopraxis, in this sense, must be an essential element of the hermeneutic process. Christian thinking, then, arises from and must return to Christian living, which gives primacy to the praxis of charity. When this is violated, any account of the rational necessity is a travesty.

One of the great contributions of Bernard Lonergan was his effort to provide a fulfillment of the “turn to the subject” in modern Western philosophy. The trend has headed for and ended in a disastrous idealism, a subjectivism that removed all objective criteria for judgment on the universe or for evaluation of its possibilities. Lonergan’s position avoided these dead-ends. It takes a firm stand against the critical idealism of Kant and the absolute idealism of Hegel while acknowledging scholasticism’s neglect of the human subject and accepting the need of a philosophy of interiority as well as of a critical stance toward the subject. Lonergan, through his elaboration of method of theology, particularly that of foundations, provides an explanatory perspective on the normative dynamics of human consciousness. It is about knowledge of the subject as subject. Theology is now understood as a reflection on religion, and fundamental to religion is conversion. “It follows that reflection on conversion can supply theology with its foundation and, indeed, with a foundation that is concrete, dynamic, personal, communal, and historical.”

If there is going to be a creative change in our world in the order of God’s world in the making, it is basic and crucial that we attend to the authenticity of our own subjectivity. Human authenticity is about an objectification that is achieved through self-transcendence of concrete existing subjects; the fundamental forms of self-transcendence are intellectual, moral, and religious conversion. The invocation of conversion cannot be a self-validating act since Lonergan admits that conversion may be authentic or inauthentic. What validates conversion is the extent to which it is a move from unauthenticity to authenticity: “it is total surrender to the demands of the human spirit.” This is the wisdom in the adage that says, “If you want to make the world a better

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34 Cf. R. M. Doran, Theology and the Dialectics of History, Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1990, 338. The three-fold conversion elaborated by Lonergan is discussed in Chapter Two of the present work. See section 2.5.1 “Analogy of Conversion”.
35 B. Lonergan, Method in Theology, 268.
place, try to look at yourself and make a change”, where looking at oneself does not mean an exercise of frugal, individualistic introspection, but a self-appropriation, involving a heightening of consciousness that leads to an objectification of the subject as subject, to an appropriation of what it means for me to be an intelligent, reasonable, and responsible subject. Just as our seeking direction within the movement of life is important, so, too, is concern with our performance in such seeking.

The foregoing argument implies a clarification of the meanings of the terms, objectivity and subjectivity. Authentic self-appropriation in the world mediated by meaning and motivated by value enables us to know what it means to be a truly converted and therefore authentic subject. Such self-knowledge is an instance of objectivity. The attainment of cognitive objectivity is an achievement of authentic subjectivity. Authentic subjectivity, in turn, is an achievement of real self-transcendence – of genuine attentiveness, genuine intelligence, genuine reasonableness, and of genuine responsibility and commitment; and the key to most concrete instances of real self-transcendence is the experience of reconciliation and love, which influences our life’s orientation. In his late work, Lonergan has given pronounced emphasis to love as the power that promotes self-transcendence and, thus, sustained authenticity. Any attempt therefore to guarantee objectivity apart from self-transcendence, that is, separated from authentic subjectivity, is an inadequate understanding of objectivity. We simply fall once again into the trap of the illusion that says that the real is already out there and all one has to do is to open one’s eyes to see everything. Such naïve realism simply ignores the complex activities involved in our mediation of the real; it can never be the source of an adequate account of human authenticity.

Authenticity is the movement toward what is truly good in itself, toward what is objective reality and of universal value. If authenticity has become a way of life, a way of being, then whatever feels good is what is really good. Remember the happiness of Aling Romana when she is able to share herself not only to her family but to her neighbors as well. What one is inclined to do is what one must really do or ought to do. It is being present in God’s world in the making, responding to life in the concrete, a response to God. Authenticity then, emerges as the most important aspect of human unfolding. Authenticity is a commitment to the true and the good, a surrender to honesty and love, an option to be responsible, a deliberate desire to foster the inherent and open-minded dynamism of the human spirit. This dynamism of the human spirit toward authentic commitment and responsibility to the true, the good, and the beautiful becomes the ground for a truly liberating spirituality. This, in itself, is what holiness is all about.

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In the discussion of the open and dynamic structure of the spirit, we see that human knowing is a whole whose parts are cognitional activities. The intrinsic dynamism of human cognitional activity is its intentionality. This dynamism operates in different patterns of experience. Cognitional activity ascends through accumulations of insights toward higher viewpoints or perspectives. Cognitional activity is the becoming known of being. It is that particular instance in which the universe, striving for being, becomes conscious and intelligent and responsible.

Knowing, as Lonergan asserts, is not a mere matter of looking but a matter of understanding and judging, and contributes towards a responsible decision that is grounded on love. The first step towards cognitive appropriation is to reject the mistaken supposition that knowing consists in taking a look.\(^\text{38}\) Looking without any accompanying spark of understanding is mere gaping; and mere gaping is, as Lonergan describes it, just stupidity.\(^\text{39}\)

In what Lonergan calls the epistemological theorem, knowledge in the proper sense is knowledge of reality. The theorem asserts that knowledge is intrinsically objective and objectivity is the intrinsic relation of knowing to being; and that being and reality are identical.\(^\text{40}\) As knowing at hand is not just present knowing but also a moment in process towards fuller knowing, so reality is not only of the here and now but also a moment in process to fuller reality; and so being is not a static, fixed being but a becoming. Cognitional activity is the dynamism of the mind and of the intended being. This dynamism impels peoples, tribes, cultures, and nations to reach the degree of intelligent and rational consciousness necessary to transcend limitations through the unfolding of the pure desire to know in understanding and judgment. This includes a process of enlightenment, whereby we are enabled to see and experience the consequences of our actions, and thereby, with the cumulative piling up of evidence, we can learn.\(^\text{41}\)

\(^\text{38}\) Cf. Insight, 635-637.
\(^\text{41}\) This process of enlightenment by becoming aware of our limitations, is discussed by Lonergan in terms of finality and potency, wherein finality is the dynamic aspect of the real, referring to a theorem of the same generality as the notion of being. Potency, on the other hand, refers to what is known by intellectually patterned experience of the empirical residue. Just as intellectually patterned experience heads towards insights and judgments, so potency heads towards forms and acts. Potency, form, and act constitute a unity, which involves some directing of potency towards form and of form towards act. Potency is a principle of limitation. Our pure desire to know heads for an objective that becomes known only through its own unfolding in understanding and judgment. Hence, the dynamism of the universal process is directed, not to a generically, specifically, or individually determined goal, but to
Lonergan, having worked on method in theology, has attributed the ills of theology to the neglect by theologians of this dynamism of their own minds. The transcendental method, expressed in terms of a threefold conversion, is according to Lonergan, “not a set of propositions that a theologian utters, but a fundamental and momentous change in the human reality that a theologian is”. This, however, is true not only of theologians but of the rest of the human community of different disciplines, who are by nature gifted with the unrestricted desire to know and to search for meaning. Though it is true that objective knowing is not yet authentic living, without objective knowing there is no authentic living. Furthermore, Lonergan reiterates that to heighten one’s presence to oneself, one does not introspect. This introspection means looking only to oneself and is passive when it comes to affecting and benefiting others. On the contrary, one raises the level of one’s activity. By heightened awareness one takes in both what one is attending to and one’s performance in so attending, both the problem to be solved and one’s performance in solving. In this way we come to appropriate our own act of knowing: the manner in which we are promoted from being an attentive subject to becoming an intelligent subject; the manner in which we are again promoted by our question from being an intelligent subject to being critical, rational subject. If one is puzzled, one wonders and inquires and the empirical subject becomes an intellectual subject as well. The intellectual subject reflects and considers the evidence; the empirical and intellectual subject becomes a rational subject, an incarnate reasonableness. Lonergan’s call to self-appropriation is a call to sensitivity to what the world teaches in its great enterprise of becoming human. The human, in Teilhard de Chardin’s identification, is the universe coming to consciousness. As we encounter the past, we have to take a stand as well toward the future. We are to live our world within the world from whose progress we must learn, and it is a world we must teach as well and redeem in its decline.

Understanding is a very important step and factor in significant human living. Putting it in Lonergan’s words: “To pass judgment on what one does
not understand, is not human knowing, but human arrogance." When we look at life and decide for the future, we not merely gape but look at it with the eyes of understanding and with the eyes of love. Cognitive self-appropriation, in this respect, must never be isolated from the existential. We continuously ask questions. We question the way things are going forward to put the pieces together, thereby, shaping a way of life that promotes the common good.

1.2.2 Existential

The path to authenticity, the flowering of the human into the fullness of humanity is a shift from the cognitional level of self-appropriation to that of the existential. We think, we discern, we judge, and we decide. Decisions have to be actualized. They need to be put into work if they are to contribute something for the good of humankind.

In the human, the immanent principle of movement and of rest is the human spirit as raising and answering questions. There are three specific kinds of questions: questions for intelligence, questions for reflection, and questions for deliberation. The immanent principle of movement in the first kind of questions is human intelligence, where the satisfaction of having an insight or a series of insights becomes a principle of rest. However, intellectual satisfaction is not all that the human spirit seeks. It is concerned as well with actuality. The attainment of insight leads to the formulation of its content. In this, intelligence gives way to reflection and the second kind of questions surfaces. Again, it remains that the successful negotiation of questions for intelligence and reflection is not enough for these questions are isolated from the feelings that constitute the greater part and impetus of our lives. So there emerge the questions for deliberation that deal with our interpersonal living and existential becoming, with what we are to make of ourselves by our own choices and deeds. The feelings that go with this questioning are not only searching but also tormenting, for they reveal values to us and dispose us to commitment but do not bring commitment about. Commitment is a personal choice, a free and responsible act, and very open-eyed in a sense that it is consciously a decision about the future. However firm one’s present commitment is, it cannot suspend the freedom that will be exercised in its future execution.

When we ask why or how or what for, we intend intelligibility. When we ask whether this or that is really so, we intend the true and the real. We reach the aspect of factual truth. When we ask and deliberate whether our undertaking is really worthwhile, we intend the good. But the principle of movement in human nature does not end here for though we intend the good,


Aristotle defined a nature as an immanent principle of movement and of rest. See B. Lonergan, “Natural Right and Historical Mindedness” in A Third Collection, 172-182.
we still do not know what would be good and in that sense, worthwhile. Questioning heads into the unknown until insight hits the bull’s eye. Otherwise, the question for intelligence returns. When this happens, a self-correcting process has begun and continues until insights have stilled the flow of relevant questions for intelligence, questions for reflection have been answered with sufficient evidence that erases doubt, and questions for deliberation have their criterion in the higher level of consciousness we call “conscience”. Yet, the several principles attain only aspects of something richer and fuller.

They themselves are but aspects of a deeper and more comprehensive principle. There is a point beyond the movement that begins before consciousness and unfolds through sensitivity, intelligence, rational reflection, and responsible decision, where it finds its rest. This point beyond is being-in-love, which in itself is a dynamic state, a principle of movement “at once purgative and illuminative”, and a principle of rest in which union is fulfilled. The whole movement is an ongoing process of transcendence. There is the self aware of its environment. There is the intelligent self which by thought moves out of the environment of an animal towards the universe of being. There is the reasonable self, discerning what is from what is not. And there is the moral self, deliberating what would be really worthwhile, advancing from merely operating for individual satisfactions to cooperating for what is truly essential for the group. In this fourth level of consciousness, self-appropriation shifts from cognitive to existential, from epistemological to ethical concern. When one deliberates and chooses, one has moved to the level of not simply a rationally conscious subject but towards the free and responsible individual, who by choices made, not only makes herself what she is to be, but also makes her world what it is to be. Being unperceptive, stupid, and silly, being unmindful of the precepts, retards the blossoming of friendship from mere acquaintance, or the growth of friendship into intimacy. Yet, even until this level, the great question is more of a promise than a fulfillment. This is because self-transcendence reaches its term not in righteousness but in love. Besides the factual knowledge reached by experiencing, understanding, and verifying, there is another kind of knowledge reached through the discernment and judgment of values of a person in love. When Pascal remarks that the heart has reasons that reason does not know, the heart is the subject on the fourth, existential level of intentional consciousness and in the dynamic state of being in love. The heart’s reasons are the feelings that are intentional responses to values. Thus, Lonergan defines faith as the further knowledge when the love is God’s love flooding our hearts. So, the decisive question of “Will I love in return or will I refuse?” or “Will I live out the gift of God’s love or

49 This shows the significance of the cognitive appropriation to that of the existential. Experience is to be understood as constitutive both of the data of the sense and the data of consciousness. This means that the self-transcending person willed herself or himself towards self-transcendence because she or he is forced by her or his senses towards a concern for the current experience or situation. This willing is indispensable for future creative actions or, in other words, in the learning process.
will I turn away?" is more primary than the question of God’s existence and nature.

One has, then, to move beyond strictly cognitional levels of empirical, intellectual, and rational consciousness to the more inclusive level of rational self-consciousness; that is, one’s concern shifts from knowing being into realizing the good. It is therefore not objective knowing but human living that is the main point. It is not only making but doing. It is not only poêsis but praxis. The principal communication is not saying that we know but showing what we are. It is self-revelation. It is the bringing forth of ourselves. We come to know ourselves by reflecting and deliberating on our living in common with others. In doing so, there has to be room for listening to criticisms and protests and one has to be always ready to learn from others. Our response to the invitation to cognitive and existential appropriation, which makes us authentic human beings, is what self-transcendence is all about.

1.3 THE TRANSCENDENTAL IMPERATIVES

The above elaboration on the human spirit paves the way to what Lonergan calls transcendental imperatives. It is the spirit that impels us towards transcendence. This transcendence is not a triumph that eliminates human limitations. Rather, it is a thrust that takes these limitations seriously so that limitations do not become stumbling blocks but life’s catapults that propel us to reach out to life’s fullness. It is a thrust, a push that is so insistent towards an open and dynamic process, formulable in transcendental imperatives. The human spirit is evident in the immanent and operative, though unexpressed, transcendental imperatives: being attentive- attention to human affairs; being intelligent- a grasp of previously unnoticed or unrealised possibilities; being reasonable- rejection of what probably would not work but also the acknowledgment of what probably would; being responsible- basing one’s decision and choices on an unbiased evaluation, sensitivity to value, the choice of what is right. Within these operations, there is the crowning precept, the foundation and the ultimate- being loving.\(^50\) We experience these transcendental imperatives as questions, questions that take us beyond ourselves. They are the living source of all other descriptive precepts such as the golden rule of “doing to others what you would like others do to you” and “Thou shall not kill”, and “Love your neighbors as yourself”.\(^51\)

Before being formulated in concepts and expressed in words, these imperatives have a prior existence and reality in the spontaneous, structured dynamism of human consciousness. They are given just as the unity of consciousness is given – the pattern of the operations is part of the experience of the operations. It is there, intrinsic to every human being. But they are to

\(^{50}\) Lonergan emphasizes that one does not surrender to unrestricted love except through experiencing divine love.

be formulated in concepts in order to bring the person to awareness of them and how they can be followed more fruitfully in daily human living. Progress results from subjects being their true selves by observing the imperatives, while the imperatives remain permanent through the continuous flow of improvements. Responding to the thrust of the spirit means a continuous and even more exacting application of the transcendental imperatives.

To promote progress, faithfulness to the imperatives of attention, intelligence, reasonableness, and responsibility must be exercised not only with respect to the current and existing situations but also with respect to succeeding, changed situations. This means that any inadequacy or repercussion of the previous course of action must be spotted in order that the good can be improved and the defective can be remedied. Violation of the imperatives results in bias and their disregard leads to alienation. Such alienation is justified in an ideology, which corrupts the social good. If self-transcendence promotes progress, then a refusal of it results in decline. Only love, which is the key and the crowning imperative, can undo the damages of decline and restore the cumulative process of progress.

Transcendence is the elementary matter of raising further questions. It begins from insight and goes beyond it towards the reflective grasp that grounds judgment. As we begin to consider insights as elements of knowledge, we involve and engage ourselves in developing, in going beyond what we happen to be. Confronted with the evidence of mistaken judgments, we are pushed inevitably to go beyond what have been previously considered procedures of our human endeavors. In transcendence, though we go beyond, we do not leave behind. Transcendence, then, means a development in knowledge that is relevant to the development of our being. We are constantly in the process of development. Prior to a decision, there are the movements of feelings, the assent of value judgments, and the voice of conscience. A decision must mean a commitment, a doing, an action, and then, a change, a transformation. This process of development must be properly understood since possibilities are many and are difficult to determine, while human development lies in the few principles on which we may rely in working out our destiny.

The transcendental imperatives are a way of naming the fundamental processes going on in us that make us authentic human beings. The most fundamental moral action is to obey these normatively unfolding processes within us that are part and parcel of our human becoming. We call this fundamental moral action ‘authenticity’.

1.3.1 Notion of the Transcultural

The transcendental imperatives, as has been discussed so far, comprise the underlying principle of what Lonergan calls transcendental method. As method, the operations involved are experiencing, understanding, judging,
deciding, and loving. A way of doing theology that is interdisciplinary, transformative, and effective in responding to what is going forward in the world, must have a transcultural base. The method that Lonergan is putting forward is, in a sense, transcultural. It is not transcultural in the way that it is formulated – this is patently culturally specific – but, rather, in relation to that to which the formulation refers. These realities are not the product of any culture but, on the contrary, the principles operative in the production of all cultures, in their preservation and the promotion of their flourishing. They are also the principles that are violated when cultures crumble and decay. What is being referred to here is the only thing all people have in common, the dynamism of the human spirit in its normative unfolding. Since this endowment is precisely what makes human beings, it follows that these realities are transcultural with respect to all human cultures.  

We speak of an endowment that makes human beings human. To speak in this way is quite compatible with acknowledging the irreducible multiplicity of human cultures, the extraordinary creative and diverse ways that humans attended to their world and understood to which they have so attended. However, the gift itself is distinct from these manifestations, and it is the gift which is transcultural. The gift is none other than the gift of being human, endowed to all peoples as a disclosure of God’s love. This is the humanity that desires and seeks the fulfillment of these desires, that is, to affirm what is. In the process, there are feelings of disquiet as one is impelled to ask questions and to search for answers until one gets closest to what is. This is the humanity capable of loving and disclosing that love to others. This humanity is not an abstraction. Lonergan has emphasized this as clearly as he could.  

Humanity is “a reality in the billions of human beings who ever have, are, or will live”, and every human person is within the totality of interpersonal relationships constituting human history. Our experiences and our ideas are not our own; rather, they are embedded within the ongoing process which calls for creative collaboration.  

The notion of the transcultural in the method that Lonergan proposes does not refer to that which is common to many cultures, but, as mentioned earlier, what human beings as humans have as a gift, as an endowment. It does not mean making a list of all possible and actual cultures and then comparing them as to what is common in them or not. This comparative approach is dangerous to the extent that the fact of similarity and difference can be used to categorize the question of truth in particular traditions and results in a truncated understanding of the truth. When this happens, the assertion of the truth, as in religious truth, can be used as ideological justification for violence against other religious convictions.

What is transcultural is the reality of human intelligence and love - the dynamics of the human spirit, which makes people to be people and creates cultural meanings and values. These dynamics, operative in the generation of all cultures, are to be identified as transcultural. Normativity lies in the attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsibly loving performance of subjects in communities, not in what these communities produce. It is not culture as the set of meanings and values that should be taken as normative, but the process itself that human persons underwent in creating such meanings and values. Should products of human creativity be made normative, e.g. a particular technology, they can be made into instruments of oppression. Even ideas of committed people can, when they are taken as normative, become tools of repressing new questions and new creativity. Lonergan’s work cuts through the prejudices and dichotomies of our contemporary time. He writes:

... the argument from the cultural differences of East and West does not seem to touch our position. For while those differences are profound and manifest, they are not the differences that lie within the intellectual pattern of experience... when an Easterner inquires and understands, reflects, and judges, he performs the same operations as a Westener.\(^55\)

The transcultural lies in the structured dynamism of human operations that enact or neglect human creativity, that which accounts for any and every culture. Authentic liberating efforts of particular groups of people have to give appropriate attention to the creative operations and destructive tendencies within their own cultures. These creative operations and destructive tendencies relate to the movement of the spirit in people – their spirituality. Thus, an adequate attention to them means proper attention to spirituality. In all this, the specifically theological principle is religious conversion – the gift of God’s love resulting in the free and total commitment of a person. As Lonergan asserts, God’s gift of love (Rom.5:5) is transcultural\(^56\), for God’s love is offered to all, to whatever race, religion or culture.

### 1.4 OPENNESS TO THE DIVINE AND THE CALL TO HOLINESS

I mentioned above that for most Filipinos, spirituality is always associated with the divine. Spirituality, as the thrust of the spirit in people, is living the faith, where faith is faith in a God who loves the world and everything in it. This lived faith provides us with the inner strength for the enormous task of transforming our collective lives. Benevolent actions spring from it and so does openness to conversion. The openness and dynamism of the human spirit goes beyond the world of human experience.\(^57\) The relevance of the transcendental imperatives is not restricted to the \textit{mundus aspectabilis} because we are open to God. Human knowing is made possible by an

\(^{55}\) B. Lonergan, \textit{Insight}, 736.


unrestricted intention that intends the transcendent, and a process of self-transcendence that reaches it. There lies within our horizon a region for the divine, a shrine for ultimate holiness, our native orientation to the divine. From the spirit world of the primeval societies until the present, human beings always looked beyond this earthly reality to that of the transcendent. Here lies the question of God which is the principle of our human intending, the font of human cognitional and existential becoming. Spirituality is *landas ng pagpapakabanal* – a path to holiness. ⁵⁸ Holiness becomes the ultimate norm within the human horizon. Cognitive and existential self-appropriation, our thematisation of the movement towards authentic living, is a clarifying contribution in the movement towards holiness.

The question of God is a question rising out of our conscious intentionality, out of an a priori structured drive that promotes the performance of the transcendental imperatives, that is, operating from experience to understanding, from understanding to the effort to judge truly, from judging to the effort to choose rightly. We are forced to ask questions about life and never stop until we feel that we have found the right answer. When this happens, there is an inner joy that is beyond explanation. Questions are manifested differently, yet however much the questions that are explicitly raised differ, still at their root there is the same transcendental tendency of the human spirit, “the spark in our clod,” ⁵⁹ that questions without restriction and questions the significance of its questioning. To surrender to this questioning is not just an act, but a dynamic state that is prior to and principle of subsequent acts, a *Sehnsucht* ⁶⁰, the stirring longing of existential consciousness as a fated acceptance of a vocation to holiness. And, as Lonergan stresses, the surrender is first of all made possible by the gift of grace that is God’s love flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us (Rom.5:5). Holiness abounds in truth and moral goodness, in joy and peace and bliss; but all the more in being in love with a mysterious, uncomprehended God.

True knowledge consists not only in being true but also in an apprehension of the divinely ordained order of the universe. Doing what is consistent with knowing is not merely consistent with knowing but is also humanity’s co-operation with God in the realization of the order of the universe. ⁶¹ Bearing our knowing into the domain of transcendent being leads us not away but rather to the affirmation of an unconditioned, intelligent, and natural consciousness that freely grounds the universe in much the same way as our conditioned, intelligent and rational consciousness grounds freely our

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⁵⁸ The expression comes from the Tagalog language. *Banal* (holy) is associated with *mahal* (expensive, precious, dear, beloved). There is no holiness in a person who does not know how to love.


⁶⁰ Tad Dunne defines this German word as “describing the poignant longing that accompanies every touch of beauty”, in *Lonergan and Spirituality: Towards a Spiritual Integration*, 80.

actions and products. As we consider our intelligent and rational consciousness, we cannot but deal with what is related intimately to the universe and its ultimate ground. For what is the universe and its ground but the objective of our detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to know?  

The question of God that flows from intentionality analysis of human knowing and choosing turns out to be of three possible forms. First is the question arising from the fact that we find intelligibility in our universe. Could this be if there was no intelligent ground to our world? Is a universe of limited intelligibility conceivable? Implicit in human inquiry is a natural desire to know God. Second, we judge a statement true if the conditions upon which it depends have been grasped as fulfilled. Can there be a virtually unconditioned unless there is an absolutely unconditioned? Implicit in human judgment about contingent things there is the formally unconditioned that is God. And third, we deliberate about whether something is valuable or not. We struggle to determine what is truly worthwhile but is the universe on our side? Are we the final source of valuing in our universe or is there an ultimate instance of moral consciousness that gives final meaning to our valuing? Implicit in human choice of values is the absolute good that is God. Our own reality then, our day-to-day life as we experience and live it, raises the question of God. A more common and more existential questioning of God however, surfaces from our experience of evil both within us and within others and within our world. This is our existential vulnerability, which cries out for ultimate healing and liberation.

Self-transcendence is a continuous process that involves the tension between the self as transcending and the self as transcended. Transcendence is never an attainment. It is always a call that has to be responded to. It is a call to holiness. Therefore, it is a life vocation. The tension must be lived creatively every moment of our life. God’s image in us is the authenticity of the self-transcending subjects, of being origins of value, in true love. It is a stretching forward towards the intelligible, the unconditioned, the good of value. It is a call that belongs to our actuated orientation towards the mystery of love and awe, where all one can do is let be what is, let happen what in any case keep recurring. Our openness to the divine expresses a desire that arises naturally. But the given-ness in experience that makes religious faith possible is the love of God poured out in our hearts (Rom 5, 5). Human development does not rest solely in the acquisition of skills and virtues but also in holiness. Holiness is expressed in good works, resulting from the eye of religious love, an eye that can discern God's self-revelation.

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Conclusion

The first chapter was a clarification of the meaning of ‘spirit’ in Bernard Lonergan’s work. From *Insight*, he has provided us a profound explanatory view on the notion of the spiritual, enabling us to see that which constitutes a human being. The emphasis is clearly placed on the fact that as human beings, we do not simply exist, but also have the capacity to know ourselves. This self-taste – the meaning of all our activities being conscious activities – is constitutive of the unity of the human being. Coming to know our own knowing reveals that we are oriented towards the universe of being. It is in the transformation of our sensitive experiences through understanding that intelligibility emerges as spirit. The movement of the spirit in us reveals not only what we are but also more profoundly who we are. For it does not only manifest the kind of person we are to others, but also reveals our whole response to life. It is the spirit that motivates us to search for life’s meaning in us, from which springs the kind of world we have since the resultant self-constitution is inseparable from world-constitution.

Our response to the thrust of the spirit in us is the human capability of self-transcendence. In self-transcendence, we come to our fuller self. Self-transcendence is a process, a movement of development. The transcendental process renders the human spirit as a structure – an open, formally dynamic structure, consisting of a normative pattern of operations. These operations, expressed in different levels of consciousness with the corresponding precepts, comprise that which Lonergan refers to as transcendental method.

The openness and dynamism of the human spirit is unrestricted. It does not end in the world of human experience because its reach is the universe of being and therefore open as well to intelligibility of the universe and its ground, that is God. As human beings, we are not simply called towards righteousness. The ultimate norm of our horizon is holiness. The human calling to holiness is what human becoming is all about. We come to be as we are by cognitive and existential self-appropriation. As human beings, we not only feel but also understand. We not only understand but also reflect on what we have understood so as to be able to deliberate on the appropriate actions to take – actions that are consistent with our knowing and collaborate with the realization of the order of the universe.

This collaboration is our concrete response to life, to God’s world in the making. It is our commitment to what is true and good. It is a surrender to honesty and love. It is through this surrender that we build communities and transform societies. This is a huge enterprise indeed. But we are continuously called not to give up even in the midst of overwhelming structures and to take the risks. We call this human action, this human response, ‘authenticity’. Living authenticity is the spirituality that is called for in a society or community where life bogs down with material possession and quick flitting pleasure, where truth is manipulated for the sake of selfish interest, and where alienation has ruled out love. These are the situations that mostly afflict and reign in our societies today. The issue of authentic human performance is
crucial and inevitable in our quest for meaning and direction in the movement of life.
CHAPTER 2

QUEST FOR MEANING AND DIRECTION IN THE MOVEMENT OF LIFE

The first chapter sought to provide a clarification of the term ‘spirit’ in Lonergan’s elaboration. This paved the way towards an understanding of human authenticity. Authentic human performance, as we said, is not so much taught as engaged in and performed. It is something we learn by committing ourselves to the ongoing search for meaning and direction in the movement of life, even in contexts that seem to be almost meaningless and pointless. It is in these moments of meaninglessness and pointlessness that the need for authenticity becomes much more intense. Why? It is because life has to move on, not only for ourselves but, usually, for those people whom we love. This is the reason why at the center and the summit of authenticity is a person in love. Authenticity, after all, corresponds to authentic loving. This is the heart of this study. A spirituality of lived authenticity is a matter of living love as much as loving life. This is what I seek to expand and promote in the entirety of this project. In the face of our limitations as human beings, we take the risks and the pain of moving on because we are in love. This, as I will later emphasize more in this book, is not a romanticization of love. It is not at all romantic to take the risk of engaging with something seen to be, at the moment, pointless and hopeless. The pain is real when, in an effort to find meaning in the situation we ask questions and there seem to be no answers. There is also the pain and fear of uncertainties. We experience this in our own day-to-day life, no matter who we are, what we do, or where we are. I am sure that the poor of the garbage dump in Manila experience the same. But the kind of response given to this experience can be appropriate and wise, leading to the greater good of the wider community, promoting life; or, it can also be inappropriate and unwise, which results to inflicting more suffering on others and on oneself, thereby, impeding and curtailing the movement of life for people. It all depends on the priorities we have in life – what we value most in our lives. What we value most in life becomes the catalyst that animates and energizes us to do what we believe must be done. In pursuing such values, however, it is crucial to ask this question: Do the choices we are making and the path we are taking lead us to the wider common good of people and planet? The answer to this question reveals the extent of authenticity or inauthenticity of our human response to what is going forward in the world. Life can be good or it can be miserable precisely because we can be authentic or unauthentic in our response to life.

This present work treats spirituality as authenticity in the quest that is life itself. Spirituality is the thrust of the spirit, the movement of life, in us. It is a quest in the sense that we, humans, like all living beings, are limited by time and space. We have only a glimpse of the whole that is life itself. The ambivalence of life, of every moment, reveals to us that we are not in control
of anything in this life. We only hope that in the vastness of the field, we may be able to find the precious jewel and then know how to deal with it and how to use it appropriately. We hope because we trust that there is more to life than plain existence. This reveals that the movement of life in us is principally a graced journey, that life itself is a gift.

This present work, therefore, brings to the fore insistently that we give proper attention to the movement of the spirit in us that is life itself. In this way, life, even in the midst of limitations and ambiguities, can be lived truly as a gift, that in the end we can say that we have not lived in vain and so we will not die to no avail. As mentioned above, our values impel us to pursue the search. Meaning reveals values. The more meaningful life has become to us, the more valuable life becomes to us. Meaning, in this sense, is putting the pieces together, discovering how everything fits. Values, in turn, give us direction. And since life is a quest, what we are searching for may be found or missed – life may be promoted or impeded. In accordance with this, spirituality can be authentic and liberating or, inauthentic and oppressive.

This particular chapter deals with the dynamics of the quest: the object of the quest – the human good, highlighted in the scale of values; the elements involved in the quest – the desire for meaning and faith; and the dynamics themselves that involve the structure of emergence and the human potential for transcendence. As in Chapter One, the development of this Chapter also draws primarily from the notions developed by Lonergan, in the manner that he articulated the dynamics of the quest. This is complemented by the works of Robert Doran especially by his introduction of the psychic dimension of conversion and by Brendan Lovett by his expansion of Lonergan’s scale of values.

In order that the appropriate and necessary creative response be made manifest within our search for meaning and direction in the movement of life, it is central that the dynamics of the integral human good be clarified and appropriated. The appropriation and realization of the human good, however, as anything else in the universe, is governed by and grounded on the possibility of emergence. Thus, it is helpful to begin by an explanatory account of the structure of emergence.

**2.1 Structure of Emergence**

We have mentioned above the web of relationships within the universe and the connections between the different life forms on earth. These relationships and connections point out a significant truth: that the story of the earth is also the story of the human, as well as the story of every being on earth. Central to the human search for meaning and direction in the movement of life is the structure of emergence – how we came to be in relation with all the others in the universe.

While Lonergan’s account is evolutionary in the broad sense, he carefully distanced himself from Darwin’s version of evolution and the reductionistic, materialistic biases that characterize much of neo-Darwinian thought.
Lonergan argues that it is intelligible relatedness that explains why things are as they are and why they behave as they do. Instead of Darwin’s focus on ‘sensible qualities’ that accumulate, Lonergan’s focus is on schemes of recurrence. The small variations of classical Darwinism do not merely pile up. Rather, scientifically they must be understood in their intelligible relationships to the internal and external functioning of the organism and its environment.

2.1.1 Schemes of Recurrence

The sense of the interconnectedness of phenomena in our universe has us searching for the structural features that would enable us to understand the intelligibility of such interconnectedness. At the commonsense level of operation, we can see how some realities are dependent on others for their continued existence and survival. If we pursue the connections in a more systematic fashion, we will stumble on the structure we call a scheme of recurrence. Here a series of events is so related that the fulfillment of the conditions for each ensures the occurrence of the others. The water cycle on the earth’s surface, the dependence of living creatures on one another in the food chain, and the planetary system are just some of the examples of schemes of recurrence. What is of interest to us in this present section on the structure of emergence is not any particular scheme of recurrence but the understanding of a conditional series of schemes, wherein all prior members of the series must be functioning actually in order that later members become concrete possibilities.

Four and a half billion years ago, one of the billions of stars of our galaxy – a star which astronomers have fancifully named *Tiamat* – became a supernova and scattered its materials in the universe. Shaped by the wider forces of the universe in their multiple combination and reaction, these materials resulted in the emergence of our sun and planetary system. At the end of June 2004, we learned in one week of one hundred hitherto unknown planets in our galaxy: all of these also owe their existence to similar interactions or bonded relationships in our universe. Without the supernova explosion and the scattering of particles in space, there could have been no sun and no planets.

Biologists have long paid attention to a form of emergence in the relationship among organisms called symbiosis. Symbiosis is a vibrant alliance of life, which arose when certain organisms at one point in time, in the process of mutation, ‘discovered’ that necessary genetic information from other organisms was significant for them to survive so that the host has to be kept alive in order for them to assume this information. Relationships among organisms are inevitable because survival is not possible without relationships. Still, the notion of emergence has always been intensely problematic for all

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materialist and reductionist scientists who, methodologically, desire to explain everything in terms of atoms and molecules. Lonergan argues that materialism is only a philosophical position that happens to be also incompatible with scientific study. Science, he argues, seeks to correctly understand how events are intelligibly connected within schemes of recurrence, and when new schemes begin to function, really new intelligibilities emerge. Schemes of recurrence are not merely spatial aggregations of material particles or random variations. They are really distinct, novel, intelligible functionings. Lonergan writes for example that a biological species “is an intelligible solution to a problem of living in a given environment,” that “later species are solutions that…rise upon previous solutions,” and that “a solution is the sort of thing that human insight hits upon”. They emerge wholly in accordance with laws of science. No vitalistic force is needed to produce them or breathe life into them. Yet schemes emerge only when the appropriate prior conditions happen to be fulfilled. Lonergan goes on to explain how the assembly of appropriate prior conditions occurs randomly, and hence that there are “probabilities of emergence and probabilities of survival” that pertain to this field of environmental conditions.

In order to refine more precisely the notion of the conditioned series of schemes of recurrence, a three-fold distinction is drawn between (1) the actual serial, (2) the probable serial, and (3) the possible serial.

The actual consists of the schemes that actually were and actually are, like the various continuous interactions in the universe. These schemes are there functioning in our universe with precise specifications of their places, their durations, and their relations to one another. They make for a perfect story of perfect emergence: exact material, exact response, and right timing, holding everything together at a knife-edge. The actual is the factual.

The probable on the other hand, is the ideal. It has to exhibit the cumulative effects of probable alternatives. As a series of manifold schemes, at each stage of the probable serial is a set of probable next stages, with some being more probable than others. The probable schemes are not abstract for in every moment of world history there exists a most probable future course and a series of less probable courses.

The possible is still more distant from actuality. It exhibits the greatest complexity and variety. If the actual is beyond the field of all laws and the

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67 For a succinct presentation and critique of reductionism in the life sciences, see Arthur Peacocke, “Relating Genetics to Theology on the Map of Scientific Knowledge” in Re-Ordering Nature: Theology, Society and the New Genetics, 122-137.

68 Insight, 290.

69 The point here is that the actuality of the actual is not determined by scientific laws: scientific laws determine nothing. Lonergan saw that the laws of science were extremely general and therefore extremely indeterminate. From Newton’s three laws of motion and law of gravity alone it is impossible to derive any specific concrete path of motion. A determinate path of motion can be deduced only when specific conditions have been specified. Lonergan uses this conditionality of scientific laws, as the foundation of his account of emergence of schemes of recurrence.
probable depends on statistical as well as classical laws, the possible depends solely on a consideration of classical laws. This makes the possible serial abstract.

As can be inferred from the notion of conditioned series of schemes outlined above, there is a probability to the emergence and to the survival of a scheme of recurrence. But how can we identify and describe the probability of the emergence of schemes on one hand, and the probability of their survival on the other? In the recurrence of single events, we can suppose that the probabilities are respectively the same as before. However, it cannot be assumed that the probability of the combination of all the events in the set is the same. By combination of all the events, the probability of emergence of events leaps from merely a product of probability fractions to the sum of these fractions. The probability is therefore greater and a probability of emergence for a scheme of recurrence becomes existent. The probability consists in the sum of the respective probabilities of all the events included in the scheme. The probability arises when the prior conditions for the functioning of the scheme are satisfied.

The probability for the survival of the schemes that have begun to function rests in the degree that positive conditions are allowed for the occurrence of the component events. The probability of survival of a scheme of recurrence is directly proportional to the probability of the nonoccurrence of any of the events that would disrupt the scheme. Thus, the probability of growth and development is proportional as well to the probability of decline.

2.1.2 Emergent Probability

The probability of the emergence and survival of schemes brings to light the notion of an emergent probability. Emergent probability results from the combination of the conditioned series of schemes with their respective probabilities of emergence and survival. The actual functioning of earlier schemes in the series discharges the conditions for the possibility of the functioning of later schemes. As such conditions are fulfilled, the probability of the combination of the component events becomes greater (from the product to the sum of the component events as mentioned earlier). What is probable occurs sooner or later and when it does occur, a probability of emergence is replaced by a probability of survival. As long as the scheme survives, it is satisfying the conditions for the possibility of still later schemes to occur and survive. Such is the general notion of emergent probability, which is affected significantly by many factors like spatial distribution, absolute numbers and long intervals of time, selection, stability, and development. It will help to consider these briefly.

However widespread the realization of elementary schemes, there will be a succession of constrictions of the volumes of space in which later schemes can be found. It is a general law of the universe that no two things can occupy the same space at the same time.\textsuperscript{70} Although elementary schemes, the earliest in the series, can occur anywhere in the initial distribution of materials,

\textsuperscript{70} The Pauli Exclusion Principle
the next batches can occur only in the place of the preceding one. Moreover, the realization of the schemes is according to probabilities and all possibilities cannot be actuated.

Another consideration is absolute numbers and long intervals of time. Large numbers make for low probabilities. If the initial absolute numbers in which elementary schemes can be realized is great, it follows that the probability of the last schemes of the conditioned series is low. If the number of possibilities is immense, the more abstract the series becomes and the less probability for a scheme to occur and survive. There is also the narrowing down of the basis for further developments. The restriction in the volumes of space as the series progresses and the lowering of probabilities for a scheme to be realized due to large numbers of possibilities are aggravated and intensified by long intervals of time.

Selectivity refers to the selective significance attached to the distinction between probabilities of emergence and probabilities of survival. If both are low, occurrence of schemes will be both rare and fleeting. If both are high, occurrence of schemes will be both common and enduring. If the probability of emergence is low while the probability of survival is high, occurrence of schemes will be rare and enduring. Finally, in the opposite case where the probability of emergence is high but the probability of survival is low, occurrence of schemes will be common and fleeting.

Last of the considerations are stability and the possibility of development. Stability is related to selectivity. Since the functioning of later schemes depends on the functioning of earlier schemes, if earlier schemes collapse, later schemes collapse as well. Maximum stability therefore, would be in line of the common and enduring while minimum stability is expected of the rare and the fleeting. Stability and the possibility of development can conflict. Schemes with high probabilities of survival provide highly stable basis for later schemes but they also tend to prevent later schemes from emerging since they tend to imprison materials in their own routines. Lonergan suggests that a resolution of the conflict between stability and the possibility of development would be for conditioning schemes to have a high probability of emergence but a low probability of survival, for occurrence of schemes to be common and fleeting. A high probability of emergence provides materials where later schemes can depend, while a low probability of survival allows for readily surrendering of materials to give later schemes opportunities to emerge.

2.1.3. The Notion of Development

In order to reveal the heuristic significance of the notion of development, Lonergan directs our attention to genetic method. Genetic method finds its heuristic notion in development.\footnote{Insight, 484-511.} Inherent to the notion of development is an advance in the course of time from generic indeterminacy towards specific perfection. Flexible schemes of recurrence both shift and expand, thereby operations that initially were impossible or extremely awkward and inefficient become possible, spontaneous and effective. As discussed in the preceding
section, Lonergan suggests that the universe can make such a process of development possible within a framework of generalized emergent probability.

There is a distinction of the meaning of development at the pre-human level and its meaning at the human level. As in the plant there is the single development of the organism; in the animal there is the two-fold development of the organism and the psyche. In the human level, however, there is the three-fold development of the organism, the psyche, and intelligence. The distinction needs to be clarified not because the understanding of development in the human is the only significant thing and that the understanding of the development in plants and other animals is irrelevant to it. The reverse is true for the same heuristic structure applies to both organic development and the study of the psyche and intelligence. In addition, in the human case the development of the organism, the psyche, and intelligence are not independent and separate processes, but are knitted together as interlocking processes. One is dependent on the other. Intellectual development provides a higher integration of the psychic while the psychic provides a higher integration of the organic. Development of the psyche and intelligence are not possible without the development of the organic. The distinction in the meaning needs to be illuminated because the difference in the integration in the intellectual level is extensive.

To better understand development, Lonergan stresses that one has not only to employ insights, but one has to come to know one’s own structures of accumulating insights, structures which are composed of the different structures of the organism, the psyche and the intelligence. In other words, one has to give particular attention to one’s own operations as a psychic and intelligent organism. Human development is effected through a succession of questions and answers. As operators, human beings are required to understand the immanent intelligibility of the succession of questions and their respective answers. This is how we appropriate our own act of knowing.

The law of effect asserts that development takes place along lines of successful functioning. The ground of functioning, which is the operator, advances to a new ground of functioning where functioning occurs successfully. Although we are confronted not with single but three-fold development in human beings, and there is a significant difference in the accessibility of data between organic, psychic, and intellectual developments; fundamentally, the same heuristic structure is applicable to the study of the psyche and intelligence. In human development, the fundamental operator is the unrestricted desire to know. Hence, answers are met with further questions. The further questions will lead to further insights and so to still further questions. In this manner, we can understand the operator to be an instance of higher system on the move. “What is revealed to us is a universe of being in which our desires and fears are infinitesimal components in the history of humankind; a universe to which we can belong and in which we can function only by “de-centering” ourselves and sharing a destiny with all else.”

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72 B. Lovett, A Dragon Not for the Killing, 81.
Human development is not something which occurs outside the rule of emergent probability. In actual human living, human intelligence is not only artistic but also practical.\(^{73}\) For practical intelligence, desires and labor are recurrent. Even an intervention of intelligence is recurrent. The history of human material progress lies in the expansion of ideas. As new inventions accumulate, they set problems calling for more inventions. Every stage of human development presents new and additional needs that require creative and appropriate response and hence, result in innovations. These novelties, which complement the old, call for further improvements and reveal fresh possibilities. This process leads into a series of mechanical and technological higher viewpoints that mark each period in humanity's material progress.

The concrete realization of such succession of new practical ideas does not happen without human cooperation. For effective functioning, an operator needs cooperators for the series of successful ideas to emerge and survive. Successful cooperation leads to the emergence of different tasks and roles and the developments of skills. Labor is divided among members and each assigned task invites individuals to enhance their skills in the performance of such a task. The fulfillment of the schemes of practical ideas in material progress also calls forth the establishment of institutions, for technology evokes an economic system. The economic system will not function without human minds. So, economy evokes polity. The ideas that bring about the system reside in different minds that may agree or disagree with one another. The problem of effective agreement is as well, recurrent. “Each step in the process of technological and economic development is an occasion on which minds differ, new insights have to be communicated, enthusiasm has to be aroused, and a common decision must be reached.”\(^{74}\)

Common sense is a necessary element of human ingenuity. However, common sense needs its political specialization in order to give effective and appropriate responses in meeting social challenges. People of common sense have to be brought together so that insights can be complemented and modified by further insights arising in every situation. A common decision must be made and must be able to command attention and win confidence. The advance of technology, the development of economy, and the evolution of states and institutions are not only intelligible but also intelligent. Human flourishing relies on the commonly accessible insights that are disseminated by communication and persuasion. These insights modify and adjust mentalities to determine the course of history out of the alternatives offered by emergent probability. The process is also the cause of human personal and social decline. Insights can be missed or replaced by oversights. Communication and persuasion can fail and the course of history taken may not be the best alternative among those offered by emergent probability. The vitality of Lonergan's notion of development and of the basic structure of our emergence lies in this. It is crucial that we discover the functional unity that in

\(^{73}\) Cf. B. Lonergan in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan Volume 3 (Insight)*, 233-237.

\(^{74}\) B. Lonergan in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan Volume 3 (Insight)*, 234.
nature binds all things together in the universe, for this is the basic ground for building authentic human communities.

2.1.4. Creative Tension of the Subject

One of the laws of development is the law of limit and transcendence, a law of tension. What something needs to become must be in tension with what it is. It is the tension between the self as transcending and the self as transcended. This is what initiates repetition and recurrence. In the human, this tension becomes a conscious tension. As the old Greek tragedies express and insist, true human growth is possible only for those who respect and embrace necessary limits. The law of limit and transcendence helps us in understanding finality as reality, as real as anything else in the world. Finality is the dynamic aspect of the real. To affirm it is to affirm movement, fluidity, tension, and incompleteness. It is grasped in the assertion of a general directedness to fuller intelligibility and systematization, and of the attainment of ever greater but never complete fullness through an effective probability. To affirm finitude is to reject that the universe is static, finished, and complete.

The dynamism of finality is directed dynamism, which neither denies nor minimizes such facts as death, entropy, and the extinction that threatens survival. The dynamism means that these facts are taken seriously and not denied. The real meaning of finality is that it goes beyond such negative features towards fuller schemes of things. As the story of the universe shows, life, being, is an adventure extant in a cycle of majesty and beauty, violence and disruption, elegance and ruin. This same story gives the insight that all are interconnected and are in relationship with one another and that there is no material existence that escapes ongoing destruction. This is the cost of creativity that every being must undergo in the fulfillment of its inner nature. To blossom forth, living beings have to hold a fecund balancing of tensions – the stance that enables a great beauty to unfold. Thus, finality reveals limitations that it endeavors to transcend. The directed dynamism of finality is an effectively probable realization of possibilities. Here we see that limitations are not stumbling blocks that have to be fought and eliminated. On the contrary, limitations allow the furthering of life. As the story of the universe again reveals, whenever species are faced with their limits, they are forced to

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75 The terminology here reflects Brendan Lovett’s differentiated handling of what Robert Doran calls the dialectic of the subject. See Robert M. Doran, Theology and the Dialectics of History, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 177-210.

76 R. M. Doran, Theology and the Dialectics of History, 472-476.


78 B. Lovett, A Dragon Not for the Killing, 81.

79 The Pauli Exclusion Principle tells us that no two bodies can occupy the same quantum state. Each being has its own quantum of value and resistance is constantly being put up by each entity. This resistance requires energy. Any constructive activity also needs energy and the second law of thermodynamics states that the process inevitably, produces entropy or waste. See Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, The Universe Story, New York: Harper and Son, 1992), esp. 52-54.
move beyond – transcend – the confines of these limits in order to stay alive. New schemes evolve in order to sidestep any disaster encountered along the way.

In the light of this, chaos and order are not contradictories. Rather, order emerges from chaos. Order is not synonymous with stability. Instead, order is that to which the universe is intending – the experience of moving forward towards a goal, though in darkness, groping, and hoping to stumble upon what is desired. Order then means the unity of functioning of the parts within the whole, a resonant participation of each element with the rhythms of reality, the fulfillment of proper roles in the larger pattern of meaning, and responding accordingly and appropriately at the proper moment. Rosemary Haughton rightly describes the emergence of life in this sense, “Like spring, the breakthrough of newness is violent... It is an eruption of life so strong. It thrusts through... Even in the sheer perfection of each growing thing there is an integrity which is painful in its accuracy...”

In human life, integrity is a matter of sustaining a tension between the principle of limitation, which is the body and the sensitive psyche, and the principle of transcendence, the dynamic of our spiritual reach, our ability to go beyond. To be human is to be limited and vulnerable. But it does not stop there. To be human is also to desire the truly good and to intend perfection. To reduce life to only one of these two poles of limitation and transcendence collapses the balance that makes for creative and fruitful living, and would be a denial of the true meaning of being human. To simply delineate humanity as limited would head towards despair. Conversely, a displacement of the tension towards transcendence would tend toward a form of schizophrenia or of the angelic fallacy – losing the groundness or rootedness of our bodily existence. The creative stance will therefore be to live the creative tension – to live life in respect of the two poles, with the limitations providing the context for human beings to embrace transcendence as self-transcending subjects. To be human is to seek for a future where desires are realized and needs met through a creative living out of limitations.

2.2 THE HUMAN GOOD

The truly good is the aim of our search for meaning in the movement of life. We can therefore say that the truly good is the pearl of great price, the precious jewel that makes everything fit. Problems occur, however, when the truly good is substituted with what is only apparently good to which humans are often subjected to do. Thus, we fail in the search and life is missed. The main troubles of our time are, according to Sir Karl Popper, due to our

misguided moral enthusiasm. With greater accuracy, Herbert McCabe finds the cause in the “evil disproportion in desires.” This means that most of our problems are due to our distorted definition of what is truly good. It is easy for us to name all the evils to be avoided and reviled but there is no helpful clarification or grasp of the good to be pursued and to be achieved. What is truly tragic is not so much human beings’ inclination to evil, but the inability to pursue the greatest good that lures them. This inability leads to disaster. Though we claim development in our society, our present generation continues to suffer a loss or decline. It is therefore fundamental that a sound and lucid heuristics of what constitutes the human good, the main object of our quest for meaning, be provided.

Chapter Two of Bernard Lonergan’s Method in Theology attempts a heuristic definition of the good by assembling various components that enter into the human good. This is necessary so as to avoid abstraction that would be misleading: the good is always concrete. These components are summarized below.

2.2.1. The World of Immediacy and the World Mediated by Meaning

Our search for meaning and direction in the movement of life aims at arriving to what is truly good. The search involves a process of development. This process is constitutive of the interaction between our search for meaning and the values that guide us in the search in order to arrive at what is truly good. Within the process of human development is the notion of mediation. As infants, we live in the world of immediacy, wherein we react to the objects that are there present before us. We do this by using our senses. But through our insertion into language, we begin to grasp the meaning of the world we live in and so, operate in the world mediated by meaning. We do this through the compound operations of imagination, language, and symbols. With the aid of images, word, and symbols, we can operate not only with the present and actual, but also with respect to what is absent, past, and future.

In the world mediated by meaning, one can lack control of meaning and easily plunge into distortions and falsity. However, one can safeguard meaning by developing reflexive techniques that operate on the mediated operations themselves. We have different degrees of development because

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84 “Evil, be thou my good.” (Milton’s Satan). Evil is done with the utmost conviction of righteousness. See R. Haughton, The Passionate God, 108.
85 ‘Heuristic’ refers to that which puts us on the road to discovery. In a mathematical problem, for example, we usually use x to stand for the unknown that we wish to know and this helps us towards finding the solution to the problem. “[T]ranscendental method fulfills a heuristic function” (Method in Theology, 22) since it involves inquiries, which aim at transforming some unknown into a known.
86 Pages 27-55.
of two distinct issues: a shift in the control of meaning will yield a new stage of
meaning in a particular culture, complexifying it in a way that distinguishes it
from other cultures where the shift has not occurred; secondly, any historical
culture will differ most deeply from another because it has been developed
through differentiations of consciousness not present in the other culture. It is
in the process of development that we, as subjects, become aware of our
selves and our distinction from our world. As we apprehend our world, our
conduct develops and we begin to move through different patterns of
experience, from the biological, to the aesthetic, to the intellectual, and to the
dramatic pattern of experience. 87

The world of immediacy and the world mediated by meaning comprise our
one and only world in the making. They are part and parcel of our process of
development as we respond to the “real” world and create history. As we grow
older, the world of immediacy is not completely lost to us. There are moments
when sensitivity is freed from the routines imposed by development, enabling
it to a fresher and deeper rhythm of apprehension and feeling. But the kind of
immediacy and the way we respond to it are different. This is because of the
world mediated by meaning that is continuously being revealed to us. The
world of theory, which many of us would consider as abstraction, has a
mysterious relevance to our successful performance in the “real” world. The
world of the mystic – **ultima solitudo** - is described by Lonergan to be that
moment in one’s development where one drops the constructs of culture to
return to a new, **mediated immediacy** 88 of subjectivity reaching for God.

2.2.2 Development of Skills and Feelings

As we enter into the interplay of the world of immediacy and the world
mediated by meaning in our process of development, we start to develop skills
that are motivated and affected not only by needs but also by the acquisition
of meaning and development of values. Skills are developed in the movement
comprising the world of immediacy and mediated by meaning described
above. Following Jean Piaget’s analysis, the development of skills is
composed of different elements. Every new element depends on an
adaptation to some new object or situation. Every adaptation consists of two
parts: assimilation and adjustment. On one hand, assimilation refers to the
spontaneous employment of previously learned operations. On the other
hand, adjustment is effected by a process of trial and error that gradually
modifies and supplements previously learned operations.

88 Besides the immediate world of the infant and the adult’s world mediated by
meaning, Lonergan talks about “the mediation of immediacy by meaning when one
objectifies cognitional process in transcendental method and when one discovers,
identifies, accepts one’s submerged feelings in psychotherapy.” This promotes a
withdrawal from objectification to a mediated return to immediacy as in the mating of
Once the mystery of language has been unraveled, a child dashes out in a flow of questions. This spontaneous inquiry reveals what is common to all human beings – the spirit of inquiry that constitutes the scientific attitude. The spontaneous inquiry leads towards the spontaneous accumulation of related insights, for every inquiry or question is followed by an insight which is usually incomplete. This incompleteness generates further inquiries and questioning. Such is the spontaneous process of learning that also grounds the acquisition and development of skills. In the accumulation of insights, successive acts complement the accuracy and cover the deficiency of those that went before them. Sensitivity to every insight discovered along the way is very important in order to translate it to actual, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible living. Once this is done, constant practice is necessary to develop the technical competence of the individual and eventually of a team or a community. The poor may be deprived of material things but they can be as sensitive as anybody else in the society. Maybe it is this sensitivity that enables them to live the kind of life they are having, which could be intolerable for others who are not in that kind of situation. The poor, being exposed to and immersed in poverty for most of their lives, have in some ways developed the ‘skill’ to move on with life, in spite of the difficulties they are faced with. It is this sensitivity and sensibility that enables them to develop the appropriate and creative response in order to break through being just victims to a dignified life even in poverty. The possibility of learning new operations by an individual, in whatever situation one may be, can be put together in new combinations with those of other individuals and brought to new ends of human flourishing and community development.

Another component of the human good, distinct but not separated from operational development of skills, is the development of feelings. Drawing from Dietrich von Hildebrand, Lonergan distinguishes non-intentional states and trends from intentional responses. The states have causes, while the trends have goals. In non-intentional states, feelings come first and one discovers what needs to be done. On the contrary, feelings that are intentional responses answer to what is intended, apprehended, and represented. These feelings relate to an object and not simply to a cause or end. Without these feelings, our knowing and deciding would be weak and lacking. It is out of such feelings that we are oriented deeply and dynamically in a world mediated by meaning, towards the good that can and should be accomplished.

There are two main classes of objects regarded by intentional responses. On the one hand, the object intended can be agreeable or disagreeable, satisfying or dissatisfying. On the other hand, there are intended values. Our response to values carries us towards self-transcendence and, at the same time, selects an object for the sake of whom or of which we transcend ourselves. Our response to what is agreeable and disagreeable is, by contrast, ambiguous. The ambiguity lies in the fact that not at all times is what

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is agreeable also a true good. What is true good can also be disagreeable and dissatisfying. Here lies the virtue of most good and, I would say, loving people, who accept distasteful and painful tasks for the sake of the greater good.

Even though, fundamentally, feelings are spontaneous and so do not rest under the command of decision, once they have arisen, feelings can be reinforced by heedfulness and consent, or can be cut short by disapproval and distraction. This reinforcement or curtailment that encourages or discourages particular feelings modifies our spontaneous response to values and thereby affects our spontaneous scale of preferences. Furthermore, feelings are enhanced and refined by the attentive study of the assets and the diversity of the objects that arouse them.

Feelings are not merely transient. Though there are those that are easily aroused and easily pass away, feelings can also last. The degree of consciousness is relative to the depth and strength of our feelings. Feelings that are snapped by repression lead us to an unhappy life without direction. In contrast, deep and strong feelings, especially when deliberately reinforced, shape our horizons and give direction to our lives. The most excellent instance of this is loving or feeling love. True loving is for all times. The state of being in love that comes before particular acts of loving is the base and wellspring of all the actions of a person in love. Mutual love therefore, is the interweaving of two lives. It transforms an “I” into a “we”, where each attends, thinks, feels, and acts in concern for both. This too, is the foundation of every authentic community.

2.2.3. The Notion of Value

Skills and feelings play important roles in defining what is truly good for us. Once the good is defined, whatever it is that we consider good is valued. The notion of value, that which is intended by the question, “What is truly worthwhile?” is a transcendental notion in a sense that, it is not only an origin of initial questions, but also of further questions. Value is what is intended in questions for deliberation regarding the good to be pursued. Situations can impose values. This is primarily due to our shared humanity, which makes for both murderous conflict and solidarity. As living and conscious beings, we value life. But there are situations – matters of life and death – where we are forced to think and decide and to choose whether the life we are going to save is ours or that of the other. The depth of human sensitivity to particular situations has to be coupled with profound deliberation on what course of action to take in order to pursue the good that particular values reveal to us. This makes for the relation between the way the world is and how we ought to act within it, between the way we are and what we ought to do.\footnote{See Terry Eagleton’s chapter on morality in \textit{After Theory}, London: Penguin Books, 2003, 140-173 especially pages 153 and 159.} Without a rational basis, our response to value can either be distorted or futile, causing
more harm than good. As a transcendental notion of the good, our valuing heads for a goodness that is beyond criticism. As we grow in capacity to discern what is truly worthwhile, judgments of value are carried out not occasionally, but regularly, easily and spontaneously. A happy conscience is the reward of a successful self-transcendence, driven by our judgment of values. In an experience of disenchantment however, one has to stop and consider whether what one is doing is worthwhile or not. Thus, limitations in every finite achievement are made known. For as actualizing a transcendental notion, our values bring us deeper into the sense and meaning of loving, but at the same time keep us aware how much our loving falls short of its aim.

The sustained self-transcendence of a virtuous person reaches forth into the whole range of human goodness. It is only by this sustained self-transcendence that one becomes a good judge. Judgment of value is simple or comparative. It affirms that something is truly or merely apparently good. Comparatively, it tells if one value is better or more important or more urgent than the other. The measure of the truth or falsity of our value judgments depends on the authenticity of our being.

Distinct from judgment of facts, judgment of values can approve of what does not exist and can disapprove of what does exist. Though the criterion of both is the self-transcendence of the subject, this is only cognitive in the judgment of facts while the judgment of values “heads towards” moral self-transcendence. True judgment of values seeks out the fullness of self-transcendence which consists in not merely knowing what is truly good, but doing it.

It was mentioned previously that apprehensions of value are given in feelings. As human beings, we are endowed with the capacity of not only asking questions that lead to self-transcendence and recognizing the answers, but also to respond to the stimulations of our being when we recognize the possibility or the actuality of moral self-transcendence. Lonergan points out three components of the judgment of values. First, there is factual knowledge of reality and especially of human reality. Second, there are our intentional responses to values. And third, there is the initial thrust towards moral self-transcendence, constituted by the judgment of value itself.

In judging what is valuable or not, knowledge and feelings must be in accord with one another. One cannot live with the dichotomy of the two. When knowledge is deficient, there is the tendency that feelings are expressed in what is called moral idealism, or as mentioned previously, that which Karl Popper describes as a misguided moral enthusiasm. Yet, neither is knowledge alone enough. The development of knowledge and the development of moral feeling together lead us towards our existential discovery, the discovery of ourselves as moral beings. Our choices, above all else, make us authentic or inauthentic human beings. This discovery illumines the significance of our value as persons and the meaning and consequences of personal responsibility.

Judgment of value brings to light the fact of development and the possibility of failures. Growth is situated in the continuous enhancement and
refinement of one’s knowledge of human living and in finally actualizing it. Development or failure depends on the way we advance in what Lonergan defines as the integral scale of values. Before dwelling on this in the next section, it is worthwhile taking note of the possibility of distorted values, meaning to say, putting more weight on trivial things instead of giving more attention and priority to what is truly essential. There is also the incidence of conflicting values, where one’s values clash with someone else’s values. Where this someone else is superior physically or intellectually or emotionally, or even spiritually, feelings of ressentiment\(^91\) may occur. This feeling of ressentiment, when it extends over time, can turn into hostility especially when not directly expressed. One is resentful because she not only lacks the value-quality of the other person, but also feels unable to acquire it and so sinks to belittling the value in question; this can extend to doing violence to the person who possesses the particular value quality. Its worst feature is an eventual distortion of the whole scale of values due to its rejection of one value and this can spread through a whole community, people, or a whole period of time. There is a third possibility: it is that of a conflict between genuine values in my own life. The unavoidable issue then becomes the prioritization of value. Relevant to all three possibilities is a scale of values.

2.2.3.1 Scale of Values

Responding to values involves some scale of preference. An explanatory matrix of the human good is needed to provide such a scale of preference. The scale of values is therefore a structure that is implicitly defined by internal relations. Lonergan distinguishes vital, social, cultural, personal, and religious values in ascending order on the basis of the increasing level of self-transcendence required by each level.\(^92\)

It is clear that the writer of *Insight* never forgets that the universe is governed by emergent probability and that survival of later stages of emergence is conditional on the continued health of their grounding possibility of emergence. It is then understandable that Lonergan begins with vital value in his presentation. However, in the face of our mounting ecological problems, it seems pedagogically desirable to make what is implicit explicit and expand the scale of values into nine irreducible levels.\(^93\) Thus, the nine level structure of the human good, as diagrammed by Brendan Lovett, includes from the bottom up — physical, chemical, botanical, and zoological levels before the five levels distinguished by Lonergan. The inclusion and appropriation of the first four levels is crucial for they (the physical, chemical, botanical, and zoological levels) bring to the fore the foundational truth of our intrinsic bond with the story of the emerging universe. They point us back into the truth of our origin, of our belongingness to the earth, and to our responsibility towards one

\(^91\) *Ressentiment* is a loan word from the French and was introduced into philosophy by Friedrich Nietzsche. Lonergan follows Max Scheler’s use of the term. See *Method in Theology*, 33.

\(^92\) *Method in Theology*, 31.

another and the rest of creation. The callous and irresponsible exploitation of the plant and animal life is the root of the threat to all life on earth, including human life of course. Many animal and plant species have become and are becoming extinct. Altogether apart from the threat of wars and nuclear weapons, in virtue of the interconnected web of life, the human species is not exempt from such a prospect.

Spirituality is innate to each and every human being born in this world. By virtue of this innate spirituality, we search for the meaning of our existence and life here on earth; by it we give priority to life – all life – and everything that sustains life, particularly our ecological environment. By it, we are able to go beyond our individual interests for the sake of the common good of all as we relate to others as responsible co-sojourners on earth.\(^{94}\) At the first four levels of the integral scale of values, spirituality as lived authenticity can also be referred to as creation-centered spirituality – spirituality that is aware, sensitive, and responsible to the movement of all life in the planet. From vital value to religious value, the scale reflects a more incarnational spirituality. Now, it does not mean that an incarnational spirituality is not present in a creation-centered spirituality. All the levels of value are essential in a holistic and integrated spirituality.

Lovett emphasizes that the genuine movement between the five highest levels occurs only through personal relations and that the possibility of authenticity on one level requires authenticity of the next higher level. Differentiation and creativity move from below upwards, while conditioning and enablement flow from above downwards.\(^{95}\)

- **Physical Value**

And so, the scale of values begins here with physical value, which brings us back and closer to the earth. This valuing of our physical universe has its roots in the inherent interconnectedness of everything in the universe. I believe that this does not need to be elaborated as we feel and experience it in our daily living. This goes hand and hand with the faith in a God who created the whole universe as a cosmic reality with its bio-diversity operating in harmony for the sake of the life that God shared with it. Humankind is part of the same cosmos. As the point where the emergent process of the universe comes to consciousness, human beings can see, feel, think, and deliberate that the consumerist productive values that we have been living out so far are simply not sustainable on our planet. Any form of faulty value judgment, in this context, perverts any claimed spirituality, for spirituality springs from our relation with the world and with the universe in coming to terms with who we really are and what we are meant to be as participants in the whole scheme of life.

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\(^{95}\) B. Lovett, *On Earth As In Heaven. Corresponding to God in Philippine Context*, 20.
The creation story in the book of Genesis narrates that God created humans from the dust of the earth.\textsuperscript{96} We were brought forth from the earth and to the earth we shall return. This was the spirituality of our ancestors and remains to be the spiritual belief of most of our indigenous peoples. All life on earth reveal the presence and closeness of the Creator and this is what inspires and motivates them to respect and take care of the earth. Unfortunately, short of this spiritual motivation, human beings wantonly destroy the forests and recklessly extract minerals from the earth, all for greed and selfish vested interests, particularly for monetary gain. This does not do justice to the inherent nobility of our humanity, does not go deep enough to draw from the human wellspring of human dignity and nobility. Thus, many countries in the world today sound an urgent and insistent call for people to assume responsibility and action for the care of the earth.

A short note before we proceed to the next level in the scale of values—something I learned while staying with farmers of the Basic Ecclesial Communities of Pangasinan: Dust or soil is source of life and livelihood. We cultivate the earth to sustain us with life. Thus, dust is life. The earth is usually valued this way by those who live and work close to the land. For most of them, it is absurd to cover one’s feet or hands while tilling the land. While maybe for most of us, dust is usually taken as dirt, for those who work close to the land, to sustain life is to mingle and to become one with the earth. This suffices for living life meaningfully and with dignity and integrity.\textsuperscript{97} The problem arises when forces from outside their local communities take the land away from them.

- Chemical Value

From physical value, we move on to chemical value that brings to focus emergence of life and of its differentiation within our emerging physical universe. It also reveals our vulnerability and, at the same time, the delicate processes that make up every instance. It is a common adage that we should live life to the full every moment of our lives. Chemical value makes this even more urgent. Human beings are simply dust in the ever-expanding universe of life and activity. We have to hold every form of life with proper reverence.

There is a peculiar prolific balance that holds the universe together. The life forms that emerged, including us, are the achievement of delicate balances of chemical processes. Life emerges out of the determination of mediated combinations of chemical elements. This balance is made up of the combination of exact materials in exact timing and necessitates the exact

\textsuperscript{96} Gen. 2, 7.

\textsuperscript{97} This came from the very few members of the communities, mostly the old people, who have lived all their lives cultivating the land of their ancestors. It is really a pity that most of the young people have been alienated from this wisdom of the ancients. What is valued more now is the fleeting comfort and prestige of the sophisticated life in the city or abroad.
response from combining materials. There cannot be a little less or a little more. One very minor disruption and everything expires into oblivion.\textsuperscript{98}

Chemical value brings to the fore the value of the balance that the universe itself established along the way and, therefore, necessary for life to emerge and flourish. This balance is to be strictly respected by every life form. Take a little more or give a little less and we destroy everything, including ourselves. Anything more or anything less is a distortion. In the chemical processes, this distortion, which falls outside the time-tested compatibilities, produces poison. If we poison our environment, the very sources of life for us – air, water, sunlight, food, et cetera become poisons for our bodies which are themselves sustained by complex chemical processes. This scientific enterprise articulates the connections between the existence of life forms seeking a way to live a worthwhile life.

- **Botanical Value**

This level of value is very much connected with the first two levels of value. The increasing degree of hunger in the Philippines and in other parts of the world can be attributed to the neglect of this level. Even at this level of value, the effects of human inauthenticity are massive and very visible.

Current incidents in the Philippines, such as severe flooding and landslides, point to the destruction and misuse of the botanical resources. The Philippines is very rich in both fauna and flora that, if cultivated, cared for, and utilized properly, can provide Filipinos with enough food. It was recorded that around forty years ago, the *Tiruray* tribal people of Mindanao (one of the three groups of islands into which the Philippines is divided) had more than 42 different types of domesticated food in their diet. These were all grown in their gardens. By hunting and gathering in the forests, they were able to take

\textsuperscript{98} The universe had established its fundamental physical interactions. The first particle interactions in the story of our evolving universe were not fixed from the earliest instant of existence. There was an element of randomness associated with these interactions. But what had been a symmetric and free had to become fixed into particular interactions with determined intensities. If, for example, the power of gravitation had wavered too far one way or the other, the expansion of the universe would have ceased. Had it settled on a slightly different interaction, all the future stars would have exploded in a brief time so that the unfurling of life would have been impossible. Had the unfurling been somewhat slower, so that the temperature of the universe dropped more slowly, there could have been more possibilities for nuclear particles to enter into bound relationships. The protons and neutrons would not have stopped at helium or lithium, but would have continued gathering together until they formed iron nuclei, and the adventure of the universe would have been reduced to the ever wider dispersion of inanimate iron atoms. Instead, the universe maintained itself on the edge of a knife – expanding in its delicate fashion so that in the beginning the lightest nuclei could stabilize, nuclei whose powers were essential for the emergence of the first living cells. The established coherence, which must be maintained and held in a balance, holds open all the immensely complex possibilities of the future blossoming of life in the universe. (Cf. Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story. From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era: A Celebration of the Unfolding of the Cosmos*, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992.)
advantage of a further 62 kinds of wild food. Through proper cultivation and utilization, these sources of food could have sustained the Filipinos even until the present time. But this has not been the case. A great number of Filipinos today suffer much from hunger. There is not enough food supply for all, so that some have to scavenge for food in the garbage dumps. Many of the children are undernourished, the children who are supposed to be the hope of the future. It is therefore very crucial at this point to take into consideration the kind of values we give to our forests and the diverse plant species, not only in the Philippines, but also in the entire planet.

The tropical rainforests are our source not only of food but also of most of the data that we need for the preservation and enhancement of life. There are many recent discoveries that there are particular species of plants that can be sources of cure for various diseases that the world is now confronting, like cancer. Aside from this, the forests are centers of intense bio-activities: they serve as laboratories of life. Survival in the present world condition of hunger and incurable diseases is seen to depend largely on the preservation of the forests. Yet such forests are being permanently destroyed at the service of unperceptive and ultimately, stupid short-term commercial values. Before being subjected to the market system, Filipinos enjoyed more or less 102 different foodstuffs. The market system introduced by foreign countries made the people dependent on what the market provides. The people, forced to leave their subsistence way of life, could no longer control the food chain. The astounding variety and richness of food is wiped out by pressure from the market. Only products that met the market specifications as to appearance


100 The Philippines has been experiencing severe flooding due to the continued destruction of the forests or deforestation. In November of 1991, Liloan, a town in the province of Leyte, was devastated by severe soil erosion, which killed an estimated eight thousand people, burying them in the mud. Flooding and soil erosion is attributed to the loss of forest cover. Without the trees in the upland, there will be nothing to control the flow of water to the lowland. The forest acts as a sponge that absorbs torrential rain that water is released gradually to the low areas. The destruction of the forests causes damage to the topsoil. Sean McDonagh (*To Care for the Earth*, Quezon City: Claretian Publications/London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1986) stresses that the Philippines, in geological terms, is a new country and therefore has a fragile ecology in comparison with the land of older geological formations. While other older countries have deeper topsoil (such as that of the Central Plain of America, which had a topsoil depth of 16 feet prior to the degradations of the Europeans), we can rarely speak of a topsoil depth of 16 inches for the Philippines (Cf. B. Lovett, *On Earth As In Heaven. Corresponding to God in Philippine Context*, 23). This means that any inappropriate introduction of farming methods and style of production in this condition could rob the soil of its richness. Aside from erosion, the soil loses its fertility by the use of inorganic chemical fertilizers and chemical pesticides, and through excessive irrigation.

and shelf-life could be sold. We know that fresh foods are easily perishable. With the market’s criterion of long shelf-life, therefore, they do not meet the requirement. So, the people are forced to purchase foods treated with preservatives. These preservatives, as most of us know by now, are chemical additives that corrupt the natural process of emerging plant life and consequently, affect the chemical constitution of the human beings who consume them.

Another grave concern that is alarming and upsetting is the development in the field of genetics. Powerful and rich Western companies are pushing genetically modified crops. One form is the use of “terminator” gene technology, which sterilizes seeds. The purpose of this technology is to genetically modify the seeds so that they would not germinate after the first season. The farmers are therefore forced to buy new seeds every year from the big companies, their age-long practice of having their own seed-bank being effectively abolished, while the capitalist companies hide in the disguise that they are trying to help solve the problem of food shortage. In the Philippines, the Government approved the field-testing of genetically modified corn in July of 1999.\textsuperscript{102} The companies claim that there is no significant difference between genetically engineered and natural life forms. Yet, the truth is that the long-term effects of genetic modification on the environment remain uncertain. The disadvantage to poor farmers of bio-engineered agriculture is massive. This chemical approach to agriculture\textsuperscript{103} and food processing has introduced toxins and carcinogens into the human food supply and can cause widespread harm. It is distressing how most of those in the government of various countries are supporting this scheme. As Ellen Teague suggests\textsuperscript{104}, all of us, and especially the world’s poor, may, without our knowledge, be guinea pigs in a vast experiment.

- Zoological Value

This level of value brings to light the reality of life in the planet as a web of interconnected life forms, wherein all living organisms can only survive by symbiosis. Do harm to one life form and the rest can suffer extinction; and if a species becomes extinct, it is gone forever for the process of emerging life is irreversible. The destruction of the forests and plant-life, as elaborated above, consequently means certain extinction for other forms of life dependent on that habitat. Reverence for life in all its manifestations is therefore our only path to survival. The way and the rate that we are going however, seems to show otherwise. Human beings, especially with the rapid development of biotechnology, have dominated and gained the power to control all life for commercial ends. We are very eager to stress our superiority over other living creatures of this planet to the extent of believing it is within our power to

\textsuperscript{102} Cf. Brendan Lovett, “Masters of a Meaningless World? Theological-Ethical Reflection on Genetically Modified Organisms”, a lecture delivered during the Conference on GMO’s and Ethics on November 26, 1999 in the Philippines.

\textsuperscript{103} Monsantos’ genetically modified seed is “Roundup-ready”, that being the potent herbicide produced by the same company, without which the seed is effectively useless.

\textsuperscript{104} Cf. her article, “Frankenstein in the fields” in \textit{The Tablet}, 25 July 1998.
change the order of life. It is false ground to believe that humans are the center of the universe, such that everything else revolves around us. It is not a question of control or superiority. Rather, it is humility and responsibility, service and respect to the whole of life. Surely, human beings are different from the rest of the animals and it is in this difference that human vocation and dignity lie. As *Homo sapiens*, humans are beings that can reflect on themselves. Humans are the universe come to consciousness. This calls for an enormous and profound responsibility. In our search for the truth, wisdom is an indispensable element. At the start of a new millennium, we find ourselves in the midst of a crisis brought about by the ‘advances’ in science, such as the rise in new biology mentioned above. How do we know that such ‘advances’ will be used for human benefit and that of the entire natural world? The crisis that we face, as Celia E. Deane-Drummond suggests, is a crisis in knowledge, more specifically a “crisis stemming from a translation of wisdom into information”.  

Responsible stewardship of life demands effective advance towards wisdom, and wisdom is a quality of human subjects in whom authenticity may never be taken for granted. The foundation of that wisdom is God’s wisdom, bestowed upon humanity for this: for human beings to be guardians of God’s creatures and govern the world in holiness and justice and render judgment in integrity of heart.

- **Vital Value**

  Vital value is the first level in Lonergan’s scale of values. Vital values refer to health and strength, grace and vigor. They are furthered by good food, shelter, and adequate nurturing but what qualifies under these headings can only be understood by considering the levels of ecological value spelled out above. The furtherance of vital value depends on the integrity of pre-human world. Data on ecological destruction, therefore, indicate that a connection that should be obvious (the relationship between the foregoing four levels and the rest of the levels of value detailed by Lonergan) badly needs to be made explicit in our cultural awareness.

  Human beings come under direct focus on this level. Meeting vital values is foundational to all further levels of value of the human good. It is obvious however, by the presence of overwhelming poverty and hunger in the world at present that the people in power and authority are not embarking on a project of furthering life. Instead, most of them have opted to the evil that manifests itself in the creation of the poor. At the rate that the Philippines is going concerning the management of these vital values, it is seen that in the next 30 years...

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years, its total population will be 160 million and about 70 to 90 million (the equivalent of the current population) will live below the poverty line. 109

As mentioned earlier, creativity flows from below upwards on the scale of values. If human resources are being impaired out of the lack of proper nourishment, the humanity of the future will not be able to call on the creativity it needs for authentic human flourishing and affluence. The vital values have to be met crucially in childhood since the damage imposed by food deprivation and consistent malnutrition on children can no longer be remedied at a later stage of life.

- Social Value

“Social value is the value of systemic order.” 110 Social values, such as the good of order, must condition the vital values, and the vital values of the whole community must be preferred to the vital values of individual members of the community. People, aside from being living organisms, are social beings. Their recurrent needs can only be met by promoting the good of order; the presence of such a good is recognized in successfully meeting the recurrent human vital needs of a particular population. Social value minimally subdivides into the value of technological system, the value of economic system, and the value of political/legal system.

Technological value points to the necessary tools and technology that we use in order to meet particular vital needs. Technology has a critical role in the structuring of people’s minds and thereby, of the world. In the development of modern technologies, humans have gained enormous power over and against the movement of life itself. This power is concentrated in the hands of the rich and the powerful. So concentrated, it is a power that is against the people. We need to look to the first four ecological levels of the scale of values in order to make appropriate judgment as to what an intelligent technology is and what it is not – what is truly valuable and not simply a useful tool. Since we now live in a technological age, it is a huge and vital task to be able to realize appropriate technological value; that is, to promote only technologies that are within the local people’s control while reinforcing and enhancing their creative capacities.

Economic value refers to the order of production and distribution which can ensure that the vital needs of a total population will be met in a sustained and recurrent fashion. 111 Economic value must be defined in relation to vital value and not in terms of profit and market forces. An economic system that benefits only some of the population is to be considered a failure. Although to break with the dominant world system is such a gargantuan task, bordering on the impossible, the viable insight that an erroneous placement of values

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110 B. Lovett, On Earth As In Heaven. Corresponding to God in Philippine Context, 26.
111 B. Lovett, On Earth As In Heaven. Corresponding to God in the Philippine Context, 27.
means death for many people remains valid. Insight to how the levels interrelate enables people to creatively critique and understand intelligently what is wrong in our world. This leads people to reasonable judgments and responsible actions that can in one way or the other contribute towards social transformation. Brendan Lovett suggests that bioregionalism, “the concentration on building biologically self-sufficient and sustainable areas that can feed their own populations, is the only viable strategy for the future.”

Political value is the value of a system which ensures that in varying circumstances, the economic system can continue to meet the vital needs of a total population in sustained and recurrent fashion. It is the political order that should control the economic order and not the other way around. This means that the creative and life-giving task is to meet the vital values of the whole population and not that economic interests should use politics to further their interests. As in all the levels in the scale of values, the political system is to be defined in relation to the other levels of values.

- Cultural Value

The interrelationship between social structures and culture was well acknowledged in the Philippines. Faced with social problems, there was an accompanying awareness of the need to change both social structures and the cultural values of the people. However, it was also noted in this regard that it is easier to change social structures qua structures than to change cultural values which include the worldviews and customary patterns of thoughts that undergird the structures. Social change, therefore, must proceed along both structural and cultural lines, never one without the other. In the structural analysis in Mindanao-Sulu (southern islands of the Philippines) in the 1970’s there was often not sufficient attention to the cultural system and the analysis tended sometimes to be doctrinaire.

To speak of the cultural system here may be misleading and needs clarification in view of current anthropological usage. The focus of most anthropological study is culture as product. From this follows the concentration on social systems. By contrast, Lonergan’s focus is on culture as process. Lonergan speaks of an every-day level of culture which refers to the taken-for-grantedness of our everyday world and distinguishes it from a critical level of culture which people submit their taken-for-granted meanings – including their systemic meanings – to ongoing critique. It is this latter meaning which is in focus when he speaks of the cultural level of value.

The richness and actuality of being fully human is realized in the diversity and interactions of vast creative achievements. Each of these achievements, each human culture, is unique and irreplaceable. Through these enormous creativities, the giftedness of the universe is transformed into the significance of the world. The creativity is ongoing as a people constantly critique their

112 B. Lovett, On Earth As In Heaven. Corresponding to God in the Philippine Context, 27.
113 Cf. Warren Kinne, A People’s Church? The Mindanao-Sulu Church Debacle, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1990, 42.
meanings. Focus on social value of systems or equiperating that level with culture loses the sense in which cultural value can be considered a higher level of value.

Our reference to culture, then, describes a critical process of shaping the world and of giving people control over their own destiny. To participate in the cultural process is the way people speak and express themselves, a process by which human beings determine and discern the meanings and the values by which they live and shape their world. Ultimately, a critique of culture is possible through actualisation of personal and religious value by which one is attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible. These personal and religious values manifest and realize themselves in and through the cultural process.

The distinctiveness of every creative achievement establishes its identity and relevance: to discriminate against any one culture as “primitive” or “archaic” is simply to deny its right to exist and develop. This is what the mono-cultural, imperialist drive of the economic world system is doing, thus wrecking the humanity of so many peoples. It destroys cultures in their deepest meaning as processes. The groups of indigenous peoples of the Philippines were for a time, called the cultural minorities, simply because they were few in number. They belong to the group of natives who were not subject to the control of the colonizers, and so avoided the hispanization of the culture. Hence, colonizers called them ‘infidels’, ‘uncivilized’, ‘ignorant’, ‘pagans’, ‘primitive’, ‘inferior’, and ‘savages’. Until the present, the indigenous

114 Cf. W. Kinne, A People’s Church? The Mindanao-Sulu Church Debacle, 40. See also B. Lovett, On Earth As In Heaven. Corresponding to God in the Philippine Context.
115 Cf. B. Lonergan, Method in Theology, 32.
116 Cf. B. Lovett, On Earth As In Heaven. Corresponding to God in the Philippine Context.
117 Although some would argue that we are all indigenous, “indigenous” here means the natives, who continue to reside in their ancestral domains where they have been living since time immemorial and have maintained their customs and traditions and continue to practice them; and those that may have been displaced but are now resettled in some areas of the country and continue to live as communities. According to the report of the National Commission of Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) and other government agencies with concerns relating to indigenous cultural communities, the estimated population of the indigenous peoples, who can be found in 7 ethnographic regions around the Philippines, is close to 12 million. Some academicians say that there are about 110 major Filipino ethno-linguistic tribes.

The CBCP (Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines) General Assembly approved the change in name of the former Episcopal Commission on Tribal Filipinos-Tribal Filipino Apostolate (ECTF-TFA) to the present Episcopal Commission on Indigenous Peoples-Indigenous Peoples Apostolate (ECIP-IPA) in January 1995, upon the proposal of the participants to the 1994 National Convention of the ECTF-TFA. These people were the ones who insisted that they be called indigenous peoples rather than tribal Filipinos. (Reported during the 6th Mission Studies Lecture Series held at Maryhill School of Theology, Quezon City, on April 26-30, 2004, with its theme, “Indigenous Peoples and the Mission of the Church”.)
people of the Philippines continue to struggle for empowerment, self-governance and self-determination, and for the recognition of their rights to cultural integrity, which are being sacrificed in favor of the 'majority' (dominant culture).

Culture as process, where people think and decide for themselves what is truly desirable, significant, and worthwhile, and, thereby, determine their own destiny, is integral to human freedom. The many attempts by some powerful cultures to enforce its orientations upon other cultures are evident in human history, as cultural diversity is literally overwhelmed, not only at present but even more so in the past. It seems that there has been no other way of coming to terms with cultural pluralism but that of dominitive power.\textsuperscript{118}

Helmut Peukert defines modernity in terms of human cultural development.\textsuperscript{119} But, does modernity speak at all to the less developed nations? What are the effects of modernity on the so-called underdeveloped or developing countries such as the Philippines? Modern societies set up as norm that which to them is humanly desirable. And once the norm is set up, they make the others in their own image and likeness. Those who set up the norm remain the norm. So, they are developed and the others are underdeveloped. Their task then, is to develop the underdeveloped. The demand to be respected as a nation then comes to mean being accepted by the 'developed' nations by becoming the same as them. The articulation of the responsibility for peace in the world in terms of taking responsibility for helping other people to develop comes to mean then, that the rest of the world must become like the modern states. Implicitly operative here is the assumption that there is such a thing as one culture that is valid while the others are invalid. This is how injustice is perpetrated in the name of development, where the right to cultural integrity of people is violated. The definition of what it means to be human is imposed on people and they are forced to reject their own tradition. But to take away from people the right to cultural integrity is to deprive them of the only genuine meaning there is for freedom.\textsuperscript{120}

One of the values of Lonergan's contribution is its substantial relevance to the resolution of this cultural crisis elaborated above. Lonergan saw himself responding to the cultural crisis that has to do with the ambiguities of modernity, ambiguities which were seen to be a major reason behind the holding back of the church from engagement with the modern world in recent centuries. The challenge of modernity has largely been that of a powerful assertion of human autonomy. But what should recommend Lonergan to people is the extraordinary balanced judgment he brings to evaluating modernity. Though he was sensitive enough to the cost of what has been


\textsuperscript{120} I draw this critique of development from B. Lovett, A Dragon Not for the Killing, 169-180.
aberrational in the modern period, it did not blind him at all to the very breakthroughs and genuine achievements of the human spirit that was occurring during this period.\textsuperscript{121} Lonergan, realizing the irreversible change in our understanding of what it is to know, endeavoured to confront creatively and constructively the complexity of human events and what is going on in history and worked to bring the centuries-long turn to the subject to a fruitful resolution. “Kant’s ‘dare to know’ (\textit{sapere aude}) which symbolizes the beginning of the Enlightenment is taken up by Lonergan in a context which gives him an unshakeable foundation consisting in the appropriation of the transcendental method operating in all serious research. This method becomes […] a foundation for autonomous human knowing capable at the same time of receiving the gift of God’s love. That such autonomy is not a motive for \textit{hubris} or pride but a gift of God the Creator to be exercised with responsibility is evident from all of Lonergan’s work.”\textsuperscript{122}

I can see this as an enormous contribution by the help it provides to those who want to commit themselves to the concrete service of the society but lack the necessary interpretative key to face up to the complexity of human events. Such lack can lead to different forms of scientific ideologies issuing in revolutions gone wrong. The revolutionary theories of the 19\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries, for instance, have failed to consider the centrality of the cultural in the liberative process. Marxist typically adverted to one inversion of the scale of values: the subordination of the political to the economic.\textsuperscript{123} By naming the cultural “epiphenomenal,”\textsuperscript{124} they were blind to a second inversion of the scale of values: the displacing of cultural dynamics by economic interests. As a result, economic interests use the political system in the name ‘national security’: politics, instead of being the mechanism that mediates cultural values to the technological and economic systems, become coercive

\textsuperscript{121} See B. Lovett, “Third-level Theological Education in the Philippines: History and Prospect.”
\textsuperscript{122} Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, “Bernard Lonergan at the Service of the Church,” \textit{Theological Studies 66} (2005), 526 [Italics by the author].
\textsuperscript{123} Marxist ideology, espoused by the leaders of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), orchestrated a revolution against the Marcos regime that resulted to a criminally irresponsible inciting “of the suffering poor to that revolutionary violence which promote[d] hatred, [led] to useless bloodshed and the tragic loss of many lives [that for the most part did not] achieve any good.” It has to be noted that there were quite a number of priests, religious, and members of the Christian communities who were sympathetic to the armed revolt and joined the CPP or its affiliated groups. But those who primarily and gravely suffered from this were the poor who were caught between the crossfire. It did not resolve the problem of institutionalised violence maintained by a repressive government and its army but ensued instead a spiral of violence producing more injustices and oppression. See W. Kinne, \textit{A People’s Church? The Mindanao-Sulu Church Debacle}, 68-73. See also Niall O’Brien, \textit{Island of Tears, Island of Hope: Living the Gospel in a Revolutionary Situation}, Quezon City, Claretian Publications, 1993.
\textsuperscript{124} In the Marxist context, politics is not a field of reality with its own autonomy but something of a reflex of the material conditions of social existence, the economically generated consciousness.
propaganda to convince the populace that they need what the system is delivering to them.\textsuperscript{125}

Personal authenticity, realized in cultural values, is essential to the humanization of politics.\textsuperscript{126} A human world demands that people be able to use the political system to mediate their decisions as to what shape their economic system should take. The only appropriate response to the dominative power discussed above is to promote the heart of the human good – cultural action for freedom. True ‘people power’ rests in the people’s power of judging and exercising control over the political process and through this, control over the economic process. It is the promotion of the power of the community, where there is a space where people are inspired together to creatively name and shape their lives and their world. One last thing that is worth remembering and attending to, is that culture, like love, is energy and not just identity. Culture does not consist simply of static tradition but as energy is sustained and made alive by dynamic innovations. With our present awareness of cultural pluralism and our understanding of constitutive meaning for the human, it is no longer possible to have the illusion that we can respect people while refusing to take their meanings seriously. Meanings form the very reality that shapes humanity. We have no choice today but to embrace an empirical\textsuperscript{127} notion of human culture instead of the classical understanding where culture was normatively conceived. This notion of culture is the context of Lonergan’s understanding of the transcultural, mentioned above. The classicist notion of culture is a normative notion: ultimately, there can only be one; the others, whether explicitly named so or not, are seen as barbarians who are in the process of catching up with those who conceive their own culture as norm. For the empirical notion of culture that is operative in the human science of anthropology, culture is not normatively conceived: what is to be understood is the set of meanings and values that inform an actual way of life.\textsuperscript{128} All cultures, no matter of what time or place, are constituted by meanings and values that inform ways of living.

- **Personal Value**\textsuperscript{129}

  Personal value is realized in the creativity and authenticity of people. It provides the condition of possibility of cultural value being realized. Personal value is therefore manifested in and through cultural activity. Cultural value is realized to the extent that people are participating intelligently and freely. In

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{125} B. Lovett, \textit{On Earth As In Heaven. Corresponding to God in the Philippine Context}, 75.
  \item \textsuperscript{126} Cf. B. Lovett, \textit{On Earth As In Heaven. Corresponding to God in the Philippine Context}, 77.
  \item \textsuperscript{127} M. Lamb reminds us that what Lonergan means by “empirical” is an orientation to culture, which attends to both the data of the sense and the data of consciousness: adequate human sciences operate within generalized empirical method. In “The Notion of the Transcultural in Bernard Lonergan’s Theology,” \textit{Method: Journal Of Lonergan’s Studies} Vol. 8, 60.
  \item \textsuperscript{128} B. Lonergan, \textit{Method in Theology}, xi.
  \item \textsuperscript{129} Personal value, together with religious value, is elaborated more extensively in the next chapters.
\end{itemize}
the absence of personal value, the culture collapses. Being in touch with one’s own life of feeling and what is going on in one’s psyche is vital to promote healing and bring forth those responses which make for the furtherance of life.

The experience of being loved and being in love enable people to promote themselves and inspire others to deeper levels of creativity and appreciation. Personal value is fulfilled in people, who are responsive to the integral demands to be attentive, intelligent, rational, and responsible. But how can the demands of authentic living be responded to in a world that is continuously reluctant to change? Where do we get the resources to sustain the demand of authenticity? To answer these questions, we need to go one step higher in the scale of values, the religious value.

- Religious Value

Religious value is situated at the summit of the scale of values because it consists in being loved unconditionally and enables the capacity to love without restriction. To experience being cherished and cared for allows people to realize the personal authenticity that can promote healing of the world. Healing restores to us our dignity and promotes us towards freedom. Religious value, therefore, is revealed in a capacity for loving. This is why the movement from the top (religious value) through the scale of values is a movement of enablement. Nothing can enable us towards creativity and authenticity in a world where sin is to be transcended except the experience of being loved unconditionally and, thereby, enabled to love without restriction.

Religious value shines through wherever people are responding to life in love. It is at the heart of the meaning and value of human living. Lonergan expounds on religious value when he talks about religion in Chapter Four of *Method in Theology*. It is at the peak of the scale because it is the definitive reach of authentic human striving for the good. Yet, at the same time, it is the prime mover that animates and regulates the integrity of the scale of values because religious value, first of all, is a gift. Lonergan stresses that “[b]efore it enters the world mediated by meaning, religion is the prior word God speaks to us by flooding our hearts with love.” Faith in a God who loves no matter what comes true when people make a stand for life wherever victims are being created.

2.2.4 Structure of the Human Good

The human good does not only have components but structure as well. Following is a diagram of this structure made by Lonergan in order to show the flow within this structure. The first thing to keep in mind regarding the human good is that it is at once individual and social. By the way the two aspects combine, Lonergan selects eighteen terms and relate them to one another through a scheme. The eighteen terms regard (a) individuals in their potentialities and actuations, (b) cooperating groups, and (3) ends. A three-

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130 *Method in Theology*, 112.
131 *Method in Theology*, 47-55.
fold division of ends imposes a three-fold division in the other categories. This is illustrated in the following scheme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Ends</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Potentiality</strong></td>
<td><strong>Actuation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>capacity, need</td>
<td>operation</td>
<td>cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plasticity, perfectability</td>
<td>development</td>
<td>institution, role, task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liberty</td>
<td>orientation, skill</td>
<td>personal conversion</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The key reading of the above diagram is to see how the different levels (there are three: the level of particular good, the level of the good of order, and the level after that that leads to terminal value) relate to the social and cultural. The third level relates to the cultural in the sense that it contains the elements of that level; the second level relates to the social in the same way. Fred Lawrence summarized it this way:

Within the structure of the human good, Lonergan has brought out the differentiation of culture as the domain in which society reflects upon and appraises its way of life in distinguishing between the second and third levels. The second level regards the social dimension of the human good, the concretely verifiable way of life as embodies in laws, technology, economy, polity, family life; the third level comprises the cultural domain in the light of which the social is (to be) judged and evaluated. By this distinction, both the “social” and the “cultural” have an utterly empirical meaning, but “culture” retains the connotation of a normative function without being classicist in Lonergan’s pejorative sense.  

The nine levels of the scale of values constitute the instances of terminal value in the diagram above. The structure above is concerned to lay out the elements that enter into the human good in a way that will show how the levels of the scale of values are interconnected.

The aim of our search for meaning and direction in the movement of life is, as mentioned above, the truly good, being given the true value. The scheme above is a guide that can help in the process of the search. It begins with the potentialities that an individual has, which when actuated become the source of good. The individual becomes an originating value once these potentialities are actuated appropriately to the fullest extent. This fullness is manifested in the effects and fruits of the actuation to the community. This means that human potentialities are actuated not only to meet one’s particular needs but are performed to meet the needs of the community, therefore, in collaboration

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133 Cf. B. Lovett, A Dragon Not for the Killing, 98.
with every member of the community. It also means that our search for meaning in life is not a solitary venture. These potentialities, which we can call our gifts, are to be shared for the good of the entire community; thus, for the good of order. By following the subsequent steps below (done by line or in a vertical order), the position, the meaning, and the relationships of the terms in the above scheme can be best understood.

First step: Individuals have the capacities to operate. By operating, they get hold of instances of the particular goods. These instances are objects or actions that meet a need of a particular individual at a given place and time. Needs are understood as necessities that extend to wants of every kind.

Second step: Individuals live in groups or communities. As a member of a community, one does not only operate to meet one’s particular need, but cooperates in order to meet one another’s need; in other words, the need of the community as a whole. Operating then, turns to cooperating, the pattern of which is fixed by a role to be fulfilled or a task to be performed within an institutional framework. The institutional frameworks can either be the family, manners or mores, society and education, state and law, economy and technology, or the church and sect.

Third step: Capacities function because they are plastic (flexible and continuously shaped or molded indefinitely) and perfectible. They acknowledge the development of skills, the very skills that are demanded by institutional roles and tasks. Aside from the institutional basis of cooperation, there is also the concrete way in which cooperation works out, which is consistent with prosperity and recession in an economic set-up, the wide range of differences in the administration of justice in political life, and is what generates bliss or misery in the domestic set-up of a family. This concrete manner in which cooperation is working out is what the good of order is all about. So, if particular good refers to the goal of an individual’s operation, the good of order is the goal of cooperation in a community. The good of order is distinct from the instances of particular good, but is not separate from them. It is just that the good of order regards these instances, not singly, but all together and incessant. The order that sustains the flow of particular goods consists chiefly in (a) the ordering of operations so that they can be cooperation that ensures the continuance of all effectively desired instances of the particular good, and (b) the interdependence of effective desires and decisions with the appropriate functioning by cooperating individuals.

Fourth and last step: Liberty here means not indeterminism but self-determination. Any particular course of action, individual or communal, is limited and open to criticism. Accordingly, deliberation and evaluation is not decisive enough. Eventually, we have to operate in our liberty to terminate the process of deliberation by making decisions, opting for one of the many possible courses of action and executing it. If the chosen course of action to be executed is not simply for an apparent good but for the true good, the self is achieving moral transcendence. The person exists authentically and constitutes herself as an originating value, bringing about terminal values, that is, the good of order that is truly good and instances of particular good that are
truly good. Otherwise, if the person’s choice is only to satisfy oneself in terms of pleasure as against pain that may be otherwise involved, then she fails in self-transcendence, in authentic human existence, and in being the foundation or source of value in oneself and in one’s society.

Liberty is brought to bear within the medium of personal relations. In a community, persons are bound together by their common needs and by the good of order that meets these needs. Needs are universal. People in all walks of life have needs. More often than not, needs become the stimulus in forming a community. The community is formed and is sustained by the active cooperation of persons made possible by the commitments that they themselves have freely undertaken. By these commitments, they assume roles and perform tasks and at the same time, arouse expectations from others.

Terminal values are the values chosen. These are true instances of the particular good, a true good of order, a true scale of preferences regarding values and satisfactions. Terminal values are related to “originating values,” which expression names the persons who do the choosing – authentic persons achieving self-transcendence by their good choices. The originating value is the human person and the terminal value is the human good the person brings about. The person, as originating value, brings about terminal values by deliberating whether one’s cause is really worth dying for, when to compromise, and where to draw the line. Personal commitments bring one into solidarity with others. Terminal values are brought about by people who recognize the basic truth of every person: that no matter how insignificant one’s life may seem to be at times, one’s decision put into action does make a difference in the lives of others. Indeed, the choices that people make dictate the lives that they lead. What motivates people, as originating values, to achieve terminal values is the principle that what matters most is how one makes life better for other people.

2.3 MEANING

What has just been explored under the preceding section on values has to do with the generation and determination of the specifically human world as a world mediated by meaning. Our search for meaning is constituted by the dynamics of knowing where we arrived at a judgment of fact and the dynamics of doing where our judgments of fact feed into and are sublated by our judgments of value. All talk about values is talk about meaning and all talk of meaning is about value to the extent that our concern is to know and to do what is authentically the human good.

Our search for meaning goes hand in hand with the human good. It should be for the purpose of the human good that we search for meaning in our lives. It is by the meaning that we find in life that we come to define what is truly good for us. If the thrust of our search is towards what is truly good,
then we find increasing joy and meaning in our lives. Meaninglessness, that which cannot be creatively responded to, is death.

As mentioned before, we grow from the world of immediacy to the world mediated by meaning. Like the human good, meaning is at once individual and social. It fulfills a variety of functions in human living, including insights into the varying expressions of religious experience. So, how do we search for meaning? What are the elements that make this possible? Meaning has sources and functions. It is communicated from its sources to the recipients through what Lonergan calls carriers of meaning.

2.3.1. Sources of Meaning

Sources of meaning, which can be divided into transcendental or categorical, are conscious acts and they all have intended contents. The transcendental source is the very dynamism of intentional consciousness, which we have already elaborated on above. Intentional consciousness is the capacity that continuously and incessantly heads for and recognizes data, truth, reality, and value. The categorical refer to the determinations reached through the conscious activities involved in experience, understanding, judging, and deciding. Transcendental notions ground questioning and the answers develop categorical determinations.

2.3.2 Functions of Meaning

A first function of meaning is cognitive. The cognitive function of meaning takes us out of the infant’s world of immediacy into the adult world mediated by meaning. It is through the development of the command and use of language that our world is opened up into a wider world of meaning. The words that we learn and begin to use do not only express what we have discovered ourselves, but communicate as well what we have received and continue to receive from different people and communities, from tradition, literature and forms of arts, and which we have chosen and decided to adopt as our own.

This larger, wider world mediated by meaning goes beyond the totality of all worlds of immediate experience. Meaning goes beyond experiencing for what is meant is what is intended in questioning. What is intended is determined not only by experience but also by understanding and certainly, by judgment as well.\(^{134}\)

A second function of meaning is effective. Work, for example, is not simply manual but also requires attention and involves reflection. Before we make anything, we first intend it and then, we think and imagine how to do about it, we plan and see the possibilities and finally, we execute it. From the start of intending until the final execution, we are engaged in acts of meaning. What we have at present, all the innovations that have contributed to the kind of world we live at the moment, are products of human acts of meaning.

\(^{134}\) See previous discussion of meaning as potential, formal, and actual in terms of the components of our knowing in section 1.1.1 The Dynamism of the Spirit and the Notion of the Spiritual above.

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A third function of meaning is **constitutive**. This means that meaning is an intrinsic component of every human achievement such as personal development, social institutions, and cultures. They change, develop or deteriorate, out of a change in meaning, a change of human heart and mind.

A fourth function of meaning is **communicative**. Meaning can be communicated by intersubjectivity, through arts and symbols, through language, and through acts and way of life of human beings. By this communication, individual meaning becomes common meaning for a group of people. A meaning generates from a single individual and becomes common only through successful communication and transmission. In the process of communication, meaning is either enriched or deepened or, alternatively, emptied and deformed. The concurrence of the constitutive and communicative functions of meaning brings about the notion of community.

2.3.3. **Carriers of Meaning**

Meaning is embodied in human intersubjectivity, in art, in symbols, in language, and in the lives, activities, and conducts of persons. For the purposes of the present work, I am going to focus on three carriers or embodiments of meaning: intersubjectivity, symbols, and the lives and deeds of persons.

2.3.3.1 Intersubjective Meaning

There is a certain unity or bond that connects us to one another, which testifies to the truth that what is primordial is not the “I” but the “we”. This is manifested instinctively and spontaneously. It is as if we were parts of one body, members of one another, prior to being distinct from one another. When we suddenly see that somebody’s life is in danger, as when someone is about to fall or stumble into busy traffic, we spontaneously reach out to prevent the accident and save the person. We unreflectively feel for the other.

In relation to this intersubjectivity of action and feeling is the intersubjective communication of meaning. This, too, is natural and spontaneous and easily perceived. Distinct from the other embodiments of meaning, we do not deliberate on the meaning of an action or movement but discover the meaning along a process and series of events. It is not objective but intersubjective, only assuming the interpersonal situations of its previous circumstances and encounters. It is a meaning with its significance in the context of antecedent and subsequent meanings. The meaning reveals the subject and the revelation is immediate. Examples of intersubjective meaning are the different facial or bodily movements that reveal our feelings.

2.3.3.2 Symbols

A symbol is an image that evokes a feeling or is evoked by a feeling. Feelings are related to objects, to one another, and to their subjects. The same objects may not evoke the same feelings from different subjects; neither do the same feelings evoke the same symbolic images. There are many factors that affect the difference in affective response, such as age, sex, education, concerns in life, etc. There is also the human being’s affective development.
Faith and religion is expressed fundamentally in symbolic meaning. Symbols do not obey the laws of logic but of image and feeling. The meaning of symbols has its proper context in *internal* communication in which the meaning occurs and functions in the imagination and perception of a subject as one takes a stance in life. A symbol can possess a variety of interpretations, the multiplicity being attributed to and reflected in the many ways in which human beings can grow and regress.

2.3.3.3 Incarnate Meaning

Incarnate meaning, as the term suggests, is the meaning of the way of life of a person as a whole, the person's words and deeds. It combines the other carriers of meaning mentioned previously. It can be personal or social meaning. It can be a meaning for a small cultural group or for a whole nation or religious tradition. Since meaning can be incarnated, so too can meaninglessness and emptiness.

2.4. Faith

The object of the search is the human good. We search for meaning and direction in the movement of life to achieve what is true, good, and beautiful. It is faith, however, that sustains the search. Without faith, we cannot go on with the search. It is faith that animates the search and gives it the dynamism and the vitality necessary to pursue what is true, good, and beautiful against all odds. Liberation theology claims that commitment to the priority of praxis comes from faith.\(^{135}\) Faith in this context is existentially self-involving and practical and is not primarily a belief in a set of theoretical statements that only seek affirmation in practice. But how can personal involvement occur? It is a fact that not all people submit themselves to involvement. There are instances that many do not want to get involved in a particular project or mission. As mentioned before, one of the major problems of the Philippine BECs is a lack of commitment to that which the communities stand for. Faith in liberation theology is first, a sensitivity and deep awareness that there is something that is intrinsically wrong with our world today, incarnated in the great miseries and suffering of many people; and then, a relentless hope that things can be changed for the better because of a belief in the goodness of God. Therefore, faith is the source of genuine commitment. To have faith, however, one must be sensitive enough and deeply aware of what is going on in the movement of life within a particular society or community.

Lonergan defines faith as seeing with the eyes of love. Besides the factual knowledge reached by experiencing, understanding, and verifying, there is another kind of knowledge reached through discernment of value and the judgments of value of a person in love. Faith, accordingly, is such further knowledge when the love is God’s love flooding our hearts. At the summit of

our scale of values is an apprehension of transcendent value which consists in the experienced fulfillment of our unrestricted thrust to self-transcendence. Central to the apprehension of values is the apprehension of transcendent value, that is, religious value. The thrust is of the intelligence to the intelligible, of reasonableness to the true and the real, and of freedom and responsibility to the truly good. The question of God recurs in a new form. It becomes a primary question of decision. Having experienced God’s love, will I love God in return or will I refuse? Will I live out the gift of God’s love by committing myself to that love no matter what it takes, or will I hold back, turn away, and think only of myself? This consciousness brought to fulfillment is the consciousness that has undergone religious conversion.

Above, we have said that the human is the originating value and its terminal value is the human good. This is without taking faith into consideration. In the light of faith however, the originating value is divine love and its terminal value is the totality of the universe, where the human good is absorbed in the encompassing good and human beings reach beyond nature to God. People come together in communities not only to settle human affairs but also to worship – to praise and to bless, to experience and understand the dynamism of the spirit within, and then to share the fruits of that discernment to others by appropriate judgments and decisions. To be in the image of God means to become origins of God’s love.

Being in love with God is the basic fulfillment of our conscious intending. This conscious intending is intrinsic to human being; its fulfillment in being in love with God brings bliss and a radical peace that the world cannot give. It is bliss and not superficial joy and is radical because it is achieved not without pain and struggle. It is this kind of bliss and peace that encourages one to pursue the search no matter what it costs, even if it means giving-up a lot of oneself. This deep-set joy and peace is incarnated in the love of one’s neighbor. Reaching out to one’s neighbors calls not simply for pity, but for active involvement in a world in need of healing. In this kind of loving, our knowing and choosing reaches a new horizon in which the love of God transvalues our values. In the eyes of that love, our knowing is transformed to bring forth the fruit of the spirit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5: 22-23). It is an experience of mystery for though this dynamic state is conscious, it is not known. It is a state that is not merely attractive but fascinating. It is an experience where one feels a sense of belonging and of being possessed. The unreserved love of God evokes awe, for the gift of God’s love is an experience of the holy. As mentioned above, faith as the eyes of this love is manifested and expressed in different ways, especially in the way we reach out to others, to the society, and to the world, in the way individual operation is transformed into cooperation within a community.

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137 Religious conversion is discussed in more detail below.
Authentic human development has its ultimate significance in holiness. Faith is linked to progress for it is by faith that new undertakings are strengthened with confidence and trust, obstacles are overcome with courage and hope, and a higher authenticity is reached where evil is overcome with good. In faith, the human good also is God’s glory because the good is the outcome of the deliberation, judgment, decision, and free action of people who do good because they are in love.

In any effort of liberation, it is central to recognize that it is only religious faith that can liberate human reasonableness from its ideological prisons and it is only religious hope that can enable people to resist the vast pressures of social decay. Human pride has to be replaced by religious charity, that is, by self-sacrificing love.

2.5 WAY OF TRANSCENDENCE

The entire ongoing process of self-transcendence forms the dynamic thrust of the human spirit. It is the very movement of life in us. To appeal to authentic self-transcendence is to insinuate ways to respond faithfully to what has been received, by intimating how those realities inform our inquiring selves at the critical junctures of the quest. Robert Doran identifies the movement of our consciousness uncovered by Lonergan in *Insight* as the search for the direction in the movement of life. This transcendence that the world desperately needs is not a going beyond the body but a more faithful understanding in relation to it. Like all animals, human beings are sensate. By the gift of consciousness however, humans are capable of asking questions, which sets the conditions for us to wonder about meaning. This questioning and facility to wonder is unrestricted and moves us towards a worldview of what we ourselves can be and can do. As critical knowers, we reflect whether alleged facts are true or not, or whether the understanding we have arrived at is correct. But our knowing is not restricted to matters of fact: relayed to the factual but sublating it is our determination of and commitment to value. By our decision to implement value, we shape the future – both the future of our own lives and that of the world to which we belong.

This is the path towards authentic development – the way to transcendence. It begins with the self that undergoes a self-correcting process as it moves toward a new horizon. Espousal of the process enables us to understand what it means to be ourselves and go beyond a status quo which can be enslaving. This path to transcendence has been described before in terms of the transcendental imperatives. However, the path to authenticity in Lonergan’s presentation actually arises from a movement which involves an about-face: authenticity typically takes the form of a withdrawal from inauthenticity. It is an about-face in which a new sequence starts precisely out of a personal decision to embrace and live the creative tension. This is conversion. The decision need not be conceived of as commanded or

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139 See Chapter Four in the section on the Law of the Cross.
forced. Rather, it is a voluntary response enabled by love flooding our hearts. Such love is what Julio Labayen\textsuperscript{141} refers to as the revolution of the heart that is the heart of every genuine revolution. Human beings do not simply know. No effort to know is ever initiated without the desire to know. This basic connectedness of the life of insight to the sensitive consciousness is, as will be elaborated below, the ground for the psychic conversion that Robert Doran brings to the fore to complement Lonergan’s formulation of three-fold conversion. Love, in some sense, is the sublating context of all our knowing. We are familiar with the dictum, “To know, to love, to serve”. This series of infinitives cannot be actualized in the absence of any one of the moments. Thus, more than precepts, the movement of the spirit, the path to authenticity is a conversion process. As a process, conversion is therefore not to be conceived of as a single event, although it is always characterized as a radical turn wherein one disagrees with characteristic features of one’s previous horizons. Conversion as thematised by Lonergan is pluriform and needs to be analogically conceived. It may be intellectual, or moral, or religious, and though each of these is connected and related to the other two, each is a distinct event and has to be considered in itself before being related to the others.

2.5.1. Analogy of Conversion

2.5.1.1 Intellectual Conversion

“Intellectual conversion is a radical clarification and, consequently, the elimination of an exceedingly stubborn and misleading myth concerning reality, objectivity, and human knowledge.”\textsuperscript{142} The misleading myth is the myth of the eyeball, for there is more to reality than meets the eye. This myth overlooks the distinction between the world of immediacy and the world mediated by meaning. The world of immediacy, which conforms well to the myth’s view of reality, is just a fragment of the world mediated by meaning. The real is experienced not solely by the senses of an individual but is always and everywhere the experience of a member of a cultural community, always and everywhere, then, interpreted and critically judged experience. In what he calls generalized empirical method, Lonergan takes empirical to mean an orientation to data, which attends to both the data of the sense and the data of the consciousness.\textsuperscript{143} His work invites us to see with different eyes, to reflect with transformed understanding on what is there and to respond to it with heightened responsibility. It is the key achievement of Lonergan to have established that all objectivity is the fruit of authentic subjectivity.

What is involved in intellectual conversion is arriving at the position on human knowing which has already been presented in some detail above. Knowing, therefore, is not simply seeing but a dynamic structure of

\textsuperscript{141} Revolution and the Church of the Poor, Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1995.
\textsuperscript{142} B. Lonergan, Method in Theology, 238.
experiencing, understanding, judging, which occurs within the sublating contexts of deciding and of believing. Liberation from the myth of the eyeball, which means discovering the self-transcendence proper to the human process of coming to know is freeing ourselves from long-ingrained habits of thought and speech. The myth is replaced with the affirmation of a self that knows because it understands correctly. Intellectual conversion results in people knowing precisely in what cognitional self-transcendence consists, knowing, then, that only those who are faithful to the normative dynamics of their own emergent consciousness arrive at truth. It leads not only to integration of the cognitive subject but also to heightened awareness of what one knows when one understands and judges.

It needs to be stressed that one may not be intellectually converted, that is, may have quite inadequate ideas on what constitutes human knowing, and still, in practice, be a perfectly authentic knower. In this case, one’s philosophy is crazy, but one’s cognitive performance – apart from philosophy – may be regularly sound. Intellectual conversion, knowing wherein the authenticity of my knowing consists, does contribute to a more consistent authentic cognitive performance in all fields.

But this contribution is never automatic. One can know the truth and not act consistently with what we know. Not all knowledge leads to emancipation because development depends on the extent of a person’s antecedent willingness and concern for what, historically, needs to go forward. Frequently, those who are vested with power by the people may be intelligent but it does not guarantee the hoped-for performance. In our national Senate or Congress, the level of reasoning seems to be rationally sufficient but there is no ‘feeling’ whatsoever for the people whom they are supposed to be serving. They have a way of theorizing that is isolated from the actual experience of the common people. This style pervades all organs of government. This only proves that intellectual conversion must be complemented by affective conversion and certainly must be sublated by moral conversion and ultimately by religious conversion.

2.5.1.2 Moral Conversion

Moral conversion is about the harmony of doing with knowing and results in actually doing what one believes to be the right thing to do. It promotes good conscience – a personal appropriation of truth that leads to a choice of a culture of benevolence, of honest collaboration, of true love. Moral conversion is defined as changing the criterion of one’s choice from that of satisfaction to value. It involves the uncovering of and uprooting of our biases. It consists of opting for the truly good. Corresponding to the manner in which the cognitional myth blocks intellectual conversion, the culturally dominant, simple opposition of objectivity and subjectivity contributes to a split between fact and value in public discourse and is a big block to moral conversion. Lonergan suggests that as we grow older, we have to keep developing our knowledge of human reality and potentiality as they are in the existing situation.¹⁴⁴ A

a morally converted person continues to examine her intentional responses to values and their implicit scales of preference. She is able to listen to criticisms and objections and remains ready to learn from others.  

2.5.1.3 Religious Conversion

Intellectual and moral conversion are sublated by religious conversion. This does not mean, however, that intellectual comes first and then moral and finally religious conversion. To be religiously converted is to be grasped by ultimate concern, total and permanent self-surrender without conditions. A religious converted person easily and almost immediately responds to a certain situation that she or he feels is not right. This person is a person-in-love who knows what authentic loving is all about and immediately, at times spontaneously, responds whenever this kind of loving is just not there in the situation that she or he is faced with. In the Christian experience, it is first, God’s love flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit given us, a gift of grace that bears fruit in our being in love with a mysterious and incomprehensible God. In other words, religious conversion is falling in love with God. It is the response to God’s self-gift in grace. It is a dynamic state that is prior to and principle of subsequent acts. A total being-in-love is the effectual ground of all self-transcendence, source of our capability for agapic love, that is, not a desire of an end that uses means but love of an end that overflows. Lonergan’s later work shows pronounced emphasis on love as the power that renders sustained authenticity or self-transcendence possible. What is underscored in Method in Theology is that the summit of the ascent in self-transcendence is the deep-set joy and solid peace, the power and the vigor of being in love with God. The power of religious mediated and self-sacrificing love enables the acceptance of whatever kind of suffering that is involved in undoing the effects of decline. It is the eye of love that reveals values in their intensity and vividness and the vigor of that love that generates the realization of these values. Among the values discerned by a person in love is the value of believing in the truths taught by the religious tradition and belief in such tradition are the seeds of intellectual conversion. To be in love is the key to actuating human growth and overcoming blocked communication. It is when we reach affective transcendence, when our isolation as individuals is broken and we spontaneously act not simply for ourselves but for others as well. A religiously converted subject, a person in love, has gone beyond possessive desire to desire for generosity. Concern for one’s own needs is transformed into a self-giving of intimate love and generative care of others.

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145 B. Lonergan, Method in Theology, 240.
147 Page 39 of Method in Theology.
148 B. Lonergan, Method in Theology, 289.

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All three forms of conversion are modalities of self-transcendence so that it is possible for the three to occur in one single consciousness. Their relations can be conceived in terms of sublation. Moral conversion promotes the subject from cognitional to moral self-transcendence, while religious conversion transforms the existential subject into a subject in love. If moral conversion is recognition of the possibility of becoming a living principle of benevolence and beneficence, religious conversion actualizes that possibility and makes effective response to the challenges of reality. In the process the fruits of intellectual and moral conversion are never negated nor diminished.

2.5.1.4 Psychic Conversion

Psychic conversion was introduced by Robert Doran as an essential complement to the three-fold conversion formulated by Lonergan. Doran draws our attention to the fact that conversion for Lonergan is religious, moral, intellectual, and affective, though Lonergan only made references to affective conversion late in his writings. Doran, however, emphasizes that what he calls psychic conversion is not the same as what Lonergan calls affective conversion and so maintains that psychic conversion must be included as a distinct dimension in a single and prolonged process of personal transformation. Psychic conversion pertains to a life where emotions are in the order affirmed in any judgment. Conversion, especially the religious kind, consists first of all in a transformation of the felt meaning which shapes one's experience and directs one's living. Feelings provide the mass and momentum of human living through which value is disclosed and so, when they are obstructed from their true intentions, promote rage and resentment and this at the extreme can result in madness and violence. Emotions form a system of meanings and values within which our lives either develop or stagnate. The psyche is a necessary, in fact, an indispensable, element and participant in the whole process of correct factual understanding, of assuring sound judgments and the peace of good conscience in moral conversion, and of realizing the joy of love in religious conversion. The intentional operations elucidated by Lonergan and the sensitive psyche are therefore distinct but very much interrelated. This interrelation implies that

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150 See footnote number 15 above for the meaning of sublation.

151 In Theology and the Dialectics of History, Doran defines psychic conversion as “a transformation of the subject, a change both illuminated and often mediated by modern depth psychology…a reorientation of the specifically psychic dimension of the censorship exercised over images and affects by our habitual orientations, a conversion of that dimension of the censorship from exercising a repressive function to acting constructively in one’s shaping of one’s own development.” (Page 9).

152 Cf. Theology and the Dialectics of History, 59.


154 Doran defines the psyche as the set of data that “constitute the sensitively experienced movement of life, the pulsing flow of life, the psychic representation of an underlying manifold of neural functions that reach a higher organization in sensitive consciousness.” He stresses that by the term psyche he means “precisely and only the complex flow of empirical consciousness, whether sublated by successively higher levels or not.” Theology and the Dialectics of History, 46.
objectifying human authenticity requires knowledge, not solely of the
operations through which we know and become makers of reality, but also of
the feelings that attend these operations and that change, depending on the
quality of performance.

Values, as stated earlier, are apprehended in feelings before they are
pursued by deliberation and decision. Neglect of the order of value is certainly
neglect of the psyche, preventing the psyche from its appropriate and creative
participation in the search for the meaning and direction in the movement of
life. Ignoring or taking for granted the role of the sensitive psyche in the whole
process of human development and flourishing destroys the creative tension,
for it means a neglect of the organic and psychic root of limitation. Our bodily
and psychic limitation is the source of all creativity. The sensitive psyche is
the ‘middle ground’ between the limited organism and the transcending spirit.
Affective integrity lies in living out the creative tension of matter and spirit. The
Christian gospel places our salvation in the resurrection of the body. It is
essential that we recover a more wholistic vision of the human person as
enfleshed spirit, as a solid and firm unity of soul and body. In order to draw
out our full potential and capacity as human beings, it is crucial that we give
due attention to our bodily and psychic limits. “To fail to do this is simply to
miss life.”

This failure is the root of the Enlightenment illusion of autonomous instrumental rationality. Psychic conversion involves a fairly
radical about-face, a basic correction of this type of rationality. It takes a stand
on “an intentionality analysis that disengages the orientations of the subject,
the transcendental notions of the intelligible, the true, the good, the beautiful,
that are violated in both the Enlightenment illusion and the exclusive
hermeneutic of suspicion. In this sense, intellectual conversion as self-appropriation is a foundation of psychic conversion as self-appropriation and so of reoriented psychology.”

It is a transformation of the psychic component of what Freud calls ‘the censor’ from a repressive to a constructive
agency in a person’s development.

Without psychic conversion, the world loses the passion that makes for
creative living. One will not be able to recognize love when one meets it; and
so, will not respond to love with love. Lives are narrowed and flattened and
become poorer in meaning, with a consequent fading of moral horizon. The
decisions that are made turn out to be unconcerned with others or society.
But in authenticity, understanding of right and wrong is not simply a matter of
dry calculation. Morality is anchored in feelings. This means that to act
rightly, we have to be in touch with our moral feelings, which originate from
some source. The source, as has been argued so far in this project, is the
love of God, the experience of being loved that enables us to love without
reservations and reach out to our neighbors in good will. The passion found in

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155 B. Lovett, Life Before Death, 93.
156 Cf. R. M. Doran, Theology and the Dialectics of History, 142.
157 Cf. R. M. Doran, Theology and the Dialectics of History, 142-143.
authentic loving creates. The lack of it is bound to destroy people and communities. In view of this, we can see a clear and definite connection between the state of our psyches and the plight of the poor and the oppressed. The oppressed people of the earth are angry in their awakening minds and hearts. Their anger is mirrored in the outraged psyches of those who have oppressed them since the economic and social systems that have been enslaving them are nothing other than “products of the intra-subjective neglect of the movement of life writ large.” An approach to the psyche, as to the poor, must be done with utmost care. The approach must be “grounded in an acknowledgement and avowal of injustice, in a genuine readiness, not only to change but also to learn, in a reverence for that dimension of human reality where God makes known and most directly effective his own historical but absolutely supernatural solution to the problem of evil.”

2.5.2 Being-in-Love

The heart and the fullness of authentic conversion is a person in love with God and consequently, towards one’s neighbors. We can ask, “Who is my neighbor?” This, however, is not the right question for it seeks to justify the one who asks the question and limits one’s responsibilities only to whoever the answer to the question will reveal. The proper response to such question is another question: “Who is it that proves themselves neighbor?” (Cp. Lk. 10, 36). The right question is not “Whom shall I love?” as if I am the source, the sole point from which love radiates. Rather, the crucial question that we have to ask is “Who I become in loving?” “To be a Christian,” according to Gustavo Gutiérrez, “is to draw near, to make oneself a neighbor, not to the one I encounter in my journey but the one in whose journey I place myself.” True love rests not in commanding oneself or making oneself will to love the other as oneself (i.e. as merely one’s alter ego), but becoming love itself in letting the Thou of the other appear (as one becomes neighbor to the nameless, half-dead stranger like the good Samaritan in the gospel).

The full communication of heart with Heart is the dynamic state of a being-in-love: this does not mean that it does not involve the mind. A truly converted person is one who has decided to lay down one’s life, heart and mind, for the sake of the new situation. Any work for justice must be grounded in love. Love is therefore central to all that has been addressed so far.

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159 See the following section on Being-in-Love.
160 B. Lovett, Life Before Death, 94.
161 R. M. Doran, Theology and the Dialectics of History, 150.
Love is an encompassing word. What I mean by ‘encompassing’ is that there can be no definition of it that could comprehend its meaning. It pertains to mystery, that which is so full of inexhaustible meaning that its fullness cannot be totally grasped by our finite consciousness. It involves an intervention of some influence that cannot be totally contained in the situation itself but deep enough to enable people to see each other face to face, really see each other and not simply ‘know about’. Love is a true human encounter. However complex the meaning of love may be, it is very real. Love is the foundation and the driving force of our quest for meaning and direction in the movement of life and is the crux of authentic self-transcendence. Self-transcendence becomes actuality when one falls in love and its fulfillment bears fruit in the love of one’s neighbors. Self-transcendence happens not simply in self-righteousness, but in love. Love cannot be alone or it is not love. Love has to be communicated. It has to be given or it belies its name. It invites return by another for love begets love. Rosemary Haughton describes love as an “exchange of life”, a constant flow of energy which is actually the experienced nature of relationship of all kinds. “Exchange” is that in which life and being consist. To prevent it would mean to turn the universe back on its course.

Being-in-love is a dynamic state. It is the grace of God actively at work in the heart of anyone who seeks the truth with a humble heart. “When one falls in love, life begins anew.” Love can be so powerful that it can dismantle previous horizons, reveal new values that one could not have apprehended previously. Love leads us to a total personal revolution and transforms us into a new creation. Being in love is a breakthrough where the experience of love presses towards a point at which there is a need to break through to something else. Haughton identifies the breakthrough in love as the ‘flashpoint’ of decision, the moment where formation gives way to transformation and leads to genuine human development. Unrestricted love is total commitment and is the inner core of all genuine religions and essentially must be the heart of all authentic human communities working for liberation.

Passion is the “image of love in action” the thrust of that passion comes from the experience of being loved with love beyond expectation where one encounters the depth and beauty of one’s own human-spiritual reality. It is a double experience of being loved without reservation and of deciding to give oneself without reservation. A loving relationship is never and can never be imposed. Neither do we plan beforehand that we are going to be in love. Love is always something that happens to us. We ‘fall’ in love and this

165 In The Passionate God, 36.
166 B. Lonergan, “Natural Right and Historical Mindedness”, A Third Collection, Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan, 175.
168 R. Haughton, The Passionate God, 36.
169 Cf. D. Helminiak, following Lonergan in The Human Core of Spirituality, 96. This work is built on Lonergan’s breakthrough to interiority.
happens most momentously when our falling in love is initiated by, and has as its term, a Transcendent Mystery that we do not and cannot apprehend. The Christian gospel urges us to love one another as God loves us – “Love one another as I have loved you.” (John 15: 12). God first loves us. Love comes first of all, a gift. It is given. Everything else is a response to the gift. Without the discovery and experience of being loved unconditionally, it would be impossible to love selflessly. We can make initial sense of what it means for us to be loved by God if we look very carefully at the way we love one another.

In the structure of individual human development, without the cradling environment of love, it is difficult for trust and belief to develop. Love reveals values and then continues to transvalue our values and to shape new horizons. Among these values is the value of truth that strengthens us to pursue intelligibility and truth through our cognitive operations and eventually even transforming our sensitive, dramatic, and intersubjective spontaneity, so that body joins psyche and spirit in the total loving commitment. We achieve our moral maturity in learning to care for others as well as for ourselves. We learn to become more sensitive to the pressure of the spirit in us and this enables us to discern which events build or break communities, make or unmake the world. As this sensitivity grows, it becomes passion that St. Paul calls the spirit. When it is released it becomes our response to an inner, but clear demand of the gift of love. In Christian terms, therefore, the most reliable proof of the presence of the Spirit in power is charity – the activity of love.

Love is what enables us to live the creative tension – to accept necessary limits yet never to lose hope in the face of such limitations and continue instead to reach up to the best that we can be in a given situation, becoming the authentic human beings that we were intended to be, making the world a better place for us and for the rest of God’s creation. Love and justice flow from our deepest being and continue to be beacons amid current injustices and evil. Love never surrenders concern for mutuality even in the midst of the most agonizing struggles for justice. This is, according to Gibson Winter, where the power of love to forgive can overcome alienation. It is

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171 See 1Cor. 2: 6-16. Paul is talking about wisdom, “secret and hidden before the ages of our glory”. But the glory has been revealed through the Spirit. Yet the rulers of the age did not listen and therefore did not understand, “for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” The point is, we have received the Spirit of God so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. The crucial question is, do we or do we not discern and appropriate the gifts of the Spirit?
174 In *Community and Spiritual Transformation*, 72.
that remarkable capacity to work for justice in the spirit of love. This is the movement of life that reaches beyond intentional operations in a total being-in-love in families, in communities, and with God.\textsuperscript{175} It is the exercise of life, which is what true power is all about, contrasted with the distorted meaning of power that is winning and dominating. True power is in communities whose loving relationship enables them to bear opposition without surrendering personal integrity or breaking relationships.\textsuperscript{176} This is the power that we all share as a gift and flows to sustain all of life in the cosmos.

2.5.3 Healing and Creating

The cycle that was alluded to in the relation between religious, moral, and intellectual conversion can be articulated in another way, that is, the cycle of healing and creating. This cycle also reveals why human development is an ongoing process and that human life is a continuous search for meaning and direction. On one hand, as scarred by four-fold bias\textsuperscript{177}, humans need healing. On the other hand, as beings capable of transcendence, humans have the ability to create. In “Healing and Creating in History”\textsuperscript{178}, Lonergan clarifies that it is in the realm of human affairs that healing and creating need to occur. The need arises from the problems that we are currently facing because of what we have made of ourselves and of our world. He identifies the main source of current malaise in the extent to which our intellectual development has outrun our moral development. Humans have become very clever, as manifested by the advance in science and technology, but are unable to achieve moral and political growth. Most great people in history have appealed to a particular kind of morality. But many of them turned out to be wicked and corrupt. While there has been no shortage of people to condemn their failures, such condemnation falls manifestly short of a cure. To speak of healing and creating is, however, to present positive courses of action that will lead to the transformation of the status quo. The dynamics of healing and creating have to be understood as a matter of passion and commitment.

2.5.3.1 The Creative Vector

Human creating is not creating out of nothing. As mentioned before, it is when we are faced with limits that the need for creating is made manifest. There may be already existing principles and paradigms but they are found to be deficient. Things are amiss because something is not there. Survival, then, requires new systems and paradigms.

To take a local instance, like all other countries that are striving to survive the perils brought about by the globalization imposed on them by international currency markets and global corporations, the Philippines needs to creatively respond to the changed situation. Consequent on two uprisings of the people in their desire to transform a corrupt and oppressive government, it seems that

\textsuperscript{175} Cf. R. M. Doran, Foreword to \textit{Communication and Lonergan: Common Ground for Forging the New Age}, xv.

\textsuperscript{176} Cf. G. Winter, \textit{Community and Spiritual Transformation}, 53.

\textsuperscript{177} The different forms of bias are discussed in the next chapter (Chapter Three).

\textsuperscript{178} Cf. \textit{A Third Collection, Papers by Bernard JF Lonergan}, 100-109.
people have not really learned from the past. It seems that there is no remembrance at all of what most of the people have suffered and fought for. Corruption is still very rampant while poverty afflicts more and more people. What is most puzzling is how, at election time, a moment where the voice of the masses can be heard, people still continue to vote for those who have violated them. This may indicate that it can really take a serious and prolonged tragedy before people are convinced that there is a need for creating. Or it may be that the long and arduous ascent is the creating process itself. The first task is to be able to ask the right questions in order to find the right answers.

Human desire is not limited to what is factually the case in history: it reaches towards what ought to be but is not. Such reaching calls for creative imagination, creating reality and creating oneself in the process. The reality of the decaying world needs insights, not one but countless, not isolated but a coalition of complementing insights that also correct one another. “The wheel of progress moves forward through the successive transformations of an initial situation in which are gathered coherently and cumulatively all the insights that occurred along the way.” This requires that people have open minds. Insights will not be grasped and put into action by biased minds. The creative task calls for fidelity to the normative dynamics of our cognitive and existential living. Incapacity for such fidelity signals the presence of the moral impotence that tends to the quieting of an uneasy conscience by undermining values and this is “the monster that stood forth in our day.”

The creative task as a movement towards the human good proceeds not by single but by collaborative efforts. The process is above all the making of humanity, not merely the service of humanity. Human existence is a fundamental process of development – a self-creation. In this, humans are creative and co-creators with God. Authentic human becoming is the authentic becoming of the one world in which we all live. Freedom and responsibility are executed within the nature of personal relations in a community. Institutions are expressions and products of human cooperation oriented towards values. Human cooperation is alive when the desires and feelings are intentional responses to values. Self-transcendence is a response to the invitations of conscience within the context of freedom and values, and gives rise to the social correlative and structure of conscientious community. Human life is a project to be completed and a work of art to be created.

A creative process is a learning process. It is a dynamic and continuous process and entails transformation and intellectual, moral, religious, and psychic conversion. It is a development that can be described as “from below

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180 B. Lonergan, Method in Theology, 40.
upwards.”

Finally, the creative process culminates in a system, a system that is on the move. As challenges continue to happen, responses must continue to emerge. Otherwise, people are frustrated and cease to dream; the society disintegrates as all discourse becomes empty rhetoric; the wheel of progress becomes a wheel of decline.

2.5.3.2 The Healing Vector

Human development, however, does not only follow the one way creative process that starts from experience and grows toward understanding, balanced judgment and fruitful courses of action. If the creative process is a movement from below upwards, there is also development that works “from above downwards.” Behind the spatial metaphor is the clarification of sublating contexts provided above. What is in focus is the transformation of falling in love. This begins at the level of affectivity and results in a new apprehension of values, even in a transvaluation of our values. The ‘downward’ effect on sublated operations is manifest in sounder judgment, deeper commitment to understanding and a more passionate attentiveness—traits that people have always recognized as hallmarks of objectivity. Loving is self-surrender. But self-surrender is possible only upon the experience of being loved. Being valued because of love gives confidence that makes openness possible without fear. Love reveals values and at once both demands a commitment and joyfully carries it out, no matter what this may entail. When we are in love, we trust and believe the beloved. On this follows the growth in understanding and an attentiveness rendered more perceptive by one’s developed understanding. A newly created situation has emerged. It is in accord with such a healing vector that a decayed tradition can be renewed.

We speak of falling in love to acknowledge our experience that love has the shape of gift, and it is this gift that unleashes one to be creatively self-transcendent. It is love that reveals values and this sets the condition for the very emergence of our creative capacities. This is the way of healing in human consciousness. Our experience of such healing is what intimates to us the truth that God loves all of creation, no matter what. This love enables the human person to make responsible decisions which in turn motivate her towards making reasonable judgments and intelligent understanding of experiences. Hence, Lonergan affirms that self-transcendence becomes a way of life only to the extent that we are in love.

Where many embrace this way of life, communities are bound for true emancipation.

182 Cf. R. M. Doran, Theology and the Dialectics of History, 41. An important corrective comment would have to be made here. I note that in my presentation so far I have been referring exclusively to religious love, in sections on religious value, faith, and religious conversion above. This does not capture the nuance of Lonergan’s own presentation. Lonergan is at pains to stipulate, usually in a three-fold schema, the
“Love can undo the mischief of decline and restore the cumulative process of progress.” Healing occurs where love breaks all bonds of evil with the conviction of faith and the power of hope. Humanity’s consciously healed knowing is rooted in God’s mystery. Christians assign to the love of God the principal role in touching human hearts and enlightening minds. The constitutive experience of God’s love draws one towards creatively bringing into being a situation which would otherwise not exist, in fulfillment of that same love. Being-in-love draws one to do what is worthwhile.

The healing vector is made actual in and through the creative vector. Without the creative process, the healing process is a soul without a body. While the healing vector in consciousness brings tremendous spiritual power for overcoming what is not right in a given time and situation, if insights are not grasped, then there is no learning process at all, no creativity is brought to bear; and horrible situations can remain or even worsen. It remains true that a healing of the heart does help to prevent the distortions of the creative process effected by dramatic, personal, group, or general bias. The movements are intertwined and we need to envisage an endless interaction between these two movements in consciousness. The creative vector in human consciousness has to be released by the power of the healing vector. Without the operation of the healing vector, the creative process is a body without a soul.

complexity of human being-in-love. A typical example of his preferred presentation occurs in the 1974 lecture “Variations in Fundamental Theology”:

But on an endless topic, let us be brief and indicate three dimensions in which we may be in love. There is domestic love, the love that makes a home, in which parents and children, each in his or her own ever nuanced and adaptive way, sustains and is sustained by each of the others. There is the love that is loyalty to one’s fellows: it reaches out through kinsmen, friends, acquaintances, through all the bonds – cultural, social, civil, economic, technological – of human cooperation, to unite ever more members of the human race in the acceptance of a common lot, in sharing a burden to be borne by all, in building a common future for themselves and future generations. But above all, at once most secret and most comprehensive, there is the love of God. It is twofold. On the one hand, it is God’s love for us: “God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, that everyone who has faith in him may not die but have eternal life” (John 3:16). On the other hand, it is the love that God bestows upon us: “God’s love has flooded our inmost heart through the Holy Spirit he has given us” (Romans 5:5). [METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies 16 (1998) 5-24]

183 R. M. Doran, Theology and the Dialectics of History, 55.
185 See the section on the Dialectic of Community in the next chapter for the four-fold bias.
CONCLUSION

The quest or the search that we are involved in is an experience of life as a movement with direction that can be found or missed. Or, after having been found, can be lost again. Life itself is participation in that movement. With Lonergan’s contribution and articulation, our attention is called to the reality of our world as mediated and constituted by meaning and motivated by value. Meaning and value are those that we find or miss in our search for direction in the movement of life. The fulfillment of humanity is founded in the activity that strives for the actualization of meaning and value. To make sense of life is our deepest desire and its fulfillment lies in the way that we discover and follow the direction in the throbbing of life in us. And, as everything is interconnected, everything depends on finding the right direction. We continuously struggle to answer the question posed to us by ourselves and the movement that is life itself: “Adam, where are you?” All reality hangs suspended upon Adam’s answer. Reality is an admission of presence, of our place and meaning in the greater scheme of things, and our participation in God’s world in the making. We create reality insofar as we consent to be present to a situation. This presence can be understood only in relation to the wider community and culture. Cultural wisdom is produced and reproduced in view of ultimate meanings of life, lived individually and socially. The experience of life as a movement with a direction is the nuclear element of the human experience and is at the heart of every culture. It is foundational to the existential subject. We find our unique and absolute value by participating in the dynamics that move within limits and transcendence. In the process, we achieve authenticity.

The story is not over yet and so, the quest continues. There are perennial acts of thinking, feeling, creating and healing. This is the meaning of our existence, where every single activity acquires its meaning by its participation and solidarity with the ongoing project of emergence and creation.

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187 The phrase “world as mediated and constituted by meaning and motivated by value” is not a disjunctive phrase. Values are the meanings of our human choices and actions.
189 Cf. Response of Karl Gaspar to Manuel G. Gabriel’s lecture entitled “A Pastoral Approach to the Sustainability of BEC’s in the light of Culture,” given during the BEC National Assembly 2005 (Cebu City, Philippines, September 19-22). The Assembly’s theme was “Creating a Culture of Sustainability for BEC’s”.

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CHAPTER 3

THE CONCEPT OF A HUMAN COMMUNITY

The first two chapters above provide the foundation of the understanding of authenticity that is being brought forward in this book. It is an authenticity, whose foundation consists of the dynamics of the human spirit in a quest for meaning and direction in the movement of life. Authenticity is achieved through a self-correcting process, normative of human becoming as both cognitional and existential. At the root of this self-correcting process is the three-fold relationship with God, with other human beings, ultimately including all humanity; and with the world itself. At the heart of this process is a person-in-love. The extent and the way we engage and commit ourselves to this three-fold relationship governs our search for meaning and direction in the movement of life. Within the world dwells the mystery of human beings discovering themselves to be God’s children in the course of a historical and psychological process, in the midst of personal and historical struggle. The movement towards authenticity is the discovery of self, which is what the search for meaning and direction in life is all about. The search, however, as elaborated in Chapter Two above, is not a solitary venture. Rather, it is a social enterprise. We discover ourselves in relation with others. How people act in the social sphere results from the creative urgings of the spirit. The dynamics of the human spirit within an individual, as we discussed in the first two chapters, occur within and are oriented towards a community. In authenticity, we strive that our desires and our response to values are shaped and directed to the true good of order.

Lonergan speaks of a subject as a subject in community. This means that the authentic performance of a subject is known and realized only by way of relating with others in community. Initial encounter with Lonergan’s work on intentionality analysis may lead some to assume that his focus is the individual rather than the community. Nothing could be more wide of the mark: community was central for him. This is one of the reasons why his contribution as a methodologist recommends itself as vital to my own current research on the Basic Ecclesial Community. Meaning, that which is being communicated, is primarily embodied in human intersubjectivity.

Presently I shall speak of how the dynamics of the human spirit in a community realize authenticity. This chapter dwells on the particular venture

190 Cf. Octogesima Adveniens (1971), n. 37, O-S, 278.
191 See section 2.2.4 above on the Structure of the Human Good: the good of order is the goal of cooperation in a community, cooperation that ensures the continuance of all effectively desired instances of particular (personal) good.
of people responding to the urgings of the spirit as a community. The call for authenticity is always a call for solidarity and responsibility. Life is meant to be shared. Spirituality as lived authenticity is at once personal and communal. Human life is always and everywhere a matter of living with others, constituted by the interweaving relationships of individuals or persons. Relationship is the essence of existence. We learn from the story of the universe that the emergence of a particular living being, its growth and development, is contingent on schemes of recurrence and consists of participation from everything else. We call a human being a person. ‘Person’ denotes this or that human being with all of her or his individual characteristics resulting from communities in which one has lived and through which one has been formed and has formed oneself.192 “The person is the resultant of the relationships he has had with others and of the capacities that have developed in him to relate to others.”193 If you ask me who I am, my answer should be, who I am is how I am speaking to you. My identity is always in relation to you with whom I am relating. To be cut off from intimacy with other beings means to be incapable of entering the joy of mutual presence and, hence, can spell death for a creature. To live is to be part of a community and become a fully functioning participant. The identity of every creature comes out of this place of togetherness. To be alive means to find one’s identity in the togetherness of the community. The ideal of authenticity includes the notions of society, how people live together, or how an individual live with others.

The key insight at this point in continuity with all of the preceding chapters is that human community is a function of common, shared meaning. To live in a community is to be committed to the realization of the common meaning that its members share. Liberation from a certain form of injustice or oppression of the dominating status quo is possible only through authentic commitment of people as a community to adopt change, in fact, a revolutionary change that involves a transformation of mind and heart. To understand authenticity in human community is to understand the reality that is operative of the subjects-in-community and their relationship with one another and with the world.

Presented in the first two chapters was a thematisation of authenticity of human performance based on Lonergan’s elaboration and clarification of the meaning of the term. The primary notion in this elaboration is self-transcendence. This present chapter expands this understanding of authenticity established in the previous chapters to the context of human community.

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3.1 HUMAN COMMUNITY

Human beings are part of an emerging universe. Creation, according to Buber\textsuperscript{194}, happens to us. It changes us as we participate in it. The universe story speaks of the increasing differentiation, complexity, and communication that is the basic law of its emergence.\textsuperscript{195} Communities are products of this process. The very fact that it is called universe story instead of multi-verse brings to light the sense of the interconnectedness of phenomena in the universe. There is a certain unity or bond that connects human beings to one another and to the world. It is this bond that urges us to reach out to others as if we are parts of one body. The sense of “being together,” the sense of being community is part and parcel of being human. It can be said therefore that the phenomenon of community is as old as humanity itself. Within the human is the collective consciousness of being together – koinonia. Human beings long to be with one another. It is in this primary sense that the formation of community need not and cannot be imposed.

Human longings initiate community formation and customarily starts with physical presence to each other in the same place at the same time, by which two or more psyches adapt to one another. Sebastian Moore describes the building of an authentic human community as an "ascent in which great longings called forth great sacrifices and risks for the sake of great and noble ends shared in friendship."\textsuperscript{196} The enduring life of the community rests on the extent to which the members of the community undergo or embrace the ‘ascending’ process of the achievement of common meaning. Its catalyst is the depth and intensity of the longings to reach out to others and to find meaning in life, thus enabling one to undertake sacrifices and risks. The quality of commitment that will be given to the established common meaning of the group depends upon the extent to which each one has grown in friendship and love.

With love as the primary binding force of communities, it will be inadequate to define a community as simply an aggregate of individuals within a certain location. On the other hand, human beings are not purely intelligence. We are potential lovers and our passion for life drives us initially and spontaneously to identify the good with the object of our desire. This desire, Lonergan points out, is not to be confused with animal impulse. Rather, it is the human pursuit of dignified living.\textsuperscript{197} As the dynamic structure of our emergence shows, we can only function together effectively as a community and the primordial basis of this community is not the discovery of an idea but spontaneous intersubjectivity.\textsuperscript{198} Communities are formed not

\textsuperscript{195} Cf. B. Lovett, \textit{Life Before Death}, 11.
\textsuperscript{196} S. Moore, \textit{The Fire and the Rose are One}, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, Ltd., 1980, 129.
\textsuperscript{197} See B. Lonergan, \textit{Insight}, 212.
\textsuperscript{198} Cf. B. Lonergan, \textit{Insight}, 212.
merely in the pursuit of needs and interests but as the essential matrix of our emergence. Community is the ontic foundation of the ongoing search for life. The communal way of being is the very heart of personal life. We come to be as persons through the care of others and by this, we learn to care for others and for ourselves as well. Mutual dependence then arises between people as a consequence of working and living together in communication, in mutual support and in communion. This sense of belonging together provides the dynamic foundation for common enterprise, for mutual aid and support that provides joys and alleviates suffering. It is in community that we achieve our personal worth as individuals and as human beings through interpersonal affirmation.

Richard Cotè affirms that grace is seen and experienced as the quality of interpersonal relationships. At the heart of everything that we do when we try to achieve authentic existence is grace that binds people together. The depth of everything we do is actually communitarian. This is the reason why we are impelled to accept responsibility and to stand up for truth, have the courage to break through our own difficulties to support our own existence and especially those of others. The success and failure of our lives therefore depends on the status of our interpersonal relationships and the kind of society we create depends on our loving, deciding, and working together. Human solidarity, in this context, is a spiritual reality and we see that the matrix of spirituality has to be always the public sphere.

Such insights can ground a discourse corrective of the distortions of the meaning of personal life mediated by modern liberal theories of society. The age of the individual that brought a dynamic drive for individual success, along with a preoccupation with personal advantage, has caused a gradual weakening and erosion of communal solidarity. Moreover, it gave rise to different forms of domination and oppression of the weak and even to forms of violence born out of insecurity. Security was thought to be had in controlling other people and the natural world. Thus, we establish institutions and we create systems that will provide for us the control that we need. And since “control is never total, we develop paranoid illusions about the dangers those whom we have oppressed pose to us!”

With the mounting suffering in our world today, we must realize that the only way forward, the only true security we can ever have rests on the mutuality of life in sharing and loving. We need to understand that achieving the good life is a communal enterprise and this means placing the bonds of loving concern and the communal being of persons at the center of economic and political organizations.

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201 B. Lovett, *A Dragon Not for the Killing*, 57.
A community is not simply a number of people within a geographical frontier. A real community is an achievement of common meaning. It is this common meaning that finds expression in family and polity, in the legal and economic system, in language and literature, in art and religion. Because of this common meaning, Lonergan stresses that community is not a necessity of nature but a human achievement. Being together in the same place at the same time, physical presence to one another enhances the possibility of having a common field of experience. Understanding together the particular common field of experience makes the common meaning formal and it becomes actual when the group makes judgments, where all affirm and deny in the same manner. Finally, common meaning is realized by decisions and choices and is made permanent by the common dedication or commitment of those who comprise the community. Based on this process, we see that there are precisely diverse forms of communities because there are different kinds and varying degrees of achievement of the common meaning. Breakdown of communities occurs when there is withdrawal from the common understanding by misunderstanding, withdrawal from common judgments when one considers true what others hold false and false what others think true, or principally through the refusal to share the burden of commitment. Thus community may not be formed, in spite of people’s physical presence and nearness to one another. Closeness must go beyond physical presence. People comprising the community must be one in mind and heart. Every member is a factor in the building or breakdown of the community.

A community that is a truly human community has its core asset in the people that comprise and create it. This, however, is not to be misconstrued as denying the difference between good and bad social institutions. The authenticity of a community is dependent on the authenticity of every member and the fruitful working of institutions is dependent on the authenticity of those who operate them. A human community would not be what it is if not for the network of interpersonal relations that the members experience. All movements between levels of value occur through personal relationships. Authenticity in Lonergan’s elucidation is embodied in the creative living out of the tension between two dialectical principles. The integral dialectics of community is analogous to the integral dialectics of the subject. A distorted dialectics of the subject feeds into a distorted dialectics of community. What is emphasized here is that communities are formed of individuals and the kind or quality of community is contingent on the kind or quality of people that comprise it.

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202 Cf. B. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 79, where Lonergan also comments that the “conjunction of both the constitutive and communicative functions of meaning yield the three notions of community, existence, and history.”


204 Cf. R. M. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 144.
3.1.1 Common Meaning

Common meaning is the formal constituent of community. Aside from a common field of experience, which makes people to be in touch with each other, common meaning calls for complementary ways of understanding. Without this common understanding, people begin to distrust and fear one another and may even resort to violence. Since decisions have to be made, the common meaning also calls for common judgments and common values.\(^\text{205}\)

The common meaning that constitutes the community is doubly constitutive. It is constitutive of the individual as a member of the community: it is also constitutive of the community. A community is formed as individuals through communication and participation promote common efforts. Believing and owning the meaning that the community stands for, an individual makes a free decision to belong and be a member of such community. And as a human being, gifted with the potentiality to love and the capacity to fulfill one’s true nature, the individual allows oneself to be transformed by and within the community and, together with the rest of its members, creates a community of authentic communion and solidarity.\(^\text{206}\) So to be transformed as a human being means to appropriate our communal being, to discover who we really are in relationship to other human beings, and, beyond that, to become aware that the truly good and dignified living, to which we all aspire, rests in the way we are with others.\(^\text{207}\)

3.1.2 Dialectic of Community

Though it is true that life forces flow in interpersonal networks, the skeleton or the framework that supports or inhibits that flow of life is the institutional structure. Communities are sustained by the institutional systems that embody its symbols and values, its rules and restrictions. These structures and systems are fruits of human ingenuity, products of human practical intelligence.

In interaction with the environment and other human beings, we begin to ask questions about situations and experiences. The need arises to explain the way things are going forward, to interpret what is going on and to judge situations in order to decide how to proceed.

We discover that together we form a functional unity and that to survive we need one another. This is the moment that human society complexifies its original basis of intersubjectivity as practical intelligence, constitutive of common sense, generates the good of system.\(^\text{208}\) A new notion of the good

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\(^\text{206}\) Insight from a conversation with Julio X. Labayen, then (2001) bishop of the Prelature of Infanta, Quezon, Philippines.
\(^\text{207}\) See Daniel Callahan’s foreword to Rosemary Haughton’s *The Transformation of Man. A Study of Conversion and Community*, 5.
\(^\text{208}\) By clarifying the intellectual nature of common sense (Chapter VI of *Insight*), involving the self-correcting process of learning, Lonergan makes clear its intrinsically practical nature. Common sense is oriented towards a particular good and by knowing
comes to fore, where the good is no longer simply identified with the particular good but moves further to a new component - the good of order - where the realization of our desires is seen to lie in our contributions to the fulfillment of the desires of others. For the good of order is the concrete mode in which cooperation is actually working, ensuring the recurrence of true instances of the particular good. One wills authenticity for oneself, as much as she promotes it in others. Aside from human intelligence, a true good of order calls for personal commitment from every member of a community. The good of order, which originated from human invention, is not only concrete but also intelligible and all-embracing. The breakdown of the good of order means that the schemes of recurrence fail to function. Economic breakdowns and political decay are attributed to this failure.

Within this transformation in the process of community living, there arises a radical tension of community, a tension between intersubjective spontaneity and intelligently devised social order. The creative tension between limitation and transcendence that attaches to all emergence in our universe and that was discussed above in relation to the creative tension of the subject appears here in relation to specifically social process. As with the creative tension in the case of the subject, acknowledgement here of the tension between intersubjective spontaneity and intelligently devised social order is fundamental to authentic human development and fruitful community living. The ingenuity and the diligence of each individual together with the motive power provided by each one’s desire are both necessary and indispensable components to keep the social system functioning effectively, a system that is at the service of the well-being of the entire society. “The bonds of intersubjectivity make the experience of each resonate to the experience of others; and, besides this elementary communion, there are operative in all a drive to understand and an insistence on behaving intelligently that generate and implement common ways, common manners, common undertakings, common commitments.”

Products of human innovations and collective creativities must originate from the healthy embodying of the tension of community; otherwise, the social structures and systems formed will simply be marked by tyranny and bureaucratic domination. History witnessed the shattering impact of technical change on human life and the rest of creation mainly because when “we sit and choosing and realizing authenticity, the particular good can coincide and become a true instance of the good of order. This shows how common sense, though of different pattern from that of empirical science, is definitely not opposed to it. It is by the workings of the common sense that history is shaped, by the way human beings respond to their needs. These needs engender desires and desires stimulate interests. Experiences are molded depending upon these interests. See B. Lonergan, *Insight*, 181-189, where the different patterns of experience are mentioned and analyzed.

For details on the good of order, refer to the section on The Human Good in the preceding chapter. See also B. Lonergan, *Insight*, 213-214.


and plan, the universe is not there.”  

The social order devised by human intelligence must sustain the unfolding mutual bondedness of people with earth and with one another. This means that the bonds of loving concern and the communal being of persons have to be at the center of all our planning and decisions and in every economic and political organization. Equally, all valid institutions are established to serve the people and are oriented towards freedom.

Spontaneous intersubjectivity and practical intelligence are interlocking principles. As intelligent beings, there is no peace of mind for us unless our feelings and actions are integrated and complementary to what we regard as intelligent. We desire to behave intelligently. Inversely, intelligence is at the service of our desires and fears, enabling them to find themselves in creative living. This is the primary reason why the tension of community must be held in a creative balance. It has to manifest intellectual, moral, and religious conversion from intersubjective individuals. When this falls short, we are confronted with the dialectic of community. And then again, we are faced with the horrors of the different forms of distorted and oppressive social, political, and economic structures. Thus, communities are as much subject to decline as they are capable of progress.

By dialectic, we mean the concrete unfolding of linked but opposed principles of change.  

In a context where stupidity or irresponsibility is operative, dialectical analysis is necessary to reveal the irrationality.  For stupidity and irresponsibility flow from a refusal of self-transcendence, concretizing a flight from understanding and the resistance to further development of intelligence that would radically transform people and situations. The creative contribution of people is crucial to historical realities. Creativity happens in the development of practical intelligence that is sensitive to the requirements of intersubjective living. The tension between these two poles is unavoidable because the interlocking principles of spontaneous intersubjectivity and practical common sense have distinct finalities. It is in the collapse of this creative tension towards either of the poles that we have the dialectic of community. Such collapse is always the result of the presence of what Lonergan terms group bias, the manner in which a particular group is blind to the extent to which its privilege is excessive and socially unwarranted.

It is the reality behind the Marxist notion of class warfare but Lonergan’s clarification of this is in terms of interference with the authentic development of practical common sense. A biased social order falls short of real practicality. What we are introducing at this point are the general theological categories into which Lonergan transposes the language of sin. The term is used analogically in Christian tradition and Lonergan’s use of the language of bias

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212 Echoing Novalis’ judgment on the mandarins of power and industry at the turn of the nineteenth century.
214 Cf. B. Lovett, *A Dragon Not for the Killing*, 94.
216 The distinction between general and special theological categories is elaborated in Chapter Four below.
is likewise analogical. There is the individual bias of egoism, the group bias that obstructs the development of a social order, and the general bias that distorts cultural process and leads societies into the longer cycle of decline because of its capitulation to the illusory omnicompetence of common sense.  

The fact that these general categories of bias are derived from intentionality analysis and are critically based in interiority should be obvious. An egoist is not to be mistaken as one who is devoid of intelligent inquiry. In fact, she is one who has developed a capacity to think things through. More often than not, an egoist is such a good thinker. However, this capacity operates in a deliberately restricted field of inquiry since its primary concern is to meet one’s own interests, even where they clash with those of everyone else involved. Though not totally unaware of her self-deception, the egoist simply refuses to offer her proportionate contributions to what the developing social order demands. It is by a conscious self-orientation that she devotes her energies to furthering something less than a true social order.

Group bias obstructs the development of social order because of its refusal to entertain needed new ideas that would modify the social situation. The development of practical common sense occurs as members of a community respond intelligently to the succession of situations with which they are faced. These responses are made by intelligences that are coupled with the ethos and interests of specific groups. However, the group’s interests may not coincide with those that promote the general good of the society and so needed changes, no matter how worthwhile, are declined as long as they are incompatible with the group’s perceived interests. People would rather cling to present levels of privilege than take the risks and engage in the changes that the good of the larger community entails.

By contrast with group bias, the existence of which can be all too obvious to the many who do not belong to the exploiting group, general bias tends to affect all the members of a culture. It is the bias that affects common sense. “Common sense knows, but it does not know what it knows nor how it knows .

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217 See B. Lonergan, *Insight*, 218-226. Psychological bias, called by Lonergan ‘dramatic bias’, affects the workings of the psyche and needs to be introduced for a comprehensive explanation of a theme such as moral impotence. Moral impotence refers to the restrictedness of humanity’s effective freedom. It follows from incomplete intellectual and volitional development. In the process of living fidelity to the normative demands of our conscious reaching, there are necessary practical insights that are to be acquired and courses of action to be chosen and performed. But if people lack the necessary willingness (which lack Sebastian Moore sees as resulting from a disregard of real desires), then the movement of life is impeded. A gap is created between the actual freedom that we possess at the moment and the full potential of human freedom that we would acquire should certain conditions be met or happen to be fulfilled. This gap measures one’s moral impotence (See B. Lonergan, *Insight*, 627-630). It is in relation to this reality that Robert Doran has expanded Lonergan’s account to include “psychic conversion” which is a matter of the healing of our dramatic bias by love. The healing results in the endopsychic censor changing from being a repressive to being a constructive agency.
nor how to correct and complement its own inadequacies.” General bias simply ignores the limits to the competence of common sense. It grants common sense hegemony in practical affairs. This results in distorted cultural process. Since healthy cultural process is the sustaining principle of the creative tension of community, the operation of general bias ensures that the dialectic of community will not be overcome in any lasting fashion. General bias traps societies into the longer cycle of decline in its resistance to the inquiries and ideas that would radically put in question the adequacy of present achievements: it thereby restrains further developments of intelligence. All of us are prone to this bias of common sense. For though everyone can be acquainted with the spirit of inquiry and reflection, very few think of making it the effective center of their lives. Of those few who do, still fewer succeed in creating sufficient progress to really embody the spirit and resist the “perpetual temptation to adopt the easy, obvious, practical compromise”. This is the reason for Lonergan’s insistence on the need for appropriation of the self-correcting process of learning. For if common sense is to master the new situation, then, it must consent to learn.

General bias combines with group bias to account for certain features of the distorted dialectic of community. While group bias gives rise to a shorter cycle of decline, general bias is distinct in effecting the longer cycle. In group bias, the cycle can be immediately reversed through the depressed group(s) advocating the ideas that are neglected by the dominant group. In general bias however, all groups are rendered indifferent to the neglected ideas; hence, much effort and long periods of time and learning are required to reverse the cycle of decline. Among the implications of the longer cycle of decline are the cumulative deterioration of social situations, the retreat of culture into an ivory tower, and religion becoming an inward affair of the heart. Such are the consequences of peoples’ refusal to attain a higher viewpoint and achieve greater capacity to realize possible schemes and their complacency with the way things are.

But culture can reverse the longer cycle for there is such a thing as progress, a continuous flow of improvements. This is possible when culture allows an expanded range of effective freedom, that is, enabling people to be attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible not only with respect to the existing situation but also with respect to a subsequent, changed situation. And just as intellectual and moral conversion promote progress, so can self-

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219 Lonergan asserts that group bias tends to bring about its own overthrow and so gives rise to short cycles of decline. The excessive privilege to which the dominant group is blind is, after all, something clearly visible to all others in the society. The point in regard to general bias is that all members of a society are blind to needed correctives: this engenders long cycles of decline, very difficult to reverse apart from a clear threat to survival becoming visible.
sacrificing love in religious conversion undo the damage of the longer cycle of decline and restore the cumulative process of progress.

3.2 BASIC COMMUNITY

As elaborated above, for Lonergan\textsuperscript{224} human community is a matter of a common field of experience, a common mode of understanding, a common measure of judgment, and a common consent. The reality of any particular community will be determined by the presence or absence of these various levels of common meaning. But what might it mean to identify a community as basic? To what extent does a community become basic?

Understanding community in terms of shared meaning and value, we have to take into consideration that there can also be community in a situation characterized by profound alienation – alienated and alienating communities. We experience and can witness to these kinds of communities in our neighborhood and places of work. We read about them constantly in the newspaper. There are communities of terrorists, for example, who constitute their personal and shared identities by murder and devastation. Therefore, it would be misleading to take ‘basic’ as referring simply to the sheer fact or existence of community at all.\textsuperscript{226}

In Latin America, the adjective, ‘basic’ that describes their comunidades de base implies the communities of the people “from below” or ‘grassroots,” hence, the term is used in a more qualitative sense to describe the communities that sprang up as a response of the common people struggling out of poverty and of different forms of oppression. In this sense, the comunidades de base of Latin American countries arose as a form of counter-movement, a power generated from communities composed of people from the grassroots, which offers a counterweight in response to an existing oppressive power configuration.\textsuperscript{226}

Close to Latin American usage, Rosemary Haughton\textsuperscript{227} refers to ‘basic ’as connoting existence “in the margins of society”. Furthermore, Haughton adds attributes to basic community by emphasizing that it is a community that is “small, personal, flexible, the opposite of the organization which controls and oppresses.”\textsuperscript{228} J. B. Metz, on the other hand, refers it to a community wherein people “are seeking from below, from the grass-roots level of church and society, to bind together mysticism and politics, religion and societal

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{224} Cf. B. Lonergan, “Natural Right and Historical Mindedness,” \textit{A Third Collection}, 170.
  \item \textsuperscript{225} Cf. F. Lawrence, “Basic Christian Community: An Issue of ‘Mind and the Mystery of Christ’,” \textit{Lonergan Workshop, Volume V}, 265.
  \item \textsuperscript{227} Quoted by F. Lawrence in “Basic Christian Community: An Issue of ‘Mind and the Mystery of Christ’,” \textit{Lonergan Workshop, Volume V}, 266.
  \item \textsuperscript{228} Cf. F. Lawrence, “Basic Christian Community: An Issue of ‘Mind and the Mystery of Christ’,” \textit{Lonergan Workshop, Volume V}, 266. (Emphases added.)
\end{itemize}
Thus, Metz, by contrasting it with the purely paternalistic church “from above” and regarding it as the pattern of church “from below”, includes the element of faith tradition.

The metaphors “from above” and “from below” in Metz connote a change in orientation and direction as regards our constitution and communication of self-meaning. The transformation is from being objects controlled by the meaning “from above”, to being subjects seeking meaning and integration “from below”. Hence, subjects “from below” are dynamically shaping the movement of life in themselves and in their community with an intention and desire to transform society. Lonergan conveys this transformation in terms of the “divinely promoted transition from the prior to the later time of the subject”. The transition happens at the “critical point in the increasing autonomy of the subject.” The critical point is reached when the self-constitution of the subject becomes open-eyed and deliberate because one finds out that it is up to her or him to decide what she or he is to make of oneself. The critical point of one’s existence is what can be spoken of as true or authentic self-discovery. Here the critical point is only seen to be reached when subjects in community, by communicating and relating with another, encounter a Transcendent ground. In this sense, community is ‘basic’ when it serves as a crucial mediator of the increasing autonomy of the temporal subjects comprising it. It promotes a resolution of the “critical point,” a resolution that Lonergan did not hesitate to call “conversion”. Again, it has to be taken into account that conversion can be authentic or unauthentic. To be authentically ‘basic,’ the community values and holds the integrity of the dialectics of the subject, of community, and of culture. It respects both the individual and the communal constitution of human beings and its service is directed to a harmony of the particular goods with the common good. This is important if the communal dimension of Lonergan’s articulation and elaboration of the process of self-transcendence is to be recognized. Authentic self-discovery is naught without the presence of the other or others in community. Authentic conversion leads to responsible and compassionate actions. The basic community facilitates the emergence of people who take responsibility for their own lives and faith. It leads and guides the people to the wholeness of life lived in authenticity, towards the real substance of the search for meaning and direction in the movement of life.

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230 See section 2.3.2 Functions of Meaning above.

231 Lonergan discusses this in Existenz and Aggiornamento (Collection, 240-251).


Lonergan goes on to emphasize that the transition from the prior to the later temporal subject is divinely promoted. Thus, the transition cannot happen without the elements of grace and faith. Grace is God’s love for us, and faith is “the knowledge born of religious love.” Based on the Christian faith tradition, Fred Lawrence expands this by saying that the foundational practice of basic community happens in the context of ‘basic communication’ and sketches its elements in relation to its lack or negation, namely, the experience of loneliness. Human beings need to make their own “the reality of basic communication in overcoming loneliness that has come to dominate not just our lives but the second-order reflection upon our spontaneous living achieved by contemporary Western culture.”

The term ‘basic community’ emerged from an effort to counteract the inauthenticity that has corrupted societies, giving rise to aggravating oppression and poverty. It intended to give a voice to the people of the grassroots, the people at the base of the societies, the poor. Lonergan’s work, however, enables us to emphasize just how the poor can be given this voice. It is through the building of human communities serving as a crucial mediator for people’s conversion – people becoming open-eyed and open-hearted, breaking the walls of division and individualism and responding to situations in compassion and solidarity. This is what an authentic basic community stands for.

CONCLUSION

Authentic human communities are made up of authentic individuals who grow in experience and judgment, and so come to decide for themselves what to make of themselves as a group. What is primary is the community into which an individual is born, since she or he comes to get hold of the possibility of experiencing, understanding, and making judgments and decisions as to what one wants to make of herself or himself through the common meaning

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235 In “Elements of Basic Communication,” *Lonergan Workshop, Volume 6*, edited by Fred Lawrence, 1986, 127-142. Basic communication is discussed in the next Chapter regarding the Basic Christian Community.
236 F. Lawrence, “Elements of Basic Communication,” *Lonergan Workshop, Volume 6*, 127. It has to be noted here that what Fred Lawrence refers to as ‘basic communication’ is the communication within the Trinity, manifested and made actual in authentic communities when the subjects in communities live and take responsibility for the common good of the communities, that is, loving their neighbors authentically. They are able to do this since they have recognized and experienced being loved by God. Although we still refer to ‘basic’ as a general category here, it is essential to mention this factor in Lonergan’s work in order to understand that he was not simply working on a purely philosophical and individualistic approach, a self-transcendence that is devoid of community, of ethical responsibility, and of faith. This is important to the formation of basic communities of the Philippines since the term ‘basic’ is introduced and used in-depth in the Philippines to refer to the small communities formed through the initiative of the Catholic Church.
that the community makes available for her or for him. This goes to show that
building community is fundamental to human living. As historical beings, we
shape our own lives but this is only possible through our interaction with one
another and with the traditions of the communities in which we happen to have
been born. Our identity emerges in the communities that surround and
support us. As individuals, we are responsible for what we make of ourselves.
Collectively, though, as community, we are responsible for the world in which
we live. It is in the extent to which we undertake this responsibility that we
shape the life we live at present and the kind of future that we make available
for the generations to come. Spirituality, being the movement of the spirit in
people, is about living the values perceived by faith. It needs to integrate the
personal and social dimensions into a harmonious whole for “the foundations
for order in the soul and for order in society are the same thing.”

We have only one life and our search for meaning and direction is a
necessity that is imposed on us because we hope and we desire that this one
life can be something worthwhile. Yet, this living out of faith can be
misdirected. Our personal, and then, our collective responsibility to our world
can be corrupted by different biases. We can have an experience but miss the
meaning. It is here that the call to authenticity becomes apparent.

Authenticity becomes manifest in the basic community. Basic means that
a community is composed of a small group of people from the grassroots who
are empowered because they make decisions together. This brings
participation and participation promotes empowerment. The basic community
enables conversion among people, the transformation from the prior to the
later time of the subject where one becomes open-eyed with an open mind
and heart. The poor, who mainly comprise the basic community, are
transformed from being merely passive recipients to active vanguard of social
change. They develop a sense of responsibility and open up to the realization
that they, little as they are, can and should do something about their situation.

The formation and promotion of authentic basic communities, Lonergan
emphasizes, has its ground in the way and the degree that people of these
communities encounter and experience the divine in their interaction and
sharing of life in community. In the Christian faith tradition, the central symbol
of this encounter and experience – the prime manifestation of divine love in
human reality – is the symbol of the Crucified and Risen One. This is the
focus of the next Chapter, where we move from our present elaboration of how
authenticity is manifested in basic communities to its manifestation in basic
Christian communities.

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237 Cf. B. Lonergan, “Natural Right and Historical Mindedness”, A Third Collection,
Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan.
238 Tad Dunne, Lonergan and Spirituality: Towards a Spiritual Integration, 2 and viii
The first two Chapters regarded a thematisation of authenticity in terms of fidelity to the integral scale of values. Chapter Three elaborated on the implications of this understanding of authenticity in the context of human community. This present Chapter seeks to explore how authenticity unfolds within the specific faith tradition of Christianity. The main argument centers on fidelity to the just and the mysterious law of the cross – doing as Jesus did – as the radical fulfillment of self-transcendence in the basic Christian community. Thus, the chapter elaborates on what Lonergan refers to as Law of the Cross. This is done with the aid of Sebastian Moore’s clarifications on how self-transcendence as a process of healing and creating follows the pattern of overcoming evil by a greater good revealed in Christ Crucified. The Christian Church must embody such transcendence down to the local churches which are the basic Christian communities. The Church and the basic Christian communities must strive to become the embodiment of Christ.

We have seen in the previous Chapters that the required self-transcendence is a matter of fidelity to the integral and normative scale of values. On that approach, the problem of evil is regarded in terms of the breakdown of the integral scale of values. But the required self-transcendence for fidelity to that normative scale, as shown by the downward movement in the scale (healing vector), is enabled and conditioned by religious value, that is, the love of God flooding the hearts of people enabling them to respond in love. The solution to the problem of evil, in other words, necessitates the gratuitous gift of God’s love. Faced with evil, such as grave poverty, oppression, injustice, and violence, the process of self-transcendence is fully manifest as human collaboration with the divine partner in the search for meaning and direction in the movement of life. This demands the formation of alternative communities that commit themselves to a changed way of living. In the Christian faith tradition, collaboration with God is specified to a large extent by what is meant by fidelity to the just and mysterious law of the cross. It is also to be identified with integral fidelity to the normative scale of values. Conformity to the cross of Christ, that is, acting out of true love of life embodied by Jesus on the cross, is the summit of the process of Christian self-transcendence. This is what sets the parameters for the arduous process of self-appropriation in our time. Fidelity to the just and mysterious law of the

\[\text{See the following section of the present chapter for the elaboration of the Law of the Cross.}\]
cross is fidelity to the truth of life that grounds authentic solidarity with the historical cause of the poor and the suffering. 240

The previous Chapters considered an unfolding of authenticity in terms of general categories. Being already involved in exploring how authenticity unfolds within the specific faith tradition of Christianity, this present Chapter approaches such unfolding of authenticity in terms of special theological categories, that is, those peculiar to the Christian faith tradition.

The introduction of the terms ‘general’ and ‘special’ categories, where ‘special’ operates in contrast to ‘general’ is necessary at this point in order to grasp the value of the endeavors carried out in the preceding Chapters and their relationship with the current one. Prior to the introduction of the specifically Christian reference, the presentation had been worked out at the level of general categories. Lonergan sees special categories as naming241 realities distinct but not separate from the realities named by what he calls general categories. This merits expansion which will be provided in our first section below. Subsequent sections develop the meaning of basic community towards basic Christian community. The final section below includes a brief categorical framework that serves as a guideline to the analysis of the challenges and limitations of the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines.

240 Insights for this paragraph are drawn from Robert M. Doran’s *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 112-114. The relationship between fidelity to the integral scale of values and fidelity to the law of the cross has been helpfully specified by Robert Doran in a manner that merits quotation.

“First, there is the problem of evil, and it consists partly in the breakdown of the integral and normative scale of values.

Second, its solution must be a matter of grace effecting in persons the self-transcendence required for fidelity to that normative scale.

Third, the proportions of that self-transcendence are determined by the proportions of the problem of evil to be met.

Fourth, in our situation these proportions demand the formation of a global network of alternative communities intent on a different way to live.

Fifth, such a network will demand the generation of transcultural meanings and values.

Sixth, the generation of such cultural values demands the arduous process of self-appropriation, precisely for the sake of the psychic and spiritual development that will enable human subjects to achieve fidelity to the integral scale of values in our situation.

And seventh, such fidelity specifies to a large extent what we mean here by such expressions as ‘collaboration with God’ or ‘conformity to the just and mysterious law of the cross,’ or ‘the suffering servanthood revealed by the divine measure become incarnate in Jesus.’

241 It is necessary to take note here that ‘naming’ does not simply mean a description of realities or experiences. ‘Naming’ includes understanding the whole process of emergence, the schemes of recurrence involved that make possible the occurrence of a particular situation in history. This is elaborated more in the following sections of the present Chapter.
4.1 Of General and Special Categories

Theological categories are either general or special. General categories regard objects that theology shares with other disciplines. Special categories, on the other hand, regard objects proper only to theology. A thorough understanding of either of these two categories requires an understanding of the realities that both of them involve. Faith, for example, can never be truly understood without the foundational understanding of the structure of our emergence. The synthesis of faith and culture that we all hope for is to be achieved only when other disciplines recognize the indispensability of a specifically theological component in both the foundations and systematization of their understanding. Likewise, a theology that isolates itself from other disciplines is empty rhetoric and does not at all contribute to an adequate articulation of the immanent intelligibility of our praxis of the reign of God. Therefore, a truly converted theologian, one who has undergone authentic intellectual, moral, and religious conversion, is a committed thinker as well as a true believer. An adequate understanding of human reality, let alone an effective transition toward a closer approximation of the world as it ought to be, is an interdisciplinary undertaking and employs the complementary working out of the two kinds of categories.

The previous Chapters were more concerned with the formulation of the grounds for the derivation of general categories. The concern of the present chapter is with unfolding the implications of the thematisation of authenticity (Chapters One and Two) from the context of human community (Chapter Three) to that of a basic Christian community. As a consequence, the emphasis is on realities that belong to special theological categories. It draws specifically on the Christian faith tradition seeking an understanding of the faith which can guide us to a communal renewal that would bring the world to that alternative situation that would approximate more closely the reign of God in human affairs.

A religion such as Christianity that directs its efforts at universal communication – preaching the Good News to all nations – must have a transcultural base. General and special categories can be derived from a base that is transcultural in the relevant sense. The base for general theological categories is the self-transcending subject. The notion of the transcultural in transcendental method, already discussed in Chapter Three, pertains, not to its explicit formulation, which is historically conditioned, but to the realities to which the formulation refers. These realities, we have said, are not the product of any culture but, instead, the principles that beget cultures, preserve and develop them. It is due to their violation that cultures crumble and decay. The transcendental method is at work in the attending, reflecting, and deliberating subject. The subject doing theology, for example, is the particular theologian to the extent that she or he is intellectually, morally and religiously converted. Through self-appropriation she or he is known as

\[^{242}\text{Cf. R. M. Doran, \textit{Theology and the Dialectics of History}, 115.}\]
\[^{243}\text{The notion of the transcultural in Lonergan’s elaboration has been discussed in detail in Chapter One above.}\]
subject and not as object. The operations are not something that one has which others do not have, or something that one has to learn from somebody else. One uncovers and identifies them in one’s own operating. Moreover, one’s operating is disclosed not in isolation but in relating with other individuals, who are themselves also attending, understanding, judging, and deciding. As such groups of individuals develop and decline, there is not only society but also history.

With regard to special theological categories, the base is religious conversion – identified in interiority as the dynamic state of being in love in an unrestricted manner. As it is defined, being in love in an unrestricted manner is the religious conversion that grounds moral and intellectual conversion – it is that which fulfils our capacity for self-transcendence. This fulfillment is made possible, first of all, by a gift, the gratuitous gift of God’s love. God’s gift of love (Rom 5:5) has a transcultural aspect as well. Since it is bestowed on all people, it is manifested in many and diverse manners in the different religions of humankind. Yet the gift is distinct from these manifestations and it is the gift that is transcultural. God’s gift of love is free and not conditioned by human knowledge. It is the principle that leads humanity to seek knowledge of God. It is the experience of God’s love that makes it possible for any person to desire God and be the beloved of God by loving other persons. “For being-in-love is properly itself, not in the isolated individual, but only in a plurality of persons that disclose their love to one another.”  

4.2 BASIC CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

An understanding of an authentic basic community was explicated in Chapter Three. This Chapter expounds this understanding and translates it into an understanding of basic Christian community. This move will be facilitated by understanding what fidelity to the just and mysterious law of the cross means. But before going into this Chapter's primary notion, it is helpful to highlight first Frederick Crowe’s description of Lonergan’s ideas on communication for it elucidates the distinction and the relationship between general categories and special Christian categories.

4.2.1 Aspects of Human Communication

In his article, “The Spectrum of Communication in Lonergan,” Crowe develops Lonergan’s ideas on communication on the basis of two divisions or classifications. The first refers to communication between what is interior and moves out to others: that pertains more to general categories. The second is about communication between divine and human reality where Crowe uses the Christian, therefore, special category. The two divisions that Crowe developed are interrelated with one another.

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245 In *Communication and Lonergan: Common Ground for Forging the New Age*, 67-86.
4.2.1.1 Communication as movement from within outwards

Current efforts to articulate the meaning of spirituality in the Filipino context have arrived at a formulation that is correlative to the movement of communication in Crowe’s second classification above: Ang tulak at kabig ng kalooblooban.246 (The push and pull of the innermost being.) It is a movement from within going out, and from without towards the interior.

Communication that is internal to the individual human being, an area where Lonergan may have made a distinct contribution, refers to the ontological communication that particularly and appropriately arises in the conscious realm with its several sublevels: sensitive, intelligent, reasonable, affective, psychic. In this conscious realm, there is operative the factor of intentionality, “a conscious interior dynamism that works spontaneously to lift us from level to level”247. We should not think however, that since there is a movement of “lifting up,” communication here is simply an upward progress, that is, from the sensitive to the intelligent level and so on. Fundamentally, our response to life and our conscious development spring from the ambiance of loving trust more than from the basis of examined and understood data. Lonergan has emphasized the unity of the organic, psychic, and intellectual levels and that they are not static but dynamic systems, systems on the move. The intellectual level is distinct from the psychic level. All the same, the “principle of dynamic correspondence calls for a harmonious orientation on the psychic level, and from the nature of the case such an orientation would have to consist in some cosmic dimension, in some intimation of unplumbed depths that accrued to [human] feelings, emotions, sentiments.”248.

In his views on intersubjectivity, Lonergan points towards a primordial psychological unity of persons. He writes,

Prior to the “we” that results from the mutual love of an “I” and a “thou”, there is the earlier “we” that precedes the distinction of subjects and survives its oblivion. This prior “we” is vital and functional. Just as one spontaneously raises one’s arm to ward off a blow against one’s head, so with the same spontaneity one reaches out to save another from falling. Perception, feeling, and bodily movement are involved, but the help given another is not deliberate but spontaneous. One advert to it not before it occurs but while it is occurring. It is as if “we” were members of one another prior to the distinctions of each from the others.249

He goes on to say that intersubjectivity does not only appear in spontaneous mutual aid, but that feelings are also communicated. Using Max Scheler’s distinctions, he speaks about community of feeling, fellow-feeling, psychic contagion, and emotional identification.250 Chapter 7 of Insight also

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248 B. Lonergan, Insight, 532. Lonergan assures that this is not merely a theoretical conclusion and relates this to the non-rational element in Rudolf Otto’s Idea of the Holy.
249 B. Lonergan, Method in Theology, 57.
250 B. Lonergan, Method in Theology, 57-59.
discusses intersubjectivity and social order, the tension of community, dialectic of community, and the different biases that can destroy community and the social order. Most of these topics, however, have been introduced above in the section on community. It suffices here to note that Lonergan’s “turn to the subject” is not a turn to the subject as object of some controlling “inner look”. It is rather a humbling and purifying heightening of awareness that leads to a personal judgment that this is what I am, who I am in the greater schemes of things, and a decision to be faithful to it. His concentration on the individual was more “a withdrawal in a grand strategy of withdrawal and return”. This can be very well seen in his endeavor on communication.

Effective communication of meaning and values is the embodiment of our creative participation in the making of our world. Such communication generates the common meaning that constitutes a community. Structural distortions in communication lead to alienation and ideology, and eventually, to division, conflict, and oppression.

4.2.1.2 Communication as Divine and Human Reality in Christianity

In Christian communities, effective communication rests in the effective communication of Christ’s message, which directs Christian service to human society to bring about the reign of God. In order that this be communicated effectively, it is necessary first to know the real meaning of God’s message in Christ. But knowing must lead to living. Living enables one to reach out and share with others what one possesses. Finally, the effective meaning of the Christian message – love of neighbors – is in serving not solely the Christian church, but all nations.

It is in the foundation established in the previous Chapters (One to Three) that the common Catholic doctrine on the Trinity as the communication in divine interiority or the communication within God is based: the Father communicates being, power, all the divine attributes, to the Son; and Father and Son communicate them to the Spirit. The communication between God and humankind that is embodied in the love of God flooding the hearts of humankind sublates human communication. It is the source, the fount of self-transcendence and shapes that which is interior that, inevitably, moves out to communicate with others.

The personal self-communication of divinity in Christian terms as manifested in the doctrine of the Trinity is three-fold: in Christ the Word becomes flesh, through Christ human beings become temples of the Spirit, and in a final consummation the blessed know the Father. First and foremost, however, we must remember that it was out of great love and mercy

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251 See R. M. Doran’s Foreword in Communication and Lonergan: Common Ground and Forging the New Age, xii.
to all creation that God communicates and shares the divine nature to us, and that divine nature is ‘not a lifeless, unconscious thing, but the fullness of understanding, truth, love, peace, the consciousness that is internal “experience”’. The self-communication of divinity in love rests in the sending of the Son, in the gift of the Spirit, in the hope of being united with the Father. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” (John 3:16) This is the Christian stance.

It is through Jesus as well that Christians realize the response to God’s self-communication in love. Communication between God and humankind is mutual. What we received in an inexpressible form, we have to struggle to communicate to others. Crucial in the struggle is the degree of internal communication achieved. Jesus realized the needed measure of internal communication and succeeded in communicating divine revelation to his followers, in terms they could understand. Subsequently, his followers in turn communicated it to their world in teaching and preaching, in writing and worship, and in their day-to-day life, in the way of the apostles. In the mystical mode, internal communication works in a “withdrawal” from the world mediated by meaning into a silent and all-absorbing self-surrender in response to God’s gift of love, a withdrawal that enables and invites a return to the world in charity. Thus, charity becomes the primary Christian praxis. Response to God’s communication of love is adoration and prayer, praise and worship. This response is bona fide if it is manifested in good works. All is not lost if we recognize and feel the healing hands of God in our suffering and poverty. God’s communication of love is a blessing bestowed on humanity that enables a human being to become a blessing to others by doing works of charity. Thus, the limited communication of mind with Mind that thinkers enjoy becomes the believers’ full communication of heart with Heart, when cor ad cor loquitur (heart speaks to heart).

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255 Cf. F. Crowe, “The Spectrum of Communication in Lonergan”, Communication and Lonergan: Common Ground and Forging the New Age, 86. One manifestation of heart to heart communication was disclosed to me by committed people working in the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines. I once asked the people in the BECs of Tagum, Davao City what is it that makes them continue in their service while others have chosen otherwise. The response was simple. They, themselves do not understand fully but there is a certain joy felt when things work well for some people especially for those who are truly in need and are suffering. They declare, kung di na maintindihan ng isip, pusuin mo (if the mind can no longer understand, then turn to the heart) and joy and peace overflows in knowing that one has done something right and good. The heart has reasons that reason cannot understand (Blaise Pascal).
4.2.2 Basic Christian Community as Basic Communication

The transition from the experience of belonging to a community to the experience of being community, or for a particular church from a church for the people to a church of the people, means a change in orientation and direction as regards our constitution and communication of self-meaning towards becoming subjects of our own history. As mentioned earlier, Lonergan refers to this transition in terms of the “critical point in the increasing autonomy of the subject”, wherein one becomes open-eyed and deliberate because one finds out for oneself that it is up to herself or to himself to decide what she or he is to make of oneself. The opposite of the open-eyed and deliberate person is the drifter. The “critical point of one’s existence is the point where one moves from being a drifter to becoming an open-eyed and deliberate subject. The “critical point” is the point of true or authentic self-discovery.

One of the relevant points that has to be taken into consideration with regards to the critical point is that the transition from the prior to the later state is almost impossible without the influence of other subjects. It happens only within an intersubjective framework in a community, where knowing and willing can be acquired by way of the union of love. The community, in this case, is a crucial mediator of the changes in temporal subjects. In the light of this transition which Lonergan has delineated, community is basic insofar as it promotes the transition of the temporal subjects from their prior to the later times, from being drifters to becoming open-eyed and deliberate, or as long as it promotes a resolution of the “critical point”. It has to be emphasized that any community that is formed out of a mistaken or false apprehension of what it means to be human cannot be considered, nor be called basic. Here lies the radicality and the significance of Lonergan’s contribution in the formation of basic communities. By giving appropriate attention to this, we can no longer use the term ‘basic community’ loosely. To be part of a basic community demands great and authentic commitment and responsibility, not only for the community itself, but more so, for the wider human family. An authentic basic community directs the believing and loving of its members towards the narrow gate, towards the approximation of the faith that enables one to give oneself for the life of the world. Thus, Rosemary Haughton’s description of basic community comes to the fore. She describes it as “the little churches of Wisdom’s planting… the work of the Spirit.” As basic community, people live conversationally and become principles of conversation in the universe.

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257 See Chapter One above, section 1.1.4 on Human Authenticity.
258 See also Chapter Six on the Basic Christian Communities of the Philippines as Basic.
In this regard, the basic Christian community exists or is realized when God, through the gift of grace in the outpouring of the Spirit and through the manifestation of this love in Christ Jesus, draws human subjects into the supernatural set of interpersonal relationships grounded in the “threelfold self-communication of divinity to humanity”. The gift of God’s love re-orientets people toward God and so transforms them that, having been fashioned by divine intention in the image of God, they hope to become citizens in the city of God, faithful in this life and blessed in the future. It is the experience of grace, “the experience of a new community, in which faith and hope and charity dissolve rationalizations, break determinisms, and reconcile the estranged and the alienated, and there is reaped the harvest of the Spirit that is ‘…love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control’ (Gal 5: 22)”. To be within basic Christian community is to enter into conversation with the persons of the divine Trinity. In other words, the foundational practice in basic Christian community happens in the context of basic communication, whose main language is God’s love: communication of love among the Holy Three, communicated to humanity by Christ Jesus, and that which people strive to live out as communication among them in basic Christian communities.

4.2.2.1 Elements of Basic Communication

Fred Lawrence sketches the elements of basic communication by contrast with its lack or negation, that is, the experience of human loneliness, which is rooted in ourselves, in our habitual inability to be in conversation with ourselves, with others, and with God. Loneliness, here, is distinct from solitude. Solitude refers to the basic human condition of human questing and searching, and longing; that is a dimension of genuine development whose complete fulfillment is being-in-love with God, that is, the explicit expression or the actuation of engaging in basic communication. On the contrary, loneliness is the deformation of this original solitude by sin and alienation, which in biblical and secular terms, culminates in death. The culture of loneliness is not just generated by life. It does not simply arise spontaneously. It is elicited and imposed by deformation in the reflection upon the meaning of life. It is the consequence of missing the movement of life itself. It was emphasized in Chapter Two that the movement of life can either be found or missed; and the movement of life in us is visible in the way we discern values. Accordingly, our entry into the basic communication described above is made explicit by the structure of the human good talked about in Chapter Two.

The entire universe of being has the character of quest, yearning, ascent. For human beings the nearest context for this ascent into mystery is what Lonergan calls the human good. Evident in Lonergan is his evolving understanding of the human good. With his tendency to think of the human

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263 This section draws its content mainly from Fred Lawrence’s article of the same title in Lonergan Workshop, Volume 6, edited by Fred Lawrence, 1986, 127-142.
good chiefly in terms of intelligible order, with so much emphasis on the good of order in *De Deo Trino: Pars Systematica*, Lonergan’s treatment of the human good sets forth what in *Method* are called general categories in preparation for the elaboration of special categories to be deployed in a systematic grasp of the divine missions of Word and Spirit. For Lonergan, a philosopher reaches full maturity when she or he begins to appreciate the good of order in terms of its intelligibility and as participation in the divine good, when one follows the dictates of intelligence and chooses the good of order to satisfy primarily the needs and desires of others though not necessarily one’s own. The ascent is characterized by a movement from the objects of desire, through intelligible orders that embrace the interlocking schemes of recurrence, to the judgment of values. Values form the object of reasonable choice. The movement from the level of good of order affirmed as present in the judgment of value to that of choice and decision is identical with the movement to the topmost level of consciousness that is conscience. Lonergan asserts that at the level of conscience, the subject “is practical and existential: practical inasmuch as control includes self-control, and the possibility of self-control involves responsibility for the effects of his action on others and, more basically, on himself.”

This passage of transition from the level of objects of desire to the possible good of order, to judgments about the human good on the level of value is profoundly connected with the passage from the prior to the later subject mentioned in the preceding section, where the passage or the transition gives way to the resolution of the “critical point”, that is, towards authentic conversion. At stake here is the emergence of our full personhood. The emergence of the person in human society, in Lonergan’s thought and understanding, depends on the realization of the capacity for self-transcendence in genuine benevolence towards others by way of real collaboration for the good.

Once again, it needs to be emphasized that the self-transcendence that Lonergan elucidates as one that leads toward an authentic concern and service for the good of the society takes root when people are able to appreciate their presence to God and others, wherein ‘others’ means the totality of the created universe though it has to give due importance to interpersonal relationships. Lonergan reasons that love effects a union between or among persons, from which will flow a will to communicate good things with one another and to cooperate together in order to acquire the needed skills and resources that would build a world worthy of God’s reign on earth – a world of justice, peace, joy, hope. In short, love generates all the components needed in the realization of the concrete good of order. All interpersonal relationships are a matter of personal presence. And, in order

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for human beings, to realize ourselves as persons from our starting point of solitude and alienating loneliness, we have to enter into basic communication with God.

It is clear at this point that for Lonergan, hope is alive for humanity and the world because God loves us first. Depending on the extent to which we appreciate this gift of love, vulnerable beings though we are, we are enabled to pursue the search for the good life together with all the others who appreciate and live life as a gift. God, as *agapē*, overflows into loving us. The Spirit as the Gift of Love is sent first and was there in the beginning. Thus, in Thomas Aquinas, there is something instead of nothing – all things came into being – out of the movement of the Spirit, that is, of God’s love in the whole created universe. God wants people to enter by their acts of knowing and loving into the finite realization of interpersonal relationships as a divine good of order. But to carry this out, God also has to heal our loneliness.

The Love of God, which is known to Christians as the Holy Spirit, becomes the Love of God for Jesus, the Son. “The Beloved Son as human loves all of us human beings humanly.” Lonergan has helped us to understand how the order of grace becomes linked directly with the elements of the human good through interpersonal relations. He once wrote so beautifully:

> It is the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the love of a human will, motivated by a human mind, operating through human senses, resonating through human emotions and feelings and sentiments, implemented by a human body with its structure of bones and muscles, flesh, its mobile features, its terrible capacities for pleasure and pain, for joy and sorrow, for rupture and agony. It is the love of the Good Shepherd, knowing its own, known by its own, and ready to lose his life for them: Greater love than this no man hath, than to lay down his life for his friend.

Through Jesus, the love of God is extended to human beings and the saving and stirring love, that is, the Spirit, is poured out in the hearts of humankind. And on account of all these relations of love, there is the loving response of charity. This response is embodied in humanity’s ascent towards development as human beings. There is the movement through physical presence, psychic adaptation, memory of the past (Metz’s “dangerous memory”), and imagination of the future. Finally, comes a “phase of mutual self-mediation and mutual indwelling.” Then the Christian response is appropriate and mature.

With these preliminary clarifications in place, we can proceed further with our attempt to delineate the heuristics of theological categories special to

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269 F. Lawrence, “Elements of Basic Communication”, *Lonergan Workshop, Volume* 6, 139.
Christian faith tradition. An authentic basic community is composed of people who are continually negotiating the critical point. In the basic Christian communities, this negotiation is made manifest when people begin to possess a profound sense of “the immediacy of shared experience of conversion and of calling, of the presence of the Lord in power and intimacy.” They are people, who become convinced that they must deepen their understanding of what their faith really means and what they stand for as a community. This, according to Haughton, means learning to be in touch with one’s personhood, which is the key to inner peace and freedom. A person who is free to grow, to love, is a person who has touched the peace which is the sign of authenticity and the root of obedience to God. Conversation with Christ Jesus brings it about that people embrace his freedom, the freedom that empowered him to be obedient to the Father, obedient until death. Haughton adds that this inner truthfulness is not discovered in isolation but is a gift to each other of those who are aware of God’s action in their lives. The awareness needs a progressively deeper uncovering, “a clearing of obstacles to allow the shoots of Wisdom to appear”, that is, a deeper knowledge of oneself as subject.

And it is in the church, in the community gathered in Christ’s name, that this becomes possible because it is Christ Jesus himself who showed them how loving without reservation is possible.

If we operate in pursuit of a goal, that is, the desire to “see” God, Christ Jesus operated from the goal that was already attained by him. However, he does not start off knowing already the meaning and value of God as agapē. He had to struggle and learn it as we do in order to communicate to others what he had received. He, too, had to labor to express what was first given him in an inexpressible form. This required a great deal of him and a profound sense and appropriation of internal communication dealt with earlier in this Chapter. The conversation with Jesus starts with understanding the message that Jesus communicated to his followers, which in turn, his followers communicated to the rest of the world through the church. This conversation that proceeds in history is translated into the daily life of the church in the measure that the Word is listened to. Listening to the Word involves not simply hearing it. Christians must bear witness to it. We find this in Lonergan’s two phases of theology: “If one is to harken to the word, one must also bear witness to it. If one engages in lectio divina, there came to mind quaestiones. If one assimilates tradition, one learns that one should pass it on. If one encounters the past, one also has to take one’s stand in the future.” And, it must not be forgotten that the quality of our transmission of the message that we received depends on the measure and the quality of us receiving the message in the first place. Understanding Christ Jesus as subject must enable his followers to see themselves as subjects of authentic Christian practice. As they take a stand on their own inner experience of the

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love of God revealed in Christ Jesus, they must proceed to understand its true
meaning in human process and then, be able to incarnate it in human
community and in human history.

4.3 LAW OF THE CROSS

We have clarified the distinction between general and special theological
categories and emphasized that, at the level of general categories, the
required self-transcendence is fidelity to the normative scale of values. We
now ask what governs the required self-transcendence within the Christian
faith tradition. What intelligibility did Lonergan discern in the Christian story of
Jesus? He affirms that the story of Jesus re-presents a basic trust that the evil
in the history of the human race is not the final word. If God exists, evil can
somehow be converted into a greater good. The dynamic of the
transformation is what he calls the Law of the Cross. In this Law he finds “the
intrinsic intelligibility” of biblical affirmations that Jesus effected salvation. He
also assigns it the logical status of a precept addressed to human
freedom. By such assignation he moves his “law” away beyond speculative
understanding. Where Christian soteriology becomes a matter of hope in the
face of historical phenomenon of evil, “soteriology acquires a practical
intention which finds fulfillment not in understanding but in action.”
Soteriology is now seen to point towards action intrinsically and directly.
For Lonergan, the Law of the Cross specifies the working out of the process of
authenticity under the concrete conditions of actual historical existence. All of
this calls for lengthy elaboration. We begin this section by following the three-
step presentation of the Law given by Lonergan: 1) evil to be overcome; 2)
victory of the will; and, 3) good that emerges from evil through this victory.

4.3.1 Evil to be overcome

The more demanding aspects of self-transcendence are initiated by and
made more intense through a confrontation with evil. The process of self-
appropriation becomes more arduous. Our thrust to self-transcendence is
derailed by the reality of evil manifest in the breakdown of the integral and

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275 Cf. B. Lonergan, De Verbo Incarnato, 574.
276 W. P. Loewe, “Toward a Responsible Soteriology” in Creativity and Method, 21-
237 at 218.
277 In accordance with intentionality analysis, real self-transcendence occurs only
with evaluations, decisions, actions by which one constitutes both oneself and one’s
world in the realization of value. Unlike the classical Greek focus, Lonergan locates the
fulfillment of humanity beyond knowing in the activity which strives for the actualisation
of value, the making of history.
278 Cf. Supplement to The Incarnate Word by Bernard J. F. Lonergan, translated
by M. G. Shields, 1988, 82, yet to be published in the Collected Works series.
279 Herbert McCabe distinguishes between two kinds of evil: evil suffered and evil
done. “Evil suffered” refers to the inevitable evil caused by natural disasters, while evil
done is evil caused by human beings, the result of human wickedness, when human
beings choose to sacrifice what is essential for the sake of trivial things. Dehumanizing
normative scale of values. Added to this is the recognition that the solution to the problem of evil is not available on the basis of human resources alone. It is more than goodwill, power or wealth to confront the problem of evil. In the beginning of this book, I mentioned about a demanding process of risking one’s own life for the sake of others. One can only embrace that process by authentic loving. The fount of that love, that which makes it possible, is the gratuitous love of God flooding the hearts of people. It is what the adage, “faith can move mountains” implies – faith in a God who loves the world and everything in it no matter what. It is principally a matter of grace effecting in persons the self-transcendence required for fidelity to the normative scale of values. The problem of evil can only be met and overcome by human collaboration with God. Human beings will not commit themselves to the arduous process of self-appropriation unless they experience God’s love flooding their hearts.

The sensible embodiment of God’s response to the problem of evil in any religion is a mystery that is both a symbol of the incomprehensible and a sign of what is grasped. In the Christian faith tradition this refers to the life, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus, which pivots on Christ’s response to evil manifest in the cross. When its meaning is deeply and rightly understood, the cross of Christ functions as a psychic force that sweeps over living human beings linked in charity towards the authentic performance of the tasks set by a world order where the problem of evil is not suppressed but transcended.

In Christ, humanity takes on a deeper meaning. The consciousness has led to seeing, from a faith perspective, God united with every human person in and through the human flesh. In the Incarnation lies the spirituality of redemption in the flesh. Hence, we now talk of spirituality in Jesus Christ as incarnational spirituality. It is the human spirit in the flesh, joined to Christ’s Spirit poured into our hearts. It is a spirituality that, by the human spirit nourished by the Spirit of the risen Christ, transforms us into living the new life of the children of God, and in Christ, makes humanity the glory of God.

In Christianity, there is the value of the Cross as an object of contemplation. Christ crucified is a symbol of endless meaning. It is a powerful and effective symbol because it is not merely a created story but a historical fact: a real death. This is why J-B Metz refers to the story of Jesus

poverty is the result of this latter kind of evil which McCabe also calls moral evil (Cf. God Matters, 25-38). In the present work, I am referring to this latter kind, “evil done”, when I speak about evil.

The radical nature of this incapacity for sustained development is only clarified through understanding moral impotence (See footnote 217 above for a definition of moral impotence). Understanding moral impotence enables us to realize that freedom is not something that we simply possess; rather, it can be lessened and lost; as the tradition has it, sin is slavery. This is precisely what Jesus has provided for human beings – the restoration of our true freedom. See B. Lonergan, Insight, 627-630.

See footnote number 240 above.

Cf. Gal 2, 19b-20; Rom 8, 15-16.

Cf. Rom 8, 5-17.
as a dangerous memory. Metz argues that the negativity of evil as an enormous and often catastrophic objective surd is to be faced with the saving narrative: the dangerous memory of Jesus, who suffered, died, was buried and raised again. It is a memory because it is part of human history and the danger that it provokes in its remembrance provides “the imaginative and existential conditions of facing the general surd and cultural problem of the overwhelming extent to which the predominant forms of our existence sap our ability to think about standards of excellence or comprehensive ends at all, in so far as they impose standards in the light of which the human good is consistently felt and thought about in superficial, banal, or trivial terms.” Remembering it is to converse about a past tragedy in which human beings were the collaborators. To forget or suppress such memory and the issue behind it is to behave in a profoundly inhuman way. It would mean a denial of the existence and experiences of those who have gone before us, in which suffering and death because of evil done played an irremovable part – those whom our very existence in the present and our hopes for the future must include. For Metz, the theodicy problem must be posed as a question of the suffering of others, and basically, as the personally experienced past of suffering and of sufferers. Even as it points to God’s love giving itself to the ultimate limits, Christ’s crucifixion and death, at the same time, contains the whole horror of sin and the mystery of evil at its worst.

It is relatively easy in a healthy situation to do what is good. When the good is corrupted by evil however, it is far more difficult to restore good. It is very clear in history that humanity more frequently finds itself in the situation of evil rather than good. Like most poor and suffering Christian communities, the Basic Christian communities of the Philippines, for example, have the crucified Christ on the cross as their central symbol of faith and worship. Since the communities are mostly composed of poor families, the spirituality they manifest is born out of the struggle to make life meaningful and desirable by breaking through poverty and the sufferings that go with it. It is a spirituality that unfolds out of a desire for justice and liberation and hence, has a redemptive role in society. The presence of massive poverty that begets suffering among and violence to people poses the greatest challenge to the belief in the goodness of God and the possibility of salvation. But, it is their faith in such goodness and the integrity of humanity, manifested by the Cross of Christ that shapes the basic trust that evil has not the final word in the history of human race. For Jesus, if God exists, then evil can somehow be overcome by a greater good. That ‘somehow’ “is the way of the cross, embraced by our Lord who was condemned by the world, scourged, nailed to a cross, killed, but who rose from the dead to teach us how good must come

285 Fred Lawrence, “Dangerous Memory and the Pedagogy of the Oppressed,” Communicating A Dangerous Memory: Soundings in Political Theology, 25.
286 This will be discussed further in the following Chapters.
out of evil." The experience of gross and pervasive social injustice mediates to the poor what the Bible refers to as ‘the reign of sin’, what Lonergan refers to as ‘the expectation of sin’. The ‘victory of the will’ of our next section lies in its being enabled to overcome the reactive stance in the face of evil. The good news to be proclaimed to the ends of the earth is that of the victory over evil, an overcoming of evil which is achieved by the greater good embodied in the meaning, the mystery, and the justice of the Cross of Christ.

4.3.2 Victory of the will

Evil is not to be overcome by the violent elimination of the evil-doers. How is it overcome? When the sensible data that are demanded by the sensitive nature of the human beings command one’s attention, they nourish the imagination and stimulate the intelligence and the will. Nourishing the imagination is one thing, stimulation of the intelligence and will is another. Both, which are not easy tasks, constitute the demanding process of self-appropriation. The degree by which one engages in the process conditions the release of affectivity that is the central feature of the world of sensibility. Affectivity, then, intimates its finality, that is, its yearning for God. In the face of the present distortions and destructions of human life, Sebastian Moore asks the question: “Where are the images exposed to which feeling may find again its vigour for life?” To answer this question, there is one image which derives from the fact that God became one flesh with humankind, and before the eyes of that flesh was crucified “so that we could see the life of feeling that is denied in the denial of order, see it in the tortured, bleeding body of the

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287 Fred Lawrence, “Dangerous Memory and the Pedagogy of the Oppressed,” Communicating A Dangerous Memory: Soundings in Political Theology, 29-30.
288 It has to be noted at this point that through his development of intentionality analysis, Lonergan, in his later work, abandoned the language of scholastic faculty psychology and thereafter referred to the “will” through his clarification of the fourth level of consciousness – the level of decision. Though I opt to use the outdated terminology, drawing on his earlier work, the account here of the second element of his Law of the Cross is based precisely on his clarification, which in turn, was developed and clarified further by Robert Doran and Sebastian Moore. With regard to this, it can be said, therefore, that the clear and main obstruction to the “victory of the will” is moral impotence (see footnote no. 217 above).
289 Imagination here refers to creative imagination that leads to action promoting genuine change. The possibility of change demands imagination, which rethinks the solution previously tried and suggests a solution altogether unexpected. Genuine change can only occur when one breaks out from the frameworks and conceptual blocks that limit one’s imagination. Creative imagination takes place so often in situations of impasse where every normal way of action is brought to a standstill. This impasse brings people back to contemplation, forcing the brain into gear, “seeking intuitive unconventional answers to the situation. It is very close to revelation!” Cf. Talk given by Madonna Kolbenschlag in Washington, D.C. (November, 1986). Cp. N. O’Brien, Island of Tears, Island of Hope, 94.
290 Cf. B. Lovett, Life Before Death, 1986, 94.
order enfleshed; see it, and seeing it, feel again, and know, as from eons of lost time, the soul’s primal welling-up in the spirit of resurrection.”

“By his stripes we are healed.” Moore is concerned to explicate the psychological dynamics of our healing. The strange insight is born that crucifixion is ‘double-edged’: that our crucifixion of others manifests a deeper self-crucifixion: the human being in flight from the pain of being truly human, hardening the heart, suppressing the life of true feeling. Moore asserts that in the crucifixion of Christ, human beings can understand the drama that every individual plays out: “It comes home to me that [what I call] life’s crucifixion of me is really my crucifixion of life and of myself.” The Cross allows humans to unscramble their conflicted emotions and desires through the dynamism which the Cross reveals and thus enables humans to live fully in accordance with the spirit. This understanding that comes home to us when we are confronted by such evil enables us to see the part we are playing in the perpetuation of evil that causes so much suffering for others. Acceptance of the position as the crucifier leads one, under the sway of the Spirit, to a growing inward sense of that which is crucified. One feels the evil that she is dong inflicted on herself. When this happens, the agent of evil begins to feel for the victim. And if one devotes the necessary attention to this feeling, she may even reach out to aid the victim. In this case, evil is overcome and transformed into good. The victory of the will is manifest in one’s acceptance of being the crucifier and thereupon feels the evil she is doing to others on herself and then, decides to put a stop to that evil by doing something good. Life continues to move within the complexities of being a participant in the mystery of evil and its redemption, “between the poles of crucifier and crucified.” To understand the suffering of Jesus as the effect of one’s own evil is to understand it as the suffering one is inflicting on one’s true self.

The other edge is about seeing in Jesus on the Cross that which we are truly afraid of, and how we have denied the truth in us. We are afraid of what true humanity entails, that life is meant to be given up for the sake of the life of the world. It is a fact that human beings are afraid of death. It is our fear of death that makes it very hard to lay down one’s life for others. We hate God for making us vulnerable creatures. And, we enact this hatred in doing violence to others. Jesus on the cross absorbed evil without retaliating in kind. Rather, it was an embrace of love. The gospel story allows humans to rediscover the truth that frees the heart for God. The victory of the will is manifest when this truth and freedom are translated into actual human living,
when one decides for oneself that she or he will no longer stand with the crucifiers, take part in the evil now recognized to be the effect of one’s own doing.

The response of Jesus in the face of suffering and total abandonment is available to every authentic human being. Jesus was a human being who lived within human history and who faced the limitation of being human and responded to it by the way he lived his life and by the way he accepted death, by the way he loved. The spirit of Jesus that moved him to offer that kind of response is the spirit that moves every human being into being self-creative subjects of history. The response of Jesus on the cross reveals the spirit that urges people to go beyond limitations in the process of self-transcendence and participate in the on-going creation of God’s world. It is the spirit that propels us to continue to love life, to believe that the world is still a good place to live in even in the midst of sin and suffering, and to continue to trust in the goodness of God and creation.

The response of Jesus moved his crucifiers to identify themselves as the source of the crucifying world. Thus, in Mark’s gospel, we see the centurion at the foot of the Cross recognizing Jesus for what he truly is, the Son of God (Mk. 15, 39). This is a clear manifestation of true wisdom, bringing us back to our original pattern and purpose. The power of that act of suffering restored to us the capacity, the power, and the grace to be wholly and truly human again, thus, enabling the transformation of evil into good to be possible for us.

4.3.3 Transforming evil into a new good

Benigno Beltran suggests that a faithful explanation of the person and functions of Christ to Filipino communities must account for the unity of both the human and divine in Jesus. What has to be emphasized and developed is the identification with the crucified Christ on the cross as a point or source where people can see the liberation and redemption of humanity in the midst of sin and suffering in the world. It must take the form of revelation people can participate in, redeeming their humanity in the face of these realities. It has to start with the life of the human Jesus, where the dialectic between his divinity and humanity is creatively held, the two aspects being not separated but integrated. It holds that spirituality is living with integrity the full potential of our human spirit in the human flesh. The significance of the law of the cross to the struggle of the people in the basic Christian communities of the Philippines is placed in the integration of their faith in the goodness of God - revealed in Jesus crucified - with the realities they live, especially the realities of oppressive systems and massive poverty and suffering.

Compassion is crucial in a suffering community so that transformation of the present oppressive societal structures can be achieved. Compassion and transformation is what the resurrection is all about. Compassion is allowing suffering of others to disturb us and take us over. The transformation of the evil of the crucifixion, a transformation made real for us through our compassion, enables us to live the Christian commitment in a world in need of authentic loving and healing. This is how God can be present through us in the midst of the world’s suffering, and how spirituality can facilitate and strengthen actions for justice.

The radicality of the cross of Christ lies in its meaning of not wiping out previous evils and putting a new good in their place; but transforming evil into a new good. The symbol and wellspring of the mystery in Christian faith overcomes the objective surd of social situations by meeting abundant evil with a more generous good. This is where the true power of forgiveness is made manifest – forgiving not only those who have wronged us, but more so, forgiving ourselves for the evil that we do to ourselves and to others; in other words, accepting and being conscious of our own evil. Forgiveness goes beyond lex talionis, the law that demands an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Those who live by the sword will die by the sword. If we simply react to violence with violence, we simply become the evil that we are fighting against. But those who win the victory of the Cross are the gentle and humble of heart. They are the ones who are truly free to forgive and put a stop to the cycle of evil, leading others to repentance and conversion. Authentic conversion is therefore made possible by forgiveness and its consequence is a transformation of an evil into a new good.

The cross of Christ is about redemption, where conversion is expressed by putting one’s body and spirit on the line in authenticity and self-transcendence for the sake of a good God and a good world. Redemption in the cross of Christ is not about Christ earning God’s love for us. Rather, God’s love for creation was the prime cause and mover of the redemption. Redemption in the Cross is an act of communication – through the flesh – that is directed to every individual soul. Christ’s redemptive action was something that can be seen, imagined, recalled, thought upon; not for the purpose of replacing what one has already but for the purpose of indicating further possibilities, possibilities of freedom.

The symbol of Jesus crucified makes the unbearable truth of oneself bearable through the power of love. It explains how discovering this truth can be a source of life not death. God’s love and forgiveness is inviting the person, not only to see the evil being done, but also to see the self-crucifixion involved in the evil that one is doing, and beyond that, the real possibility of giving the whole of oneself in love. The Cross enables the one totally realistic

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dialogue between the true human person that God made one to be and the human person that one has made of oneself.  

4.3.4 Evil succumbs to love

Sebastian Moore, clarifying and developing what Lonergan calls the Law of the Cross, focuses on self-awareness to formalize the theological significance of the Cross in contemporary culture. Moore’s soteriological project places the intelligibility of the Cross within the sphere of human interiority. The source of human-inflicted evil is a distortion of the psyche which brings one to self-isolation and a devastating self-preoccupation. Its healing consists of a process that leads to an awakening, an experience that affects the psyche so greatly and so deeply that it changes radically one’s way of thinking. The way to healing in the Christian faith tradition is made possible by the spirituality that is manifested in the love revealed in the cross of Christ.

Moore situates Lonergan’s Law of the Cross in the sense of a struggle. The cross of Christ is a real and effective symbol in the sense that the events of the crucifixion are reenacted in the consciousness of the sinner and have psychological power to transform human subjectivity. In the crucifixion, the heart of darkness is made manifest. The worst has happened, the ultimate sin. “But the iron law of divine justice does not come down on our heads.”

Sin, for Sebastian Moore, is the “inescapable narcissism of our consciousness,” the failure of self-transcendence. He points out that human subjectivity is radically a desire, a thirst, a longing, which can find fulfillment in the Triune God. It involves the liberation of desire in the inquiring spirit impelled by the primordial “desire to be desired by the one we desire.” His critical explorations of the transformation of desire through the grace of redemption illustrate a point made by Lonergan in the Law of the Cross. For him, the understanding of the experience of redemption is revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Moore’s analysis of desire shows how proper appropriation of the dynamics of desire occurs within the context of conversion. It is desire that prompts us to seek out something we regard as good and to commit ourselves to a relationship, binding us to other human beings and to the rest of creation. And, it is in this seeking out and relating that we discover our place and our part in the greater scheme of things, what life means for us, who we are and what we stand for. Human desires are the ground-swell of spirituality. The liberation of desire is falling in love with God and this involves the subject searching as well as being

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296 Thus bridging the gap that moral impotence creates. (See footnote 217 above.)
298 See S. Moore, The Crucified Is No Stranger, 35.
299 See Sebastian Moore, The Fire and the Rose are One (1980), Let This Mind Be In You: The Quest for Identity through Oedipus to Christ (1985), and Jesus, the Liberator of Desire (1989).
300 See S. Moore, The Fire and the Rose are One, London, Darton, Longman & Todd, Ltd., 1980, xii.
drawn by an object. The liberation of desire leads to the victory of the will. Jesus suffered by following his desires. We learn from the Cross not to deny our desires, but to attend to them more discerningly – learning what we are prepared to let go of, and this allows one's story a chance to progress. Real desire is empowered by the Cross. In this sense the cross of Christ becomes a powerful symbol and for the Christian a downright source of authentic self-transcendence. By his response to the evil done and to suffering, Jesus is self-transcendence personified. Moore's clarifications of the dynamics of healing through the Gospel present an earnest dialogue that constitutes genuine dialectics. His meditations on desire involve consideration of a suffering whose healing is the light of faith.

Salvation is viewed as a healing and transformation that is manifested in the resurrection of Jesus. The disciples who let Jesus down were healed by the forgiveness of Jesus. Jesus' message was, “Peace be with you!” (Lk. 24: 36; Jn. 20: 19-21) and “Do not be afraid.” (Matt. 28: 10). It was only in the experience of that forgiveness that they came to understand why Jesus had to “let them down” by suffering the Cross rather than by ruling as a glorious, all-powerful messiah. The process of understanding that they underwent was what was at stake. It was made clear to them that their failure to understand made them conspirators in his crucifixion. The forgiveness of Jesus in the resurrection, however, revealed to them how much they are loved and that they are still lovable in the midst of their vulnerability and limitations. This revelation transformed them. The self now awakened in them is the self in love. The resurrection experience makes apparent to them the fulfillment of what they have been waiting for: the appearance of God in the flesh, the moment of liberation. The risen Jesus is a clear moment of incarnation.

Communication in such a way, through the crucifixion, is necessary so as to come to terms with humanity’s crucifixion of itself. The suffering of Jesus was necessary to bring home the effect of the resurrection. The transformation of evil into good by the victory of the will is manifested most completely in the Cross which points out the authentic self-transcendence embraced by the crucified, which in turn, evokes the dynamics of self-transcendence in the crucifier and in the by-stander.

To understand the suffering of Jesus as the effect of one’s own evil is to understand it as the suffering one is inflicting on one’s true self. Conversion consists in shifting position from the crucifying ego to the crucified self. The essence is coming to know what one has been unknowingly doing to someone else. Humility is manifested in this movement from the offending to the offended. If the suffering of Jesus is not seen as a place of self-discovery, then the human being finds oneself simply “identifying with a sufferer,” choosing the sufferer as the hero because of some belief in the value of suffering. Christianity does not mean a following of the footsteps of a

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sufferer. God does not want anyone to suffer. Rather, Christians find themselves in the suffering that, when rightly understood as self-inflicted, resolves the evil in their condition. The creative response to this suffering is not imitation, but creative fidelity to awareness of what one is doing and of what is really going on. One of the important reasons humanity learns from the cross of Christ is that the wicked, the destroyers of life, are themselves suffering, in the real sense of the word, from the destruction of their own humanity and the implications of this are tremendous. The appeal Jesus on the cross makes to them is to see themselves as the victims of their own malice. But nobody likes to be the victim. The condition of being the victim is precisely what is most feared. God was crucified by this fear. One cannot accept this truth about oneself, therefore Jesus, the very person who reminds others of the truth, is eliminated, killed. In Jesus on the cross, one sees the person one has not dared to be. But “what a fantastic resolution of this fear takes place when, forced to turn into hate and crucify, it then succumbs to love!”

This succumbing happens upon seeing and recognizing in the bloodstained figure the greatest peace that humanity can ever know.

Moore asserts that it has been clear to him for many years that an adequate account of salvation through the Cross lies in the fact that Jesus was killed. Jesus did not simply die. He was killed. This conviction led Moore to work out the dynamics of salvation in terms of the transformation of the killers of Jesus, with whom human beings must identify, into being one with Jesus in love. The role of Jesus in this account was to represent what the human person destroys by sin, namely oneself as an inalienably self-transcending being. For the Cross of Christ to be a meaningful and effective symbol of salvation, the human being, confronted with the crucifixion of Jesus, must awaken to their condition as self-destroyer, and so can be healed from this basic flaw in oneself.

Moore argues that the root of the universal sinful condition is a deep self-distrust, which makes everyone believe that there is nothing of self-transcendence in him or her. Jesus, one who is wholly without this original sin of self-distrust, tells and shows through his life that like him, human beings are free and so there is no reason to think of themselves as good-for-nothings or slaves. However, the freedom of Jesus is a threat to the “immemorial bad self-image” embedded within each human being. This threat motivates human destructiveness, which is the desire to advance one’s false egoistic self. It is out of this poverty and not of the imagined wealth and power that human beings strike and hurt each other. One sees oneself so small that she or he has to see others even smaller. “It is the wretched view of ourselves that compels us to cut others down.”

The rule that applies is ‘kill or be killed.’ The one who is totally free of the self-diminished image, definitely has to be

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cut down. This is why Jesus was killed. It is the envy towards someone else who has something that one feels she or he cannot have, and worse, does not consciously wish to have because one is afraid of it – namely, freedom. This peculiar bitterness of the contradictory situation existing within one, who feels unable and therefore unwilling to enjoy freedom, generates resentment of the other who freely and happily experiences this enjoyment. Therefore, the resenting one attempts to remove the source of the envy. The victim is hated for being a victim.\textsuperscript{306} Jesus put a stop to the furtherance of this misery of accepted unfreedom that pervades human society by not retaliating. (Non-retaliation here means responding not in violence against violence done to one. It has to be stressed as well that this is not a passive response.) This non-retaliation on the part of Jesus puts the wretched self-image into question. In the non-retaliation of the victim, the victim remains human and continues to offer a human relationship with the crucifier. Hence, the victim comes out stronger due to their willingness to bear the cost of promoting a more human world. The victim confronts the victimizer with the truth of her or his suppressed humanity. More important than the fact that violence provokes retaliatory violence, is the general theorem that violence must continue until its total resolution. Humanity in flight from itself, a flight from the summoning of the spirit to authenticity and self-transcendence, is intrinsically violent.\textsuperscript{307} This violence not only provokes further violence but also, itself, proceeds to ever-new violence. The resolution in the crucified Jesus on the cross is more radical than that which consists in non-retaliation. It stops that which provokes the retaliation of violence.

In that moment of non-retaliation, one is impelled to believe that there is a freedom from the rule of putting each other down, of killing or being killed. This freedom, which is the heart of Jesus, is born in every human being. For by this moment, human beings come in contact with the work of love that understands and embraces the wretched self-image and the impoverished human world that it creates. “And thus it is that in a brutal execution that epitomizes the fearful human condition, the human inability to live human freedom, we humans discover that we are free, that we are as he is, that we are where he is.”\textsuperscript{308}

It is necessary to die with Jesus in order to capture the essential message of the freedom embodied in Jesus’ death, which is to be as Jesus is. The symbolism of death is transformed: from death as the symbol of a wretched self-image that afflicts humanity, to death as the symbol of a new life in the Spirit. This explains, “dying he destroyed our death.”\textsuperscript{309} The flight from oneself that makes humans violent is rooted in humanity’s fear of death. This desperation to preserve one’s life drives one to kill in order not to let oneself know that the death one desires for the other is really one’s own. Violence

\textsuperscript{306} B. Lovett, \textit{It’s Not Over Yet}, 19.  
\textsuperscript{307} S. Moore, \textit{The Crucified Is No Stranger}, 25.  
cannot forgive itself. Only when one receives forgiveness from another does one suddenly realize that she is capable of forgiveness and the appropriate response can be given. “We who so readily kill are died for.” The vulnerable human being is not despicable, but loved. Seeing and believing that they are loved enables human beings to receive healing. Human beings as beloved of God are self-transcending by nature, a nature received from God. By nature, they desire to know, and by nature they desire to be in love.

The desire of Jesus to communicate his freedom and his wholeness to people comes from his love for people. By his love, he provokes desire to flame up into its full crisis. Jesus is someone who has shown human beings that they are lovable precisely where they experience themselves as hateful. Hell is harrowed and evil is swallowed up by love.

Christianity is the story of a man free of the universal crippling guilt, and thus in love with man as the expression of God, his freedom his greatest glory. A man so in love with men and women, so passionately convinced of the inner core of freedom which we disguise even from ourselves, that he lets himself be drawn into the logic of our desperate situation to the extent of accepting our condemnation and its bloody sequel.

4.4 Authenticity and Radical Fulfillment of Self-transcendence

It should be clearer by this point what authenticity and self-transcendence mean and how they need to be radically embraced and embodied in forming the authentic basic Christian community. Authenticity is the creative living out of the creative tension within the dialectics of the subject, of community, and of culture. It means fidelity to the normative scale of values. But creativity to live the tension and to embrace the necessary self-appropriation is, as we have been emphasizing here, is not an easy task. Many people, as they are confronted with evil in their communities and societies, know and feel that something has to be done to put things right, to alleviate if not to eliminate suffering in their midst; in other words, to make the world a better place. However, with the way the world is going forward, many of them experience frustration in realizing that particular tasks or fields of responsibility are not properly done and are not appropriately responded to. Many know the facts. In face of them, perhaps very few take the risks to respond to authentic values since the cost to oneself will be severe. It is in this context that an authenticity that can recognize the radicality of needed change requires a potent thrust, a power that set the dynamics in motion. In the midst of limitation, the healing vector stimulates creativity in people. In the Christian faith tradition, this potent thrust, this power refers to a discovery and an embrace of the true meaning of the cross of Christ. This discovery is what I have been referring to in this Chapter as the experience of new life found at the foot of the cross of Christ. “By his wounds, we are healed.” Conversion takes place at that moment, a

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radical movement from inauthenticity to authenticity. The Crucified and Risen One is a “sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed” (Lk 2, 34). Taken seriously and attentively, the symbol of the Crucified and the Risen One is like a sword that pierces souls. Arduous and painful though it may be, people of faith are impelled to embrace the self-appropriation process that leads to self-transcendence. This is my understanding of authentic Christian living, which demands a radical fulfillment of self-transcendence.

Let me just point out again that the impetus of my present work is to respond to the current distortions in Philippine societal structures that generate abject poverty and institutional injustice in the country. The formation and promotion of Basic Ecclesial Communities in the Philippines was principally motivated by that same purpose. The Catholic Church of the Philippines made the formation and promotion of these communities her main pastoral thrust to participate in the resolution of the social crises in which the poor are the primary victims. The Basic Ecclesial Communities are to be communities of faith that will provide an alternative situation to a society corrupted by selfish and, therefore, erroneous use of power and wealth.

Preoccupied with “the social question”, Pope Paul VI, through the encyclical Populorum Progressio (1969), called for the development of all peoples trapped in poverty and misery. In response to this, Filipino bishops issued a pastoral letter on evangelization and development in 1973 where they considered the notion of development to go “beyond the socio-economic level”, to a concern for culture that “includes all that makes [every human being] a free and conscious being”. In this endeavour, the Church realized that it could only be achieved by committed action from all sectors of the society: sharing experiences, assessing realities, discussing common problems, and seeking solutions. An important and major element of this is grassroots’ participation. Another is an enhancement of ecclesial life where worship results in more social awareness: spiritual and social worlds are not separated, but interacting and affecting each other. It means entering into a dialogue of faith with all the other aspects of human life. This led to the building up of people into authentic Christian communities.

The ongoing struggle for authentic and integral human development, for justice and peace, and for compassion and solidarity among people was notionally recognized in the Philippines as imperative for all Christians, especially during the reign of terror and violence throughout the Marcos’ dictatorship. But this meant taking risks and many people in the country, especially those within the Church, have opted not to take such risks.


\[314\] It was during the period of Martial Law, which the Marcos’ regime instituted, that most of the basic Christian communities of the Philippines were formed.
Faced with violence and institutional injustice from a corrupt and oppressive government with its repressive ideologies (many of which were foreign-influenced) and socio-political structures, the Filipino people looked to the Church for support and guidance. The Catholic Church has the potential to play a crucial mediatory role in the Philippines. Being predominantly Christian, the majority of the Filipinos find enough credibility with the Church leaders. Referring to the Catholic Church, David Wurfel saw it to be “the most significant non-governmental linkage between the elite and the masses in the [Philippines], and only a small portion of its potential has as yet been utilized.”

However, this potential, apparently, was not taken up and employed. A documentation of the Mindanao-Sulu Pastoral Conference (MSPC) states that many of the church leaders fell prey to repressive ideologies “in trying to preserve the institutional church and its interests”. Consequently, they turned out to be “unwitting partners in suppressing the struggle of the people towards total human liberation”. But the rest of the Philippine population is not to be exempted from blame in the failure to provide the necessary creative response to the situation. The rich and the powerful collaborated with an oppressive government to preserve their wealth and power. There was silence from most of the middle-class, refusing to be open and give proper concern to the pleas of the poor. Silence can be a political act but it is a devastating one when resorted to out of personal preferment or fear. Niall O’Brien suggests that someday some scholars have to present this silence in a way that will shock the nation. Until that happens, Filipinos will continue to enjoy the luxury of putting the blame on the past, particularly on the colonizers and on Marcos and his cronies, for the evil that resulted in Philippine society.

The rich and the elite may be joint perpetrators and collaborators in building institutional injustice and violence in society, but none of them could operate without the consent of the ordinary people. These form a significant base of the pyramid.

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317 Niall O’Brien gives some examples of this devastating silence. He talks about how the submissive, obedient, passive compliance of school teachers and petty officials in the Philippines had helped ‘democratically’ ratify the new Constitution after martial law was in place, allowing Marcos’s one-man rule. In subsequent years when the full intent of Marcos was clear, the teachers still did not make any worthy protest against the prostitution of the educational system in the service of the martial law ideology. They proceeded to teach the banal “New Society” doctrine to the schoolchildren through the textbooks which gave a bogus philosophical underpinning to the Marcos’ dictatorship. Cf. N. O’Brien, *Island of Tears, Island of Hope*, 70-71.
such that, if they were to walk away, the structure would fall. The participation of Philippine society in the imperialistic world market system has made most of the people dependent on such system. This dependence is at the heart of the problem of the poor. This dependence led to the frightening and devastating, pervasive silence among the poor. In addition, stripped of any possible help from most of the members of the society, most of the poor simply became resigned to the status quo, accepting suffering as their fate and losing interest in striving to change their situation. Still others from different sectors of the society chose violent means and resorted to armed struggle. Silence and inaction can condone the structures that oppress people and indirectly promote hatred and armed struggle.\(^{319}\)

All of the above contributed to the failure of many of what came to be called basic Christian communities of the Philippines to really respond creatively and appropriately to the suffering of the poor and become a great factor in the transformation of the society. This will be elucidated in great detail in Part Two of this book.

4.4.1 Spirituality

We have been elaborating self-transcendence in terms of general and special theological categories in order to make possible an elucidation of the required human authenticity in basic Christian community. This has obvious relevance for critical reflection on human spirituality. In general categories, we can refer to the understanding of history itself, where “the aim of history is conceived to be the interpretative reconstruction of the constructions of the human spirit.”\(^{320}\) This involves the whole process of human emergence – the making of the human by humans themselves, the human search for meaning and direction in the movement of life.

The actualization of our decisions constitutes the movement of life in us, and this is a matter of living the creative tension between limitation and transcendence. Spirituality as a matter of lived authenticity, within the general categories, corresponds to the fidelity to the normative scale of values. I pointed out in Chapter One that this undergirds a creation-centered spirituality, as the scale of values is part and parcel of our emergence in relation to the whole of God’s creation.

But, within the search, we discover that solutions to social and cultural problems, particularly to the problem of evil, are not achievable by human resources alone. This is the primary limitation of being human. This limitation is transcended, meaning to say, it does not impede us in continuing to seek for answers, as we experience in our history the great and genuine love that can embrace evil even until death, thereby overcoming evil by good. This makes it essential that spirituality be regarded in terms of special theological categories. And since we are speaking about the basic Christian community,\(^{319}\)


\(^{320}\) B. Lonergan, “Natural Right and Historical Mindedness,” A Third Collection, 171.
it is evident that we have to speak about specific Christian categories. Thus, we speak of the just and mysterious law of the cross that has provided the central religious category of the entire Christian spiritual tradition.

Living the Christian faith and hope, putting love to work is a self-transcending process which springs out from an intense spiritual experience (at the foot of the cross of Christ) and is then explicated and witnessed to in our interaction with one another in our communities. The fruit of the witnessing is an alternative situation that approximates the reign of God in concrete human living. Spirituality, as the well of liberation, is “like living water that springs up in the very depths of the experience of faith. To drink from your own well is to live your own life in the Spirit of Jesus as you have encountered him in your concrete historical reality.”

Spirituality, as lived authenticity, is drawn from the concrete daily experiences of the Christian communities and it means living the creative tension, where people become transcending subjects with great attentiveness to what is going forward – understanding what is really going on in our hearts and in our world, never allowing the limitations given or imposed by situations to become obstacles to the search for fuller understanding and truth; but instead, pushing towards a deliberation that would lead to decision and action and transform situations. The thrust of such a process, its initial impulse, comes from an encounter with the Mystery, and this Mystery is Love. It is first of all, a gift. It is grace. There is the reason why many of us fall short in this undertaking: we fail to recognize the gift. It may be that we are so pressed down by our vulnerable humanity that we cannot accept and appreciate that we are loved, loved unto death. We impede life in us and in others because we believe that there is no transcendence in us. This self-crucifixion of life-in-us leads to the crucifixion of others. This flight from understanding can be seen in the mob in the passion of Jesus. Drifters form a mob, unthinking, easily manipulated, an embodiment of misplaced desire, the exact opposite of an authentic human community.

Another reason of failure is that a gift is not a gift until it is given twice. It means that the fullness of a gift, its acceptance and recognition, is realized when the recipient is able to give and share it with others, as it is. But confronted with the gift, that is, real love - God’s love manifested in Jesus, we are threatened and experience it as a terrifying demand. To love wholly and authentically in the whole process of emerging life in God’s world involves enormous cost. And so, when we meet love, we kill love rather than face the vulnerability of being simply human.

322 “Attentive affectivity” brought about by our “accused sensibility” as Emmanuel Levinas more rightly puts it. See Marie L. Baird, On the Side of the Angels: Ethics and Post-Holocaust Spirituality, especially Chapters Four and Five.
323 Cf. B. Lovett, It’s Not Over Yet, 21.
324 Cf. B. Lovett, It’s Not Over Yet, 8-9.
Jesus is the center of the life of the basic Christian community. Living authenticity in basic Christian community, therefore, becomes an instance of the radical fulfillment of self-transcendence when the memory and the spirit of Jesus is kept alive in daily life, enabling people to experience the true face of the Love that is there for each one of us, thereby making it possible for us to enter more deeply into the reality of our lives and dare to be honest as we take the world into our gaze.

The radical fulfillment of self-transcendence in basic Christian community is a spirituality of discipleship to Christ Jesus, and is living in truth, living authenticity. This spirituality is both creation-centered, manifested in its fidelity to the normative scale of value, and also incarnational, discernible in its fidelity to the just and mysterious law of the cross. “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” (Jn. 8:32) The Spirit will guide us into all truth (Jn. 16:13) “and will lead us to complete freedom from everything that hinders us from fulfilling ourselves as human beings and the freedom to love and enter into communion with God and with others. It will lead us along the path of liberation because ‘where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty’ (2 Cor. 3: 17).”

CONCLUSION

The basic Christian community is a church of communion and a community of disciples. A community that is authentically basic and Christian can provide an alternative to a society whose public interest is almost totally determined by the goal of possession, where anything that has no market value is considered negligible. The socially manifest discipleship of poverty in the basic Christian community specifically designates the locale of mysticism and spirituality, where life is lived at the service of loving as Christ Jesus loved, proclaiming the dignity of every person and the existence of all humans as subjects before God even, and most especially, in the face of utmost risk and danger. The basic Christian community is a “church of the people,” where the poor, the weak, the exploited, can see themselves as subjects of its voice and language, of its hopes and promises. This demands that such people remain subjects under the pressure of collective forces, and become subjects by transcending the misery and malevolence that such collective forces inflict. This is the radicality of the fulfillment of self-transcendence that is required and called for from a community that is basic and Christian – the self-transcendence that enables the achievement of authenticity. It is a community that mediates the transition from the prior to the later times of the subject, which Lonergan calls ‘conversion,’ and this transition is essentially divinely promoted. The love and mercy of God, first of all, makes it happen.

\[325\] G. Gutiérrez, *We Drink From Our Own Wells*, 117.
\[326\] Cf. G. Gutiérrez, *We Drink From Our Own Wells*, 141.
\[328\] I will be returning to this issue again in Chapter Six.
For the Christian faith, this love and mercy of God is revealed in Jesus Christ on the Cross.

The people of the basic Christian communities continue to engage in authenticity no matter what it entails because they are so affected by the Love - the Spirit between Christ Jesus, the Son and his Abba - that is so committed to life and creation that it is willing to suffer everything for the sake of life in the world, for the sake of creation. They are so affected because they have come to understand the true meaning of his (Jesus’) coming. As a result, they are so in touch with the fullness of life and so, come to cherish creation, including the vulnerable poverty of being human. This ‘intouchness’ is, according to Rosemary Haughton, “the key to inner freedom and peace---freedom from false guilt and compulsions, from the fear and suspicion and insecurity which drive people to manipulate and oppress each other and themselves.” This is the kind of freedom that springs from the deep awareness of being loved that impels the person to really love and thus touch the peace which is the sign of authenticity.

Within a community that is basic and Christian, life is lived in constant and sincere communication with the basic, familial community of the Holy Three. It springs from the shared life of the genuine poor, who still, and ever more deeply, love life and believe in the goodness of God and creation in the midst of their poverty. They may be relatively poor but empowered, subjects of their own history. They are the truly poor but truly free, unafraid and dignified. The wretchedness of the situation that they are faced with, either directly suffered by them or by others, impels them to embrace self-transcendence radically. These are the kind of people who dare to give themselves in love and for love. The radical engagement to self-transcendence, which is the way towards authenticity, brings about a new situation - a new way of being church, as the basic Christian community is described today. The story of Jesus is retold and relived and this opens up the possibility of a new and different life for the poor of Yahweh as it offers a critique to our own cherished attitude to life.

In the basic Christian community, poverty has a redemptive value. What we have done so far in this Chapter was to put forward the centrality of the wisdom that the cross of Christ bears in the Christian community. It is the wisdom of God that, as Paul declares, overturns the wisdom of the world (1Cor 1, 8-25). The wisdom of the cross reveals that spiritual maturity rests not so much in the acquisition of knowledge as in love manifested in good works and authentic commitment to life, especially if that life is the life of the other. “He saved others; he cannot save himself” (Mk 15, 31). But that was

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331 This will be discussed in detail in the next part.
333 It is remarkable how intellectuals for centuries behaved as though men and women lacked stomachs. As the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas remarked of Martin Heidegger’s rather lofty concept of *Dasein*, meaning the kind of existence peculiar to human beings: ‘*Dasein* does not eat’. (See Terry Eagleton, *After Theory*, 4.)
just the point: it was by not saving himself, by putting his own life on the line, that he was able to save others.

The suffering poor of the basic Christian communities opt for life rather than death even in the face of extreme vulnerability because of the hope that rests on the love of God ‘poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit’ (Rom 5, 5). This hope is not so much an optimistic attitude about a positive future, as a trust that God will complete what was begun at the cross. Without the love manifested on the cross, suffering can just as easily lead to despair and resignation.

The elaborate and complex heuristic of spirituality which has been built up in this Part One needs the complement of a historically accurate account of the basic Christian communities of the Philippines before its adequacy can be determined. Part Two attempts to provide this account.
Part II

Historical and Contextual Landmarks of the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines

Main question: What are the historical, contextual, and ecclesial backgrounds of the internal and external problems with which the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines are confronted?
Our ongoing desire to make sense of what is going forward constitutes our quest for meaning and direction in the movement of life. This desire finds embodiment in the stories we tell. We tell stories because we want to make sense of what is going forward. Narration provides a pattern of the significant and the essential. Believing in the worthiness of one’s own life story is actually living its meaning and values. Things have value for us only when we find them meaningful. It is in accord with this degree of meaningfulness that we establish our own set of values; or in Lonergan’s terms, our scale of values. During the Ministerial Assembly of the Basic Ecclesial Communities of Northern Luzon\(^1\), Bishop Francisco Claver defined spirituality as consisting of the values that motivate people to act. To be in the BEC is to have life and faith together. It means appropriation of the tradition by way of a creative fidelity and participation and sharing in the community.

The history of a people is a story telling of the movement of life – what is going forward – in a particular group of people at a particular place and time, which includes process and development but, also, decline and collapse.\(^2\) History is an ongoing story that understands the present as it creatively anticipates the future, while looking back into the past through memories. It is in history that we see how God acts in the world through particular human agents by their decisions and actions. Historicity is constitutive of the constructions of the human spirit, the human making of the human. In contrast to human nature, which is given and is constant, history is a continuing process and is variable.\(^3\) Human beings create history. Depending on the manner of such creating, life for us becomes either a story of progress and flourishing or a story of decline and decay. The decisions that we make and the specific response we give in particular situations at any given time and place serve to either make or unmake our world. To understand people and the communities and institutions they form, we have to look to their history.

Part II involves addressing the historical process, particularly with an eye to the emergence of the future basic Christian community of the Philippines, where the mediation from the past into the present is done from the underside of history. It consists of three chapters. Chapter Five explores the roots of poverty in the Philippines. The historical account focuses on two major factors that effect the generation and exacerbation of poverty in the Philippines: they are the related factors of colonization and land grabbing. Chapter Six explores the relationship between Filipino religiosity and social transformation throughout this period. The concern is with the resources of strength and creativity on which Filipinos could and did draw in responding to the historical challenges. Thus, while Chapter Five is concerned with what I consider the external aspects, the socio-economic patterns being imposed from outside,

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\(^1\) June 11-12, 2004, held in Manaoag, Pangasinan, Philippines.
Chapter Six dwells on what I consider the internal aspects, the effects on the religio-cultural lives of the Filipino people. In Chapter Seven, the historical accounts given in Chapters Five and Six are extended up to the emergence and development of the Basic Christian Communities of the Philippines, where Christian faith tries to express itself through a community life that serves and responds to the life-needs of the grassroots. To what extent can the building and promotion of Basic Christian Communities be a facilitating factor for the restructuring of the society? This involves religious faith that motivates people in this endeavor and a spirituality that nourishes and sustains it.
CHAPTER 5

EMERGENCE OF THE FILIPINO

As the contemporary Filipino searches for truly Filipino solutions to Filipino problems, the urgent need of ever more detailed historical studies is being addressed. In the context of the present work, a brief sketch, drawing on the best historical studies of the Filipino people, will help concretize the more general features of the phenomenon of the Basic Christian Communities of the Philippines. The inevitable selectivity of such a sketch will be consciously governed by attention to those factors in Philippine history that are seen to be of most importance for the subsequent genesis and thrust of the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines. This will be done by placing the principal focus of the story on the anonymous groups of individuals and on the social forces generated by their collective lives and struggles. This is important since we are concerned with the emancipation of the poor and the oppressed. A history where these people can see themselves as the principal participants and movers can serve as a guide for them in perceiving present reality and is itself a liberating factor. They can have a grasp of their development and identify the forces that impede real progress. Human society is a product of the collaborative effort of people in motion, of people struggling to realize the human potential. The history of the Filipino people in recent centuries is, for the most part, a story of struggles – struggles for liberation. These struggles are responsible for the people’s awakening. It is in these struggles that they become aware of the real and urgent need to liberate themselves through their own efforts. These struggles developed in them the consciousness to understand their own possibilities more widely and more deeply. The more conscious they became the more actual their participation became and the more telling their contribution in the ongoing movement of life in them as a community, as a people, as a nation. It is in these struggles that the Filipino emerged.

5.1 THE BARANGAY

One of the important elements in the formation of the BECs of the Philippines is the link to geographical location. The families that comprise a basic ecclesial community must be living near each other. In other words, they are neighbors in the literal sense of the word. This is reflected in the way some BECs name themselves. In the northern part of the Philippines, for example, the Pangasinenses (natives of the province of Pangasinan) simply call their small communities Simbaang Sangkakaabay. Simbaan is the

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Pangasinenses’ word for church. Kaabay can mean either a companion or a neighbor. It is assumed that people living in one neighborhood share almost common and related experiences. But this assumption has a deeper basis: the BEC is being viewed as a retrieval of the barangay.

The barangay is currently the smallest local government in the Philippines and is similar to a village. Municipalities and cities are composed of barangays. The name barangay came from the ancient Malay boat called balangay. Historically, the first Malay immigrants, coming from other parts of Southeast Asia, came to the group of islands we now call the Philippines in these small boats. When they settled on these islands, the seafaring ancestors formed villages and named them barangays. When the Spaniards arrived, they were surprised to see early settlers of the archipelago having a civilization of their own in well-organized independent villages. A barangay could contain 30-100 families and was governed by a datu or chieftain. Being originally seafarers, most of these baranganic communities were coastal or near-coastal in orientation. People relied more on fishing than on hunting for sustenance. Most of the members of these pre-Spanish communities were related to one another by blood or marriage. Common economic interests and shared rituals formed also the basis for community cohesion and organization. The barangay was a social rather than a political unit. Each one was a separate entity with only informal contacts with other villages.

5.1.1 The Encomienda System

Upon the conquest of the archipelago in the 16th century, the Spaniards introduced one central government. The head of the central government was the Governor-General. Through the encomienda system, the whole country was divided into territories, where a definite number of inhabitants of a territory were entrusted to the care of an encomendero. Thus, the encomiendas replaced the barangays.

The Spanish Crown delegated to the earliest encomenderos the power to collect tribute and to use the personal services of the inhabitants of their encomiendas. In return, the encomenderos were supposed to look after the welfare of the natives and to give them some education. However, as the history of the Philippines tells us, the encomenderos for the most part ignored their duties and treated the natives as slaves. The encomienda system generated abuses especially in terms of collecting tributes. Many encomenderos were selfish and cruel to the people under their jurisdictions.

7 The encomienda system is discussed in this section in relation to its part in the emerging social and political structure in the life of the early Filipinos. It is treated further below in terms of its effects in generating poverty among the people.
These abuses led to revolts in many places. Some missionaries, led by Martin de Rada and Domingo de Salazar, made petitions to the king of Spain against the corrupt encomenderos. In response, the king abolished the encomiendas. By the end of the 16th century, almost all encomiendas were eliminated and provinces took their places. The term ‘barangay’ was again used to call the groups that formed the towns. Each barangay was led by a cabeza de barangay. The natives though, aged 16 to 60 years old, still had to pay an annual tribute, which was collected by the cabeza de barangay from each family. Abuses and corruption still crept into the system of the tribute and personal service and these caused most of the early revolts.

Aside from the encomienda system that affected the community structure of the early Filipinos, there was also the reduction or reduccion policy. This was the method applied by missionaries in the conversion of the natives. By this policy, the scattered Filipino population was congregated into clustered village or settlement where they could more easily be instructed and Christianized under the friar’s eye. This paved the way for the emergence of the present system of politico-territorial organization of the villages, towns, and provinces. In most of the towns of the Philippines today, especially outside Metro Manila, this method of congregation is still very much evident. Located in the middle of the town center are the parish church, the town plaza, and the municipal hall. The process enabled the Church, then and now, to play a central role in the lives of the people because with the Church near the people, it was able to touch every aspect of their existence – from birth to growth to marriage to adulthood to death. However, historically, not all the natives, especially the indigenous communities, found this method suitable to their way of life. They were fisher-folk and farmers and the sea and the mountains were their source of sustenance. There were those who resisted and returned to the mountain fastness. The missionaries described them as remontados or cimmarrones. Thus began the separation between the lowlanders and the indigenous of the mountains. Those who lived in the mountains, away from the town center, were now considered uncivilized and pagans.

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8 Martin de Rada was one of the Augustinian friars who came with Legazpi. Domingo de Salazar was a Dominican friar and was the first bishop of the Philippines. He was influenced by Bartolomeo de Casas.


11 The city center then was called poblacion. Around the poblacion were the barrios or the sitios. This way, the natives could live near the lands that they were tilling and go to the poblacion for the religious and political administrations of the friars and Spanish officials. For those who lived very far from the poblacion, the friars had to make periodic visitations to the native villages to say Mass and impart Christian doctrine. This practice was called the visitas. See R. Constantino, Vol. I, The Philippines: A Past Revisited (Pre-Spanish – 1941), 61.

12 This will be discerned in the next chapters. It is important to take note here that in the present BEC set-up in the Philippines, the parish priest, together with some
barangays were later called *barrios* during the four-century-long Spanish period and have remained the basic social unit of society through the American period and with the birth of an independent republic.\(^{13}\)

people from the town center, mostly members of the parish pastoral council, goes to the town’s remote areas or to the mountains instead to start a BEC but does not stay there. One of the reasons for this is so as not to take the people away from their homes and to enable them to develop themselves in their own local context and to be self-sufficient as much as possible in the future. The BECs are neighborhoods, communities of people living near one another, know each other by name, and thereby, can work and support one another better.

\(^{13}\) Cf. Amado L. Picardal, *Basic Ecclesial Communities in the Philippines, An Ecclesiological Perspective*, Rome: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1995, 28. The term ‘barangay’ was revived officially by Ferdinand Marcos (Philippine president: 1965-1969, 1969-1986) back in the early 70’s after Martial Law was declared and has endured until the present. The barrio was also retained but it refers to centers with smaller population than the barangay and where only one level of government exists. A barangay is a sub order of municipal governance equivalent to a district, which coexists within the framework adopted throughout the Philippines as a unique way of solving some of the country’s problems by devolving power and responsibility to the community level. The barangay concept is favorable to the very-populated areas where government resources are so limited that it could no longer meet the needs of the people and the idea of delegating some governmental authority and responsibility to a smaller area was intended to resolve at least some of the local problems. However, current situations in most parts of the Philippines show that the barangays have become just small-scale versions of government corruption as the country began to be industrialized. When industrialization is supposed to improve the lives of the people, it contributed to the worsening of poverty in many areas of the Philippines. Extreme poverty leads to too much corruption, which in turn, intensifies the poverty. Industrialization has displaced a lot of people from their homes and from their customary way of living. As we have mentioned above, most of the people of the barrio used to be self-employed and supported themselves through fishing and farming. But with industrialization, farmlands have to give way to the construction of big factories and industrial plants. Industrial plants continue to dump large amount of pollutants including heavy metals into the sea, reducing fishing yields. The industrial zones have indeed created jobs, but these jobs went mostly to the educated people. Thus, the poor who are mostly uneducated and who depended mostly on the richness of the land and sea become even poorer and are forced to leave the countryside to go to the cities. The exodus to the cities therefore is a reflection not so much of the wealth that is to be found in the cities as of the poverty and inequalities that prevail in the countryside. The growing number of people living near the garbage dumpsite in Manila and Quezon City, which we have described in the beginning of the book, is one of the consequences of this exodus and worsening condition of poverty and inequality in the countryside. This destitute life of the people in the countryside is the main reason why the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines started in these areas and are today more prominent and enduring in rural areas or in the countryside than in urban areas or in the cities.
5.2 HISTORY OF POVERTY

5.2.1 LAND

This project sees two major causes of the miserable situation of most of the Filipinos today. Both are, of course, historical. The first is the issue of the land. When one talks about poverty in the Philippines, it is inevitable that one speaks about the land. Though the first settlers were seafarers and fisher-folk, they eventually turned into farmers and began to depend on the land for their daily needs. Thus, the Philippines is considered an agricultural country, having a predominantly agricultural economy. Seventy percent of the rural poor are engaged in subsistence agriculture.14

As in the history of many nations, poverty in the Philippines has its roots, among others, in the land becoming a commodity. Since the Philippines is a farming nation, the majority of its population live and work on farmland and most of these people earn too little to afford a proper diet. The reason for this situation has nothing to do with the amount of food they grow. It is because a mere 5 per cent of the farming families own around 80 per cent of the land. The rest are either landless or sharecroppers.15

It is historical fact that the four centuries of Spanish occupation has stamped a skewed pattern of land ownership on the country. Before the Spaniards came, the islanders of the Philippines had no notion that the land could be owned by individuals. One distinguishing feature of baranganic society was the absence of private property in land. The chiefs or the datus administered the lands in the name of the barangay. Each individual, therefore, shared in the community ownership of the soil and as a member of the barangay, participated in production. This means that the production system that the Spanish colonizers encountered was one where the control of the means of production and labor was exercised by the producers themselves, contrary to the one we have at present in which the means of production are mostly in the hands of groups that do not participate in the productive process, which Renato Constantino describes as the leisure class backed by force.16 With Spanish colonialism, the barangays passed through a series of changes, characterized by the gradual disintegration of the communal village. Along with the disintegration of communalism went the breakdown of the collective spirit. A Europeanized class structure began to develop and was superimposed on indigenous kinship structures. With this, many former communal lands were transformed into private property.

The Church too had her share in the manipulation of the communal lands of the villages or barangays. The religious friars lived with their flock so they had better opportunities to acquire landholdings. In order that the missionaries would not be a burden to their flock, religious orders suggested that the king grant them some estates in the native villages so that the missionaries could become self-supporting. The religious succeeded in persuading the king to agree to their suggestion, revoking the royal decree that prohibited the clergy to own lands in the native villages. And since the pope had exempted the friars temporarily from their monastic vows, the corporate religious had more opportunities to accumulate large tracts of land.\textsuperscript{17} Though the royal grants of land in the early years of Spanish rule were intended to be only for unoccupied land, the majority of the grants were used to also take over settled areas as time passed. Soon, many lands, which belonged to the individual barangays were swallowed up by the big estates. By 1898, when the Spaniards were ousted, the religious orders owned vast haciendas\textsuperscript{18}.

The colonial presence of the Americans reduced the authority of the friars but did little to challenge the system of land tenure. The United States even seemed to have strengthened it. The only significant moment of reform was when the friars agreed to sell ninety per cent of their landholdings in 1902, and this was to appease peasant unrest. But instead of giving the land to the tenants farming these estates, the United States’ government sold it to the existing landowners, and at least one large block went to the United States’ sugar corporation.\textsuperscript{19}

When the Japanese invaded the Philippines in December 1941, the landlords were as powerful as ever. Many members of the land-owning political elite collaborated with the Japanese to preserve their interests. This provoked guerilla resistance throughout the archipelago, the most organized and effective of which was the \textit{Hukbalahap} (shortened to \textit{Huk}) in Central Luzon and the Southern Tagalog region.

The granting of independence on July 4, 1946 made the Philippines a neocolony of the United States. The designed agreements tied the Philippines both economically and politically to the United States. The effects of these


\textsuperscript{18} A \textit{hacienda} is distinct from the \textit{encomienda}. While the exploitative practices of the encomienda were not directly based on land ownership, the exploitative relations in the hacienda are based on, and grow out of, the ownership by the landlord of the tracts of land from which the tenants derive their livelihood. The \textit{hacendero} has the right of inheritance and free disposition; the \textit{encomendero} does not have these rights. The vast haciendas were products of later development and not of the encomienda system. Cf. R. Constantino, \textit{Vol. I: The Philippines: A Past Revisited (Pre-Spanish – 1941)}, 48-49.

\textsuperscript{19} Cf. Charlie Pye-Smith, \textit{The Philippines In Search of Justice}, 9-10.
agreements that were made sixty years ago are still very much felt in the Philippine economic and political context at present. 20

The revolutionary movement led by the Hukbalahap and another peasant organization, the *Pambansang Kaisahan ng Mangbubukid* (translated literally to National Unity of Farmers) won the support of the peasants in Central Luzon. It thrived on the agrarian unrest caused by centuries of exploitation of the peasants at the hands of the land-owning elite. It was only when President Quirino received U.S. military support and appointed Ramon Magsaysay as defense minister that the revolutionary momentum was checked.

When Magsaysay won the presidency by a landslide in 1953, he declared Mindanao the “land of promise” and invited the Huks and other Filipinos in need of land to settle there. This started the large amount of migration, mostly from the Visayan region, to Mindanao. Magsaysay also tried to initiate an agrarian reform program. But landlords dominated the Congress at that time so that the Land-Reform Act passed in Congress in 1955 was never really implemented. 21

During Diosdado Macapagal’s term as president (1961-1965), economic activity was redirected to the production of export crops such as banana, copra, sugar and other raw materials. Those who benefited from this were the U.S. multinational corporations, the landlords that owned the haciendas and plantations, and the local businessmen who functioned as intermediaries between the foreign capitalists and the local agricultural producers; most of the Filipinos suffered in poverty in either the rural areas or in the urban slums. Macapagal, like his predecessors, pushed as well for the enactment of a comprehensive agrarian reform program but did not succeed either because of the opposition of the landed elite who controlled the Congress. 22

Then came the twenty-one years of dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos. Marcos was elected in 1965 and was re-elected in 1969. The second term lasted for seventeen years. When Marcos was elected president, he promised to introduce wide-reaching social reforms, including the redistribution of land. The promise was never fulfilled. When he declared Martial Law during his second term, some optimists hoped that it would provide Marcos with the perfect opportunity and the authoritarian means to redistribute lands. But the only landowners to lose significant amounts of land for redistribution, under the reforms, were those whom Marcos saw as political opponents.

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Even during the term of office of Corazon Aquino, insurgency continued in the countryside and the landless, for the most part, remained landless. She, too, failed to satisfy the clamor for social change. The indigenous people of Mindanao, for example, had high expectations of reform. They hoped and believed that they would at last be given control over their ancestral lands for through the agrarian reforms lands would be given to the tillers. But it never happened. As if adding insult to injury, 14 years after Aquino’s term in the presidency, in a violent dispersal operation in Hacienda Luisita, a sugar estate owned by her family, seven people were killed in November 2004 when 700 plantation workers staged a strike following a deadlock in their collective bargaining agreement negotiations.

Liberalization, deregulation, and the introduction of incentives for foreign investment have been the principal tools of reform carried out by the Ramos government under the slogan Philippines 2000, which referred to a massive drive for industrialization and aimed at making the Philippines a Newly Industrialized Country (NIC). The government encouraged industrial development in different regions of the country by financing large-scale infrastructure projects and providing incentives for domestic and foreign investors. To attract foreign capital, the government liberalized the laws on foreign equity, which meant 100% foreign ownership of companies and 75 years lease on land. One of the immediate effects of the program has been the conversion of prime agricultural land that by law should have been subject to land reform into industrial and residential or commercial estates. This caused the displacement of the peasants and the decline of food production. Rice-producing lands were bought very cheaply by large capitalist companies and were turned into plantations of other varieties of plants or crops like flowers or banana among others. This is still very much the situation today in many parts of the country especially in the rural areas where the supply of the staple food (rice) of Filipinos is coming from and where the BECs proliferate.

At present, the land as commodity remains anathema to most of the indigenous peoples of the Philippines. They may have been poor before but they were never really hungry. They had a decent living until they lost most of their lands. The land and the forest provided them with enough food. Having been driven further and further into the hills, they are now eager to protect and

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23 Corazon Cojuangco Aquino is the widow of former opposition leader Benigno (Ninoy) Aquino, Jr., who had been assassinated at Manila airport in 1983. The assassination of Ninoy Aquino sparked the uprising of the middle-class and the poor Filipinos, who were becoming increasingly disenchanted with Marcos’ ‘constitutional authoritarianism’. This uprising, (which has been called “people power”, a nonviolent revolution, fought not with arms but with people’s unity and prayers), led to the ousting of the Marcos’ government – the most powerful one the Filipinos had known since Philippine independence.


25 Fidel Ramos, vice chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines during Marcos’ administration, was president of the Philippines from 1990 to 1994.
reserve for themselves the land which they still occupy. The indigenous people hope that they would be given titles to their ancestral domain but so far the State has refused to grant freehold titles.

The scarcity of land results in other serious problems. One example is the fact that indigenous communities still practice kaingin, where a plot of land is cleared of trees, usually by burning, and planted with crops. After harvest, the land is left fallow for several years, allowing the soil to naturally replenish its fertility. In the meantime, farmers make use of plots elsewhere, hence the term ‘shifting cultivation’. It is obvious that this practice is sustainable and environmentally benign as long as there is no shortage of land. But in the case of land shortage, farmers are forced to use the same plot over and over again, thus depleting the soil’s fertility, changing its consistency and composition. This is one of the reasons why the Philippines, recently, has been experiencing a lot of incidences of soil erosion. Aside from illegal logging that destroys the forest cover, not to mention the use of fertilizers and pesticides that leaves the farmlands acidic and salinized, too much exploitation of the soil makes it too soft to hold the young and matured trees alike, thus causing soil erosion, floods, and landslides.

Over the centuries these injustices concerning land ownership and land use has spurred armed rebellion of different kinds. Every president of the Philippines has made the promise of land reform. So far, nobody has truly delivered. A land reform backed with help for small farmers would mean a restructuring of the society. The landed elite, most of them occupying high positions in the government, do not find this at all congenial. Thus, the needed land reform has been left on the sidelines.

The manipulation of land property, which started in the colonial period, has done a lot of damage to the Filipino way of life, particularly in the aggravating condition of poverty in the country. It is alarming, however, how this is being proliferated and perpetuated by Filipinos themselves today. The social institutions built to serve the needs of the people especially the poor do not function effectively to offer such service. This manifests how people are opting to simply operate to meet their own particular needs rather than cooperate with the wider community and help one another in meeting the needs of the whole society. We can see this in the distortion of the Filipino values as in the value of utang na loob, for example, which will be discussed later on in the next Chapter.

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27 The flood and landslide that occurred in Quezon province last December, 2004 comes to mind here. It was occasioned by a storm much less severe that those affecting neighboring Southeast Asian countries, yet it killed more than a thousand people and wrought large-scale destruction on some cities.
One of the problems that the BECs of the Philippines today have to contend with is still this problem with land ownership and utilization.\(^{28}\) It seems that the past has not been wisely appropriated and that the hope for the future is growing dim. In the global community, the Global Governance Initiative Annual Report stated that if present trends continue, about 600 million people will go hungry in 2015.\(^{29}\) The report said that the total number of people surviving on less than $1 a day has gone down by only 12 million in the last decade, leaving more than one billion in absolute poverty, and they are concentrated mainly in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. The panel who made the report suggested that, for the efforts to ease hunger and poverty to lead to substantial results, a paradigm shift is needed. This implies a correct scale of values and in Christian terms, a call for a radical understanding of the gospel. It also entails a clear option and a readiness to take risks.

Human societies at the macro-level of the world or at the micro-level of a village are marked by poverty, oppression and exploitation, and injustices of various kinds. In the Philippines, poverty remains the central development issue. The country has not been able to sustain the growth required to reduce poverty to acceptable levels. Growth and poverty here are not to be understood in simple economic terms but refer to the quality of human life as a whole. Statistics show that poverty is more widespread and more persistent in the Philippines than in neighboring ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) countries and it is most acute and widespread in rural areas.\(^{30}\) One main reason for the significant number of poor in rural areas is that, as mentioned before, the rural poor are mostly self-employed, primarily in agriculture or casual labor and almost all of them landless. The gravity of poverty in rural areas results in the exodus to the cities. The people have to adopt survival strategies and these involve physical movement or migration.

It was mentioned before that every government since Magsaysay (even those of the colonial governments of Spain and the United States in the Philippines) tried to establish its own land reform program. But none succeeded because it strongly favored the landowners, the educated, and the wealthy. The bureaucratic procedures for acquiring ownership of the land, such as land surveying and notice requirements, together with the excessive legal costs, ensured that potential peasant benefactors could not gain access

\(^{28}\) It is still a big problem for the people of Davao in Mindanao, where I had the opportunity to talk with some of the people of the GKK there. The same is true with the people of Pangasinan, where I had some exposures with the BECs in collaboration with the parish. It also remains to be the problem in Negros, which I learned from my conversation with Brian Gore, a Columban priest who was one of the prominent figures in development of BECs in Negros especially during the years of Martial Law under the Marcos dictatorial regime.


to land. Feudal landlords are well aware of how to use the law to their advantage. However, understanding the extent of exploitation and corruption perpetrated by Filipinos on their own people leads to a consideration of the second profound cause of the suffering of the Filipino poor: in addition to the issue of the land there is the cultural fall-out of a double colonization which extended over four and a half centuries.

5.2.2 Colonialism

5.2.2.1 Spanish Conquest

The first settlers in the archipelago were also poor. The autonomous barangay communities that the Spaniards encountered, except for the Muslims of the South (Mindanao and Sulu), had a subsistence agriculture, which simply provided them with enough for their needs. The additional burden of the colonizers, therefore, seriously strained the resources of native communities. It was recorded that Miguel Lopez Legazpi had to move his main camp repeatedly from one place to another since there was not enough food to eat.  

In a written observation, Legazpi attributed the poverty of the natives to laziness or idleness. He reported that though gold was more or less found in all the islands, the natives only worked the mines when forced by necessity. “…they do not even try to become wealthy, nor do they care to accumulate riches.”  

But, according to Constantino, the main reason for this was the absence of an exploitative class that everyone simply worked for an immediate need and that was all. The village chief was the administrative leader of the community and not an absolute ruler. His position was originally attained by an exhibition of traits useful for the community’s survival. The chieftainship was not an exclusive occupation. Executive, judicial and military functions were exercised when they are required, but in other times than these, the chief remained a farmer and wove his own cloth like the rest of the barangay members. The emergence of social stratification was based on roles, functions, and responsibilities that involved the welfare of the community and definitely not on wealth. In such circumstances differences in social status and honor are not economically expressed. Thus, slavery is a misnomer when it comes to describing the condition of the dependent population of the early

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barangalic societies of the Philippines. It was only when they had survived into a period of more complex industrial development and internalized the class-imposed values of the conquerors that the social organization became an instrument of exploitation. John Larkin, for example, suggests that the tribute imposed by the Spaniards through the encomienda system had affected the original relations and contributed to the deformation of the social organizations.

- The tribute and forced labor

The tribute was exacted throughout the archipelago and was collected from Legazpi’s time until 1884. It was levied on all Filipinos with the exception of the following: incumbent *gobernadorcillos* and *cabezas de barangay* and their families, government employees, soldiers with distinguished service, descendants of some chieftains, choir members, *sacristanes* and porters of the churches, and government witnesses. From these exceptions, we see that the paying of the tribute was put on the shoulders of most of the poor natives and it generated a lot of corruption and abuses from the tribute-collectors. Even the act of collecting itself was an occasion for much cruelty. The tribute was used to finance the expeditions of Spain against her enemies - first against the Portugese, then against the Dutch. The islands of the Philippines were used by Spain as bases for operations against her rivals.

The preparation for these expeditions provided the context of forced labor. Labor was needed in the building of ships, in operating these ships, and in fighting Spain’s battles. The Hispano-Dutch war in the Far East was essentially a naval conflict. The demand for woodcutters, shipbuilders, and crewmen rose sharply. Others were forced to work in the mines. Men between the ages of sixteen and sixty, except chieftains and their eldest sons, were required to serve for forty days each year in the labor pool or *polo*. The polo took the men away from their homes for many months and resulted in the ruin of the communities they left behind. The absence of these men caused a manpower shortage and this shortage meant abandoned fields, lesser harvest, and meager food supply. To add to the burden, since polo laborers were hardly ever paid, their villages had to provide them with a monthly allowance of four pesos worth of rice to keep them alive. Hence, many people died of hunger. Furthermore, the stepping up of labor recruitment in many areas separated the men from their families for long periods of time and this caused deep resentment.

Aside from the above modus operandi of the government that caused the people a great deal of suffering, there was also the *bandala*. The bandala

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consisted of the assignment of the annual quotas to each province for the compulsory sale of products to the government. However, since the government claimed not to have enough funds, all the people got for the sale of their products were mere promissory notes. Along with this abuse was the government setting the prices of the products lower than the prevailing prices. People who found it difficult to fill their quotas with their own produce had to buy at a higher price from others and sell them at a lower price to the government, which seldom paid anyway. Even if pests or natural calamities destroyed the crops, the people still had to buy rice in order to give to the government on credit. Besides, Spanish officials often collected more than the actual assessment, pocketing the difference. This forced many natives to become indebted to the chieftains.

We have to remember that both labor and produce were being forcibly extracted from an economy that had no tradition of surplus of either. The government demanded rice supplies, giving in return mere promises. Families largely dependent on subsistence agriculture were suddenly forced to yield a surplus to feed a group of people who did no work at all. From this, we can gain some sense of the social and economic distress that each of the Spanish impositions inflicted on the native population.

- **Neglect and plurality of economies**

  With small communities of natives being scattered throughout the many islands of the Philippines, it was very hard for a few hundred friars and Spanish officials to carry out their colonial plans and activities such as the collection of tributes and forced labor. The remedy was a policy of resettlement or reduccion. We have said something about this previously. The reduccion policy consolidated the population in larger villages. This made the barangay to be integrated into the colonial framework and made it easier for colonization to do its work rapidly and efficiently, since people were organized and resettled in compact villages. However, not all the natives acceded to this policy. Most of them being subsistence and not surplus farmers, they needed to live close to the land they tilled and in a surrounding where they could hunt and fish to supplement their diet. They found moving to compact villages highly impractical and contrary to traditional life patterns. So, insisting on the reduccion generated hostility between the natives and the colonizers. Some of those who did not consent to the policy were severely punished. Others went into the mountains and renounced the colonial enterprise altogether. In response to this, the Spaniards, mainly through the religious friars, made a compromise. The result was the poblacion\(^{38}\), which prevailed until this day. The buildings around the town plaza of each poblacion reflected the hierarchy of colonial society with the church- convent and the municipio (municipal hall) or seat of civil authority dominating the square. This was also suggestive of the increasing stratification of native society, including its economic stratification.

\(^{38}\) See footnote 11 of Part II above.
Though the Spaniards chose to retain certain indigenous social institutions to serve colonial ends, they brought over new practices and the use of institutions alien to native society, thus, transforming them in a profound way. The presence of the colonizers in the archipelago stimulated the influx of the Chinese and their activities in serving the needs of the Spaniards formed another factor that changed the Philippine social and economic life. Some historians maintain that during the early part of Spanish rule, there were three distinct economic systems that existed in the Philippines: a Western economy, a native economy, and a Chinese economy. The Western economy was the Spanish economy, whose preoccupation was the galleon trade. Inasmuch as the Spaniards did not find in the Philippines such economic promise as they found in Latin America, there was a relative lack of interest for them to develop the economy of the country. They did not find the same rich mines; there were no edifices that housed vessels of gold; there was not an abundance of spices either. The mercantilist philosophy of the time with its emphasis on trade and the geographic isolation of the country from Europe discouraged any serious effort for economic development. Due to this mercantilist stage, which emphasized immediate extraction of wealth – particularly mineral wealth – for trading purposes, the possibility of long-range development of natural resources did not turn up. The Philippine colony, thus, was not much more than a defense outpost in the East. The galleon trade was essentially a trade between China and Mexico, with Manila as the transshipment port. Hence, it did little to develop the islands. Very little of the country’s produce ever made its way to the Mexican market. The Spaniards, who were captivated by the quick returns from the trade neglected to develop the agricultural potential of the colony. They made their fortunes by extracting whatever they could from the marginal economy of the native population.

Conversely, the Chinese had a major role in the linkage of the country to world capitalism. It was mainly their commercial activities all over the country that accelerated the dissolution of the pre-conquest social patterns of the Filipinos. The Chinese wrecked havoc on the primitive economy of the natives. There were cases when economic deterioration was experienced so acutely in some areas of the Philippines that a large part of the rural population moved to the city to enter domestic service or other services that the Spaniards required. Again, the movement to the city took the natives away from their fields of rice-planting and from weaving their own clothing. As a result, the natives bought their staple food and their clothing from the Chinese. Thus, Chinese industries flourished and since they were selling their products in the provinces as well, the competition forced many local farmers and weavers to abandon their occupation. The natives could not offer any competition for they had no capital and had very little experience in trading ventures. In this way, the Chinese became an indispensable and established institution in the economic life of the Filipinos. The commercial activities of the Chinese became the solvent of baranganic communities.

Tight economic competition between the Chinese themselves or with the so-called Chinese mestizos (product of intermarriages between Chinese and
Spanish), forced them to shift to agriculture. Most of them were able to amass large tracts of land through a notorious contract known as the pacto de retroventa\(^{39}\). It is necessary to mention this particular kind of contract in addition to what was said of the role of the Spanish friars in the acquisition of lands in order for us to understand why most of the haciendas in the Philippines today are owned by Filipino elites who are descendents of either the peninsulares (Spaniards who were given the choice positions in the government), the creoles or the insulares (Spaniards born in the Philippines and who considered themselves children of the country – the original ‘Filipinos’), and the Chinese mestizos. A further reason for devoting attention to this is that some elements of the pacto de retroventa are very much evident in the way foreign capitalists acquire lands in different parts of the Philippines today, especially in the provinces.

\textit{Pacto} is the Spanish word for a pact. ‘Retro’ means to return and venta is the Spanish word, which means ‘to sell.’ The pacto de retroventa, therefore, was a contract under which the borrower conveyed his or her land to the lender with a proviso that the lender will sell the land back to the owner for the same amount that it was sold. Money lending was one of the many commercial activities that the Chinese engaged into during the Spanish colonization. During the term of the contract, the borrower usually became the tenant or lessee of the lender. Rarely was the borrower able to accumulate the necessary amount to exercise the option to repurchase. What is more, there were unscrupulous moneylenders who would deny that a borrower ever had such an option, especially if the borrower did not have the proper education and influence and most of these contracts were signed without the benefit of a lawyer. In this way, the landlords got the land cheaply, while thousands of small landowners lost their lands.

It was only when the English penetrated the Spanish colonies (including the Philippines), with Spain herself being dependent on England, together with the loss of Spanish colonies in Latin America, that there was a rethinking of Spanish economic policy. It was also the time of the rise of capitalism in Europe, where various economic theories were propounded with the concept of free trade at the core. Changes in the colonial economic policy brought about some efforts to develop the agricultural economy of the islands, wherein Spain attempted to encourage the production of cash crops such as sugar, indigo, tobacco, and hemp\(^{40}\). Thus began the transformation of Philippine economic life. From merely being an outpost of the empire, the Philippines became a participant in world commerce. The development of the export-crop economy produced an economic system where Western, native, and Chinese economies became parts of an interrelated whole.


However, this did not end the suffering of the people. Instead, new colonial policies, which aimed to develop the local economy, brought new hardships for the people. The natives were forbidden to manufacture their products for their own consumption. Examples were the effects of the tobacco monopoly and the wine monopoly in Ilocos. With the two product monopolies, the Ilocanos were forbidden to drink their home-made brew, the *basi* (rice wine). Rather, they were forced to buy the wine from government stores. With the institution of the tobacco monopoly, on the other hand, the government supervised the growing and sale of tobacco. This meant assigning quotas to the farmers. The farmers were fined when they did not meet the quotas. And as in the collection of tributes and in the administration of land ownership, the whole operation was graft-ridden. The same thing happened with other native products such as the cloth that natives used to weave for themselves. With the rise of the export-import trade that was virtually monopolized by some three hundred Europeans, local materials such as *piña*, *sinamay*, and *jusi* became very expensive that it was only the rich who could afford them.\(^{41}\) When the Philippines began exporting rice, shipping the product to China annually, the people suffered rice shortage and the country was forced to import rice instead.

Due to these various abuses and oppression inflicted by the colonizers and immigrants alike, a range of resistance and uprisings sprung from the natives. The rising of popular unrest occurred not only in the provinces but also in Manila and in other urban centers. The rise of the hacienda system was mainly based on the seizing of lands from small farmers. The influx of foreign trade resulted to the decline of local industries, bringing acute repercussions to the local communities. Economic progress itself, while causing painful dislocations in the life of the majority of the people, nurtured a popular consciousness more deeply aware of injustice, inequality, and different forms of exploitation. It was within the course of the struggles in responses to colonial oppression, that the native inhabitants of the archipelago gradually became curious of their identity as one nation.

### 5.2.2.2 The American\(^{42}\) Regime

The Filipino people expressed their awareness of injustice and oppression, together with the growing sense of identity, in different forms of revolution. Constantino put it very aptly, “The nation was born of the Revolution as much as the Revolution was the expression of the nation being born.”\(^{43}\) However, while the enthusiasm for struggle was great among the poor, it was far from being so among the wealthy. The depression of the living

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\(^{42}\) ‘Americans’ here refer to the Northern Americans – those of the United States of America.

standards of most of the people, especially in the countryside, produced by Spanish colonialism, built up resentments and aggravated the unrest of the peasantry. One can just imagine the bitter anger of the poor, especially those who were forced to work as tenants of the new owners on the land that their ancestors had regarded as their own for generations.

But this colonial situation had effects on some members of the native middle and upper classes as well, giving them the impetus and courage to participate in the common cause of the people. This was manifested in the first reform movement, which came to be known as the Propaganda Movement, whose prime movers were the so-called clase ilustrada – members of the generally wealthy class who had enough financial resources and influence to go to Spain for studies. Their own grievances urged them to relate with the common people. However, the ilustrados, or shall we say, the literate and educated, still considered themselves as social superiors to those who were illiterate and uneducated and, therefore, saw themselves as related to the ruling power. One important factor limiting the effect of the propagandists was the fact that they wrote in Spanish, which was a language virtually unknown among ordinary people. Their goal was still assimilation, that is, Hispanization: that the Filipino people would not be alienated from Spain and be accorded the right to Spanish culture. What they aspired for was better accommodation within the system. The concerns of the vast majority of people, especially of the poor, were different.

With the exception of some individuals, the ilustrados were willing to compromise, even to join the ruling power as long as their political and economic demands could be granted. They had already the social and economic status, including personal ambitions and interests that needed to be defended and secured. Yet, at the same time, they had to identify themselves with the rest of the population in order to secure the maximum attention and concession from the colonial establishment. They were such a minority that it was necessary to include the laments of their less fortunate brethren to become an effective force. The strength of the revolution depended on the terms of support of the vast majority.

The common people for their part based their claims solely on the experience of struggle through the centuries, but they did not yet have the capability and the means to integrate these experiences. So, they had to accept the teachings of the ilustrados who had chosen to become part of the revolution. The poor responded enthusiastically and trustingly to what they thought was the only channel by which their thoughts, feelings, aspirations and the injustices that they have been subjected to for a long time could be articulated. They eagerly gave their support to these leaders in hope for the possibility of a better life. Another thing that needs to be regarded is how the long experience of suppression along with the hierarchical organization of the Spaniards had accustomed the people to accepting the following of directions and orders from their social superiors as natural and proper.
The description of how the reform and revolution movement originated and took effect in the Philippines during Spanish colonization somehow explains why it was easy later on – as in the American rule – for the wealthy and more opportunistic members of the native elite to manipulate the leadership of the Revolution and redirect it toward compromise. This fraudulent and corrupt manner of leadership with its preoccupation with power which capitalized on the ignorance of the poor for individual gain became one of the main reasons for the perpetuation and aggravation of suffering and misery of the Filipino poor throughout the years of foreign invasion and colonization. Factionism, rivalry and betrayal, all elements of this leadership, proved disastrous for the struggles of the people. This was evident in the process by which Andres Bonifacio (considered as the father of the Revolution through his leadership in the Katipunan, the first recognized revolutionary movement under the Spanish colonization) was outmaneuvered by the “ilustrado syndrome”. The elite members of the revolutionary movement attacked Bonifacio for his lack of education. It was a typically ilustrado belief that leadership should be the exclusive prerogative of the educated. Thus, a plot was designed to overthrow Bonifacio and promote a new government and a new leadership under the command of Emilio Aguinaldo, who himself, belonged to the elite class. Whereas the birth of the Katipunan was marked by the passage of the leadership of the revolutionary movement from the hands of the ilustrados to leadership based on the people, the triumph of the ilustrados in grabbing the leadership from Bonifacio symbolized the seizure by a provincial elite of the leadership of a mass movement and hence, meant the defeat of the revolution of the common people.

Aguinaldo’s inclination towards compromise and assimilation with the colonizers was already evident in the first decrees he issued. In them, he urged all Filipinos to “follow the example of civilized European and American nations” in fighting for freedom. The bitter part of the Aguinaldo administration was its willingness to negotiate with the colonizing power, where money was involved and the people’s sacrifices, especially those of the poor, were merely used as leverage. Thus, the pact that was held in Biak-na-

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44 Andres Bonifacio belonged to the lower middle class. The early death of his parents forced him to quit school to support his brothers and sisters. He had different jobs in order to earn his livelihood. They included making walking canes and paper fans and selling them, working as a messenger, and later a warehouseman. Poverty prevented him from going beyond the second year of high school. But, he was said to be an avid reader especially on the subject of the revolution. His lower class origins enabled him to have an instinctive affinity for the working class in the cities and for the peasants of the countryside. Thus, the organization of the Katipunan became a triggering force that roused the masses into action for it expressed the masses’ demand for freedom from Spanish colonialism and friar despotism and not simply for accommodation and assimilation into the colonial system, which was the goal of the ilustrados. See R. Constantino, Vol. I: The Philippines: A Past Revisited (Pre-Spanish – 1941), 166-167.

Bato between the Spaniards and the Aguinaldo administration is taken as a shameful repudiation of all that the Revolution stood for. Constantino even described it as nothing more nor less than a business proposal.  

As the Filipino people unwaveringly continued their campaign for liberation, little did they know that maturing imperialist plans were being designed across the seas that were to rob them of their right to independence. The United States of America, which was bent of protecting her investments in Cuba, attacked and destroyed the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay in 1898 as a show of sympathy to the Cuban revolutionaries, who had waged war against Spanish tyranny. This started the Spanish-American war that paved the way for America’s claim to the Philippines. At this point in time, the Philippines was torn between four major forces: Spanish colonialism, American imperialism, the Filipino ilustrados, and the rest of the Filipino people. The engagement of the first three in furthering their own goals by securing control over the fourth entity – the common people – brought great miseries and hardships to the native Filipinos, especially the poor. The Americans, for their part, was simply biding time until they could implement their real plan. They had been keeping up friendly liaison with the Aguinaldo government while negotiating with Spain in secret. These negotiations resulted in an agreement to stage a mock battle, which would be quickly followed by the surrender of Manila to U.S. troops. The mock battle occurred and Manila was surrendered. Filipinos fought at the side of the Americans, many of them died, in a battle where they were completely unaware that they had been sold out. In spite of this, Aguinaldo continued to declare his faith in the Americans.

After the Treaty of Paris through which Spain ceded the Philippines to the United States, the First Philippine Republic was inaugurated in Malolos with Emilio Aguinaldo as its president. The people saw the Malolos Republic as the symbol of their unity. It was the culmination of their struggles. Busy with the struggle though, the people did not pay much attention to the maneuvers of their leaders. They did not perceive the real import of the ilustrado takeover.

A noteworthy fact about the Constitution that was drafted by the Malolos Republic is that it contained a provision for the union of Church and State. With it, the Church was given the same prominence and power that had been the source of the abuses during the Spanish regime, taking for granted the long history of the people’s grievances against the friars who had robbed the people of their lands. What can be considered as the worst betrayal of the people’s interests was the action of the Malolos government towards the friars’ lands. The Revolutionary Government did confiscate the estates of the friars but these were not distributed to the oppressed peasantry. Instead, the government passed a law giving people of means and local chiefs the

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opportunity to administer the estates upon representation of security in cash or in bond. The movement towards feudalism in the countryside, which had been established during the last century of Spanish rule, was continued with legal sanction under the Revolutionary Government. Aside from this, in his first two decrees as president of the First Philippine Republic, Aguinaldo gave Spaniards and all foreigners the right to engage in business in the Philippines.

The ideologies and principles of the leaders of the government that emerged from the Revolution were those of the ilustrados. They were in direct contrast to the tenacity of the people whose concepts of freedom and independence meant driving the colonizers away. Although these leaders urged the people to fight on, they were willing to negotiate. Taking the United States as the protector of the Philippine independence, they were blind to the new threat to freedom. The collaboration of the ilustrados with the Americans gave the justification for the new colonizers to keep the Philippines as their colony. For the Americans, the Filipinos had to be educated and civilized, in the American concept of education and civilization, of course. The Filipinos could not be abandoned because they were incapable of self-government. The American government seemed to have taken for granted and belittled the Filipino spirit of cooperation and community, which is in many ways familial. But they were very well aware of this. General Arthur MacArthur, who was Military Governor of the Philippines, accounted for this in one of his reports. He reported that “the towns regardless of the fact of American occupation and town organization, are the actual bases for all insurgent military activities, and not only so in the sense of furnishing supplies for the so-called flying columns of guerillas, but as affording secure places of refuge.”

He called it a unique system of war, which depended upon almost complete, unity of action of the entire native population – an apparently spontaneous action of several millions of people. No, the Americans did not take it all for granted. Their experience in war taught them to recognize this spirit of cooperation and community, innate in every human being. Behind the façade, brutal efforts and different forms of betrayal continued to be exerted to suppress a people up in arms. The spirit of struggle, sustained by the sense of community, had to be dismantled. Thus, the Americans created the Philippine Constabulary, the motive of which was to use native force to suppress native resistance. The cruelty and brutality that constitute every form of war were inflicted on the Filipino resistance. Villages were burned, men, women, and children were massacred and their little possessions looted. The tortures inflicted on individual Filipinos were directed against the whole community.

American economic policies in the Philippines, including the moves made for the granting of the country’s independence, were all advocated solely to protect America’s own interests, especially in protecting their local production

and labor from foreign competition. They had nothing to do with the welfare of the Filipino people, nor with their right to freedom. American investors and businessmen were behind the argument of establishing a civil government in the Philippines, since the military government enforced at the time did not have the authority to enact laws governing property and contracts. A civil government would open the Philippines for exploitation. The policy “the Philippines for the Filipinos,” that was enunciated by William Howard Taft and interpreted by many Filipinos for many years as endorsement of Philippine independence, was actually a part of the imperialist framework. The promotion of the improvement in the standard of living of the Filipinos and giving them the benefits of American education, would facilitate the shaping of new tastes and consumer demands, and thus, would drastically change the consumption habits of the Filipinos. This meant a development of profitable market for American products, while exacting disastrous effects on local production. Here, it is clearly seen how development and education can be distorted and used for selfish and destructive ends. And unless people are aware and proper attention is placed on such crucial moments, imperialism will remain a power to oppress and enslave a people. It would produce a nation whose people are contented and complacent colonials, who would not dare to question the status quo nor object to the permanent slavery imposed by an oppressive colonizer dressed up as a friend and benefactor.

Section 4 of the Philippine Bill of 1902, otherwise known as the Cooper Act defined Filipinos as “citizens of the Philippine Islands and as such entitled to the protection of the United States”. Filipinos were not to be considered as American citizens. The Congress enacted special laws governing the Filipinos, which did not affect American citizens. It is also noteworthy that these laws were mostly for the benefit of manufacturers and exporters at the expense of domestic industries. This made the country’s economy open for exploitation by monopolies like the Sugar Trust, which wanted to establish a large plantation in the Philippines.

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48 It is worth citing in full here the quotation that Renato Constantino [Vol. I, The Philippines: A Past Revisited (Pre-Spanish-1942), 298] provides on the explanation of W.H. Taft, President of the Philippine Commission, Civil Governor, Secretary of War, and finally President of the United States, regarding the policy mentioned above.

The promotion of their material and intellectual welfare will necessarily develop wants on their part for things which in times of poverty they regard as luxuries, but which, as they grow educated and as they grow wealthier, becomes necessities. The carrying out of the principle, “the Philippines for the Filipinos” in first promoting the welfare, material, spiritual, and intellectual of the people of these islands is the one course which can create any market here among the people for American goods and American supplies that will make the relation of the United States to the Philippines a profitable one for our merchants and manufacturers. (Henry F. Pringle, The Life and Time of William Howard Taft, New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1939, Vol. I, 234-235. Italics added.)

The development of the import-export trade necessitated the development of roads and railroads. Road building during those times, therefore, was still to satisfy the needs of the Americans and not for Philippine development. The money to build such infrastructures was raised by taxing the Filipinos. Thus, the Filipinos were shouldering the cost of social improvement that would facilitate their own exploitation. This was facilitated by an American-oriented education that taught Filipinos to regard all these as benefits derived from the colonial rule.

As for the friar estates that were accumulated by the Spanish clergies during the Spanish colonization, the U.S. colonial government made some negotiations so that the U.S. could purchase them. The Philippine Commission passed the Friar Lands Act,\(^{50}\) which prescribed the conditions for the sale and lease of the friar estates. However, this Act set a selling price for the lands that was too high for most of the tenants and small farmers to purchase them. It was, however, attractive to rich corporations such as the Sugar Trust.

The land policy that was instituted by the American colonizers was in a form that strengthened the system of landownership that Spain developed. The procedure for land title acquisition was in a design that was so vulnerable and open to usurpation that poverty and ignorance prevented small farmers from protecting their properties. It was intended to strengthen only the Filipino landed elite.

5.2.2.3 Then and Now

The enduring evidence of the special relationship between the Filipinos and the Northern Americans, the deep loyalty of the Filipinos to the United States, caused their encounter with the Japanese to be filled with hostility. It was true that the Japanese occupation of some countries in Asia had accelerated their local libertarian movements against the colonial powers of the time. For the Philippines, however, the invasion of Japan only made them more disposed to welcome the return of the old colonial power, that is, of the United States of America. Japan is one nation that was able to join the bandwagon of imperialism. It was due to domestic pressure that the country had to take the imperialist road. This pressure produced the need for expansion and its expansionist program was planned and executed by the military, the state bureaucracy, and the big business combines – the zaibatsu – working closely together.\(^{51}\) To implement it, the Japanese had to attract other Asian nations and her policy consisted of dislodging the Western imperialists and encouraging Asianization – “Asia for Asians”. It sought to


eradicate Western influences and called for an emphasis on indigenous culture. This move was in many ways a liberating force for Asian nations; for an Asian like them was able to challenge their former imperialist masters whom they considered natural leaders of the world by virtue of their superior racial qualities. Unfortunately, Japan was herself an imperialist power, whose primary purpose was the inculcation of the Japanese culture, paving the way to the integration of the occupied countries into her empire.

These facts about Japan, combined with the pro-American orientation of the Filipinos, produced the wide gap between the two Asian nations. Unlike the other peoples of Asia who did not identify themselves with their Western colonizers, Filipinos had succumbed to the subtle techniques of American domination. Due to the strong influence of the United States, Filipinos did not really consider themselves as Asians. This produced a strong racial bias against their fellow Asians. Although Filipinos feared the Japanese, they also looked down on them. The phrase “made in Japan,” referring to Japanese manufactured goods, had a pejorative connotation. Aside from this, the Filipinos, out of Spain’s most lasting legacy, that is, Catholic religion, took pride in being the only Christian nation in Asia; and hence, considered non-Christians like most of the Japanese as inferior. The American press contributed as well to the continuing abhorrence towards the Japanese by informing the people of the atrocities perpetrated by Japan in China. In addition to this, American (mis)education of the Filipinos had wiped away all the biases against the American invaders.

Like the Spaniards and the Americans, when the Japanese entered the Philippines, they proclaimed that the imperial forces were in the country to emancipate the Filipinos from the oppressive domination of the present conquerors and to help them to establish a “Philippines for the Filipinos.” However, just as with the first two conquering countries, it meant an insidious military control of national life and exploitation of the country’s resources for the invaders’ needs.

When the Japanese imperial army proclaimed martial law, the Filipinos were confronted by policies imposed by the coercive power of a military force. The totalitarian regime was even more repressive and brutal due to the exigencies of war. Arbitrary arrests and executions followed. There were military abuses. One of these, very much portrayed in many memories of the war, was the slapping of civilians even and usually by the common Japanese soldier for the slightest offense. To be slapped in public is, among Filipinos, a great humiliation – a gesture of contempt deliberately administered so that the person will feel more the degradation than the pain.

War is synonymous with torture, and graft and corruption among the ruling power. This was true as well during the Japanese occupation. The hostility thriving between the Filipinos and the Japanese, described above, exacerbated the violence with a resulting rise in corruption and crime, made worse by inflation, unemployment, shortages of basic commodities, hunger,
and diseases. Desperation led to the breakdown in morals and social discipline. Life was cheap. It became easy to kill.

The three years of Japanese occupation was a nightmare. It was also an era of deception and hypocrisy. The horrors of this particular time of war in the Philippines can be attributed to the above-mentioned motives or intentions of the Japanese invaders, coupled with the uncritical faith of the Filipinos in the altruism of the American protectors. It is astounding that even today, while Filipinos easily condemn Spanish colonialism and Japanese military occupation, very few are able to see and recognize the evils of American imperialism. It seems that there is always the failure to realize that anyone who seeks to exercise power over a people will eventually proceed in basically the same manner – oppression of the subjugated people. There are only differences in style that distinguish one oppressor from the other.

The reoccupation of the Philippines by the Americans was accomplished when the Malacañang palace was turned over by the Americans through General MacArthur to the then president, Osmeña on February 27, 1945. MacArthur, upon his return some months before, had issued a proclamation informing the Filipinos of the re-establishment of the Commonwealth government in the Philippines. Thus, the Filipinos received their fourth “liberation.” Three years of Japanese occupation had not produced a real anti-colonial consciousness among the Filipinos. Instead, the reoccupation was equated with freedom and, therefore, was eagerly awaited. Thus, the Philippines went through a revolutionary phase of world history without undergoing a social revolution. It is therefore a fact that Filipinos, themselves, contributed to the re-imposition of American hegemony over their country.

These realities of the past still cast a dark shadow on Philippine society today. The experience of struggles during the occupation could have been an opportunity for further politicization and education of the people about the realities of war, of imperialism, of misplaced decisions, of distorted assumptions. Leaders of every resistance group missed the chance of re-examining these old assumptions. Thus, for the most part, Filipinos lost the opportunity to learn from their struggles and effect their own liberation.

At present, foreign hegemony is still very much enforced, affecting the life of Filipinos. The Philippine crisis of today is viewed as resulting from foreign monopoly capitalism, bureaucratic corruption, and domestic feudalism. In spite of the experiences of the past, the crisis is becoming more severe, while corruption is becoming more rampant. This has agitated popular resistance and has led to more violence among the Filipinos themselves.

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The high incidence and persistence of poverty in the Philippines can be attributed to past economic policies that hampered growth, combined and aggravated by the resistance of the powerful elites to much-needed reforms. The failure of these policies to stimulate growth owes much to the important role played by the elites in Philippine politics and society today. These policies retard economic growth by discriminating against agriculture in favor of import-substituting industries, when poor Filipinos are disproportionately employed in agriculture, fishing, and forestry. They also favored capital over labor that led to the under-investment in the human capital of the poor.

The ancestral domains of the indigenous people of the Philippines are rich in natural resources but the people have been deprived of this natural wealth. As in the times of colonization and foreign invasion, the life and the income of agricultural sectors, made up primarily of the poor indigenous people, are depressed by heavy government regulations that favor the elites and the capitalists. The tariff reforms that were introduced in 1991, for example, produced trade policies that heavily penalized the primary and agricultural sectors and benefited the manufacturing sector. This has had disastrous effect on production.

In an analysis of what he called “the social problem” of the Philippines, Jeremiah Montemayor, in the late 1960’s stated that the social problem was that “some get too much of the fruits of work while others get too little”. He also perceptively saw in another sense that the most basic problem of the Philippines was cultural in nature. The people, he judged, were manipulated culturally through educational institutions and the mass media. These, together with the debilitating effects of colonization and colonialism that have made a deep impact on the Filipino psyche comprise the crises that the basic ecclesial communities of the Philippines of today have to face.

**CONCLUSION**

These considerations may go some way to show why not much progress was made over the years when it came to the alleviation of poverty among Filipino people. What is there left in the Filipino spirit that can counteract this failure? Where to go from here?

It was not the intention of the preceding account of Filipino political and economic history to put the blame on foreign intervention. Too much of the story speaks oppression of Filipinos by their own people and alongside the stories of oppression and domination were the stories of authentically committed people, including those of foreigners (most of them undocumented), who worked for the common good. What is needed is a discerning attention to foreign influences.

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It is said that we stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us, stressing the effects of the past on the present. But situations in the present Philippine society, the kind of society Filipinos have formed themselves, show that this standing on the shoulders has not and is not being done or being lived critically and effectively. The purpose of the historical account above, which highlighted the generation of the Filipino poor, is to help us grasp the crucial value of effective remembrance, enabling us not only to realize that something is deeply wrong with what is going forward, but also to discover again what could be the reasons behind it and what factors contributed to bring us to the present dilemmas. Only on that basis can people pull together their fragmented communities and defective society so that they rise above their petty divisions and their selfish narrow individualism. I believe this constitutes what being critically and intelligently attentive to situations means.

The need for structural change is evident and is only accorded with a cultural process that promotes the integral common good, wherein the deeper issues of life and its meaning are appropriately addressed. Structural change presupposes creative cultural change. A truly revolutionary movement must promote the conditions for such cultural creativity. People have to express themselves and participate in the cultural process, where meanings and values are questioned, criticized, corrected, validated, and improved. An integrated spirituality is revealed in cultural creativity as the capacity to initiate alternatives to our system-dominated values. Such is the challenge that a society in dire need of transformation has to face and address. This demands the strength and the power that can be generated from the majority of the people that constitutes the society – collaboration from among authentic communities, committed to authentic social transformation. To walk with people in faith-inspired struggle in fidelity to the truth of life, which grounds authentic solidarity with the historical cause of the poor requires concerted efforts among Filipinos from all walks of life – rich and poor alike – who in faith, learn and mature in their struggles.

To strengthen the argument, it may be helpful here to echo a realization of Niall O’Brien, which he wrote in his book, Island of Tears, Island of Hope: Living the Gospel in a Revolutionary Situation (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1993). As an Irish Columban missionary to the island of Negros (situated about three hundred miles south of Manila, about the size of Holland and the fifth largest island in the Philippine archipelago), he witnessed the suffering of the people and the violence they had to live with, how the spirit of the people was crushed by an unjust system that left them to choose counter-violence as a response. He writes, “... the problem in the sugar fields was not just the wages; it was the very way the whole sugar industry was and had always been organized... The second thing I realized was consequent to this: Though working to raise the minimum wage is laudable and a worthwhile struggle, and unionizing and working for social security and the basic human needs are necessary if people are to survive and grow, nevertheless Negros will never be a land of joy or peace till sugar is gone.” (16-17).
CHAPTER 6
THE CHURCH AND FILIPINO CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

In the previous Chapter we offered a brief sketch of Philippine history, paying much attention to the generation of poverty in Philippine society. The present Chapter now takes the important factors cited in the previous one from the limited focus of the role played by the Catholic Church of the Philippines in their generation. It raises the question of how the Church can exercise creative responsibility in providing, through the Basic Ecclesial Communities, an effective catalyst towards a transformation of Philippine society to one that approximates more closely the reign of God in the world.

This Chapter is a brief account of the history of Filipino faith from the pre-colonial period to what is now identified as Filipino Christianity, from which emerged the Philippine Catholic Church. It pays particular attention to the effects of colonization and other forms of oppression on the Filipino psyche and life as a whole, and the ways the people as a church become involved with the appropriate response to the given situation. In these circumstances, social transformation (or deformation) becomes the issue of faith and religion. Whereas Chapter Five dealt more with the external challenges, this Chapter takes into account the internal ones that the ongoing history has posed and continues to shape and which the basic ecclesial communities of the Philippines have to consider in responding to the needs of the present situation.

6.1 SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF FILIPINOS

A small group of experts once surveyed the development needs of Indonesia and came up with the following somber summary.

What kind of magic power is at work that metamorphoses all our endeavors to development into as many obstacles to it? We try democracy and it produces, by its own logic, dictatorship; social dynamics, and we get stagnation. We import medicines, and the result is the survival of the weakest. We expand education rapidly, and the youth become stultified.

Accurately planned production drives make the harvests an object of derision... All conventional mechanisms of development, added to special ones turned to the specific needs of this particular socio-economic system are called in; all failed without even indicating more promising experiments or shortening this ambiguous transition period.\(^{55}\)

There are crucial things in the above summary on which we have to focus our attention. One is, of course, the “magic power.” What kind of magic does this power perform? What kind of power is it? Another is the “we.” Who are the “we”? Are they the real objects and subjects of the needed development, or are they the “development experts,” who believe that they know better than the people concerned and what these people need and want? What do they take into account and take for granted in their development plans? What does development mean for them?

Development has been the agenda of countries that consider themselves developed for those other countries that they consider underdeveloped and developing. Development, however, for most of the societies today, has a self-serving definition. These societies (mostly of the ‘developed’ countries) set up the norm as to what to them is humanly desirable. Those who set up the norm remain the norm. Once the norm is set up, then all the rest have to be like them. This has always been the way of the colonizers, of the past and of the present. The articulation of the responsibility for peace in the world in terms of taking responsibility for helping other people to develop comes to mean that the rest of the world must become like the ‘developed’ states. The result is one culture that is valid while the others are invalid. This is how injustice is perpetrated in the name of development. People’s right to cultural integrity is violated. The definition of what it means to be human is imposed on people and they are forced to reject their own tradition. But to take away from people the right to cultural integrity is to deprive them of the only genuine meaning of freedom that exists.  

Struggles for liberation were responsible for the spiritual awakening of the Filipinos. Their struggles in history enabled them to understand their own possibilities. It was at the point of these struggles, when they were faced with something more than the customary, that they were able to realize their full potential as a people. The struggles that Filipinos encountered were like fire in a furnace that molded them into what it means to be Filipino. It is probably in these struggles and the consequent awakening that the true Filipino spirit may be drawn, where development can be seen as the process of liberation. In this context, development would mean setting the people free. People, who are liberated from the multiple and varied limitations imposed on them, take charge of their own development and transformation. By their own efforts, they achieve the full human life for which God created them. This is possible when the sufferings of the people are taken seriously. Taking suffering seriously means that what has been going forward in the last centuries in

56 See the Epilogue of A Dragon Not for the Killing by B. Lovett (Quezon City, Philippines, Claretian Publications, 1998).
57 Cf. B. Lovett, A Dragon Not for the Killing (Epilogue).
58 There is a need to put emphasis on the kind of limitations mentioned here. These limitations are imposed by human beings on other human beings. These limitations have to be rejected. They are not to be confused with the kind of limits that are enabling – enable creativity.
terms of what has been uncritically affirmed as progress or as development must no longer be tolerated. There is no genuine development when the human family continues to suffer great misery. We have to take responsibility for our misdefined needs and distorted choices and value judgments. If we are to exercise our freedom, we have to accept responsibility for the ongoing historical process. We have to open our minds and hearts to the pains of the victims. Opening our hearts and minds is the way to conversion (intellectual, moral, and religious) and the path to authenticity.

The Christian Church is called to the task of forming communities that guide and lead their members to this path of conversion and authenticity. This is crucial in understanding the breakthrough of the Christian Church towards the building of the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines in response to the situation of aggravating poverty, suffering, and corruption. Appropriate response to a given situation is not possible with just planning and organization and without necessary deliberation. In the same way Indonesians asked themselves above, it is also vital that the people within the Church of the Philippines ask their own what kind of power (or what spirit) drives and guides the Church to the fulfillment of its mission so that their endeavors toward development do not metamorphose into as many obstacles to it. It is imperative that the spiritual potential be mobilized in our people’s struggles. An account of development and liberation has to turn to a reflection and deliberation of this spiritual potential. Development belongs to the core of spiritual life.\(^{59}\) Spirituality consists of the dynamics of constant striving for the emergence of elements of higher integration. Practical insights grasp possible courses of action that are examined by reflection, decided upon by acts of willing, and thereby either are or are not realized in the underlying sensitive flow.\(^{60}\) Authentic spiritual development is a process of liberation. Otherwise, what we take as development is actually retrogression.

6.1.1 Pre-colonial

Concerned as it is with an exclusively oral culture, it is difficult to give an actual account of the lived faith of the early Filipinos. Most of the historical accounts available today are based and dependent on foreign chroniclers, thus mirroring their perspectives. An inquiry about the Philippines that is primarily associated with these perspectives would risk deepening the divide, which for a long time has separated ways of looking at the Filipinos from ways of looking at the rest of their Southeast Asian neighbors, and therefore risks dividing the archipelago from its own pre-colonial context. Yet, it has to be realized that foreign accounts may not simply be set aside either. It appears that pre-colonial people never wrote about their experiences, secular nor


\(^{60}\) See B. Lonergan, Insight, 617.
religious. This calls for Filipinos to discover their true identity as a people, understand the flow of life in them – the energy or the power that they generate – by articulating it and learning to make creative use of their own sensibility as they respond to life in their local context through their relationships with people different from them, not only with those in Asia but also with other continents, especially with those in Europe and America who have made a mark in and have influenced their own way of life.

There are clear arguments to suggest that Negrito tribes like the Aeta were the first settlers in the Philippines. Then, migrants from such diverse places as Indonesia, Indochina, and China added new blood to the Philippine stock. Primarily of Southeast Asian origin, Filipinos’ notion of power may be related to that which Benedict Anderson, in his anthropological accounts of the people in Java, Borneo, etc., calls the ‘Southeast Asian potency.’ In Anderson’s account, this ‘potency’ is the “intangible, mysterious and divine energy which animates the universe…. there is no sharp division between organic and inorganic matter, for everything is sustained by the same invisible power.” We mentioned earlier that, in the context of the early Filipinos, the barangays were kinship units. In this case, if there were hardships in dependence, they must have been mitigated by blood relationships. Power, in their context, therefore, was relational and reciprocal. Despite the presence of the three ranks: the maharlikas or the nobles composed of the datu and his family, the so-called freemen, and the dependent population, all these positions were mutable; a dependent could gradually become a freeman or even a datu by exhibiting prowess and valor and traits useful for the community’s survival, and a datu could slip from power and descend in the other direction. The fundamental problem of the pre-colonial Filipino rulers was, as that of the Javanese rulers in Anderson’s account, not the legitimacy of power but the problem of accumulating and preserving it. Power as that mysterious and intangible divine energy always remains at a fixed quantity in the universe. The problem occurs when, in the redistribution of power, different persons gain and lose power relative to each other. Since power is relational and its quantity fixed, its balance can be altered in any encounter between persons. A recovery of this notion of power of pre-colonial societies can offer a critique to the hierarchical societies of our contemporary times.

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61 In the news recently was the report of a group of Aetas living in Boracay, Aklan, Philippines being evicted from the land they have inherited from their ancestors; this was for commercial purposes. Boracay is one of the famous beach resorts of the Philippines.


63 F. Cannell, Power and Intimacy in the Christian Philippines, 8.
Two centuries before the Spanish arrived, merchants from the Middle East introduced Islam especially in parts of the southern island of Mindanao. This added a sprinkling of Arab blood into what is basically Malay stock, whence a people of unique blend of east and west, both in appearance and culture, emerged. The inhabitants of significantly large areas of Mindanao and Sulu are predominantly Muslims even down to the present.

Before the Islamization of Mindanao and Sulu, however, the natives of the archipelago had their indigenous beliefs and practices. Divided geographically and culturally into regions, each region of the archipelago is recognizable by distinct traits and dialects. The pre-colonial communities believed in a Supreme Being that was called by different names in different regions or tribes. This Supreme Deity could be either male or female, in contrast to the God introduced by the Spaniards that was patriarchal. There was Bathala or Maykapal to the Tagalogs, Kabunian to the Ilocanos, Macaptan (or Maguayen or Abba) to the Bisayans, Manana (or Kalayagan) to the Bagobos, Lumawig to the Igorots, and Bagatulayan to the Tinguians, to name a few.

Aside from the Supreme Deity, the early Filipinos believed in lesser gods, the spirits, which the natives called anitos. The anitos were believed to perform certain functions. They can make ordinary mortals suffer or enjoy abundance. So, if there were beneficent spirits, there were also the malevolent ones. Convergence can be found within the Catholic tradition, which has its angels and saints and the devil respectively. They had also their own superstitious beliefs and believed in magical power of amulets.

Pre-colonial Filipinos adored the sun, the moon, the earth, even the animals and plants. All these things, they believed to have spirits or anitos in them. Many plants and animals were revered and respected and great care was practiced in order not to offend the spirits in them. People would offer sacrifices to them as atonement for any evil done and thanksgiving for the blessings received. The mediators between the spirits and the people were the babaylans, who were usually females. They not only performed ritual tasks but also other tasks like healing the sick. These are manifested until the present in numerous religious festivals of the Philippines that venerate nature.

The early Filipinos also believed in life after death. They believed in the immortality of the soul and venerated the memory of their ancestors. Various rituals were conducted for important moments in the life of the people and communities.

Some elements of the way our ancestors lived are preserved in our customs and tradition and are still practiced until today especially by the

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indigenous peoples of the Philippines. The indigenous peoples are usually contrasted to the lowlanders who entered into intensely charged relationships with the representatives of the colonial powers. The indigenous communities refused contact and exchange with new rulers and settlers and retreated up into the mountains. Geographical location, therefore, has a very important effect or influence in the spiritual development of the Filipinos. Until the present, the mountains or the highlands of the Philippines have become the site of various resistance movements. Because of their indigenous religious significance, mountains have also been the usual sites for small ‘native-syncretistic’ religious communities, the most famous of such mountains is maybe Mount Banahaw in Laguna province, where different cults including those based on the reworking of babaylanism (indigenous spirit-mediumship), flourish.  

Aside from the different ways of worship, a second element seen to have affected the spiritual development of Filipinos is the customs and traditions. It was mentioned earlier that pre-Spanish settlements were mostly far from each other. Houses were made of renewable materials, aligned along a riverbank or shore, allowing them to move easily from one place to another. It was also the custom to burn or abandon the house when a member of the family died. All this suggests that early Filipinos had the sense of impermanence and mobility. They could easily let go or leave something they had worked for behind as long as there was a vision of something better. It also led them to acquire the skill for shifting cultivation and making more use of the land. One cannot help but think that this sense of impermanence and mobility can be contributory to the huge amount of migration among Filipinos of today, allowing for the central fact that life in the country has become really difficult for most of them.

Since most of the members of early communities or barangays were related to one another by blood or marriage, it was usual to help one another in building a house or planting in the field of a certain family. The family, in return, fed all participants. Sharing food was very important to the early Filipino communities. A British anthropologist, for example, suggested that members of tribes used their food surpluses as a means of acquiring prestige and that feasting was an avenue to political success and even religious authority. However, it was more than that. Sharing food meant gratitude and appreciation for a sincere service rendered. Food was the primary fruit of their labors in collaboration with the land and the sea, that is, mutuality or bonded-ness with the earth. Sharing it meant embracing one into the family and enjoining one to the celebration of blessings received. Every meal was sacred and a feast for the pre-colonial communities. One can imagine, then, what hunger in the present Filipino context does to the Filipino psyche. Aside from being deprived of proper bodily health and nourishment, it also means a

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total denial of the capability for solidarity and community and, therefore, causes one to feel ineffective, unworthy of attention and support from the rest of the community. Thus, one can spend most of one's resources for a fiesta because the value of community is affirmed greatly. Spanish chroniclers have commented on the great number of occasions that natives found for feasting. During those feasts, the whole community was invited for eating and drinking. Should there be food surpluses, they were never stored. In fact, even until today, when one visits a poor family, for example, the family will offer whatever is available on their table. Here lies the root of the Filipino spirit of bayanihan and hospitality. In the Filipino values of food sharing and bayanihan, vital values such as food and shelter provide a means to an upward movement in the structural levels of the human good.\textsuperscript{69} They promote personal relations that affect the social, cultural, personal, and religious values.

\textit{Bayanihan} is a Filipino word derived from the word bayan meaning nation or community in general. Bayanihan literally means, “being a bayan” and is thus used to refer to a spirit of communal unity and cooperation. It can manifest itself in many forms but for early Filipinos, it was clearly and impressively displayed in the tradition of neighbors helping one another to carry the whole house of a certain family and transporting it to a new location.\textsuperscript{70} Working as a community provides a happy and festive mood to the bayanihan. After the work is done, the moving family expresses their gratitude by hosting a small fiesta for everyone. The moral fiber of the Filipino custom called bayanihan is the human-communal spirit, that is, the interconnectedness that exists among people. This spirit prevailed through every struggle and challenge that Filipino communities faced especially during the revolution, manifested itself in various forms, and has endured until the present. In the BEC’s of the Philippines today, the meal on the table always follows the meal on the altar. In Tagalog terms, we always say, after the Misa (Mass) comes the mesa (table of food - brought by different families and shared together in one table).

Filipino hospitality is related to the spirit of bayanihan. If bayanihan can be attributed to the Malay culture of the Filipinos, hospitality is identified as the common denominator in the Filipino character and, therefore, is considered as that which distinguishes the Filipino. This trait displayed by Filipinos makes them legendary in Southeast Asia. It is very rare to find such hospitable people who enjoy the company of their Western visitors. But this trait, which is considered as a Filipino virtue, can also be corrupted and abused. The history of the colonization of the Philippines reveals that Filipinos, having high regard

\textsuperscript{69} Refer to the section on the Scale of Value in Chapter Two.
\textsuperscript{70} This was done by placing long bamboo poles length-wise and cross-wise under the house (traditional Filipino houses were built on stilts), and then carrying the house using this bamboo frame. It usually took a fairly large number of people – 20 or more – working together to carry and transport the house. Refer to Joann Natalia Aquino’s article “Bayanihan. The Spirit of Community” in \textit{Filipino American Herald}, August 2002 for some notes on bayanihan.
for the wealth and the physical and mental skills of the foreign invaders, more often than not, had been lenient and failed to discern the true motives of their conquerors. Many of our brethren opted to accommodate colonialism and settle for assimilation. On the other hand, hospitality as a way of hosting guests can serve as a dialogue in diversity. It means reaching out to others, welcoming and embracing others different from them by giving them the best possible accommodation, treating them as members of the family, and giving them the liberty to make one’s home their home as well. Hospitality goes beyond pakikipag-kapwa, which reveals how Filipinos treasure relationships. Kapwa means others but denotes another who is similar to one, as in kapwa Pilipino (fellow Filipino), kapwa tao (fellow human being), kapwa Kristiyano (fellow Christian). Hospitality is more of pakikipag-ibang tao, where iba means different. In the core of the Filipino soul is this joy of being with others, which translates into the joy of being. The joy of being, then, lies in being able to embrace friends and strangers alike. Hospitality as pakikipag-ibang tao is a response to pluralism, where popular spirituality can be translated into cultural energy. This is reflected in Tagalog terms, which are usually associated with food: halo-halo (mixed), sari-sari (variety), sapin-sapin (overlapping); and connotes a religion of negotiation.

6.1.2 Spanish Legacy

Eduardo Hoornaert described the indigenous religion in the philosophical sense as the embodiment of the principle of permanence and immobility. It means that nothing new happens for everything is a repetition through the natural cycles into which humans are inserted. In the indigenous religion, therefore, where a break that would allow change does not happen, the imposition of a new religion that calls for transformation does something violent to the people who are not accustomed to it. The introduction of the Catholic faith in the Philippines was no exception. It had been violent since it went along with the purpose of the colonization. As it is often described, Spain conquered with the sword and the cross. To bring the light of Christianity to the natives became the primary justification for the Spanish presence in the Philippines islands. The symbol of redemption, that is, the cross of Christ was

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71 Dionisio Miranda, however, emphasizes that kapwa is a concept that embraces both the categories of iba at hindi iba (different or other and not different or not other). Filipino dictionaries, he points out, render kapwa with “both” or “fellow-being,” underlining an understanding of shared identity that the word and concept “other” as used in the West practically excludes. Kapwa is thus a concept that embraces both myself as well as the other. But I would prefer pakikipag-ibang tao which highlights a shared life without those who are different from us, not undermining the otherness of the other. See D. Miranda, Loob, The Filipino Within: A Preliminary Investigation into a Pre-theological Moral Anthropology, Manila: Logos Publications, Inc., 1988, 50-51.

72 This was mentioned by Albert Alejo in his talk during the Spirituality Forum III, held in CME Auditorium, UST, Manila, August 25, 2003. The Spirituality Forum was sponsored by the Center for Spirituality – Manila.

first encountered by the Filipinos to be associated with colonization, with violence and oppression. Some of the missionary forerunners of Christian faith in the Philippines played a prominent role in the suffering and oppression inflicted upon the natives. They saw the natives as oppressed and marginalized; worse, they considered them savages until they were converted to Christianity: Christianity would liberate the natives from oppression and from their own savagery. This was why the people of the colonies must be converted to the Christian faith no matter what. Those who rejected this ‘work of charity’ would go to hell and suffer more grievously.

6.1.2.1 The Muslim South

When the Spaniards set foot in Philippines soil, quite a number of natives in the southern part of the Philippines were already converted into the Islamic religion. The Muslims of southern Philippines were never conquered by Spain. The Muslims continued to resist Spanish colonialism and were successful. The Muslim South became a fortress that was continuously besieged by the Spanish conquistadors but remained undaunted. This meant that a sizeable segment of the indigenous society tenaciously resisted Hispanization and colonization. This is why the Muslims of the Philippines refuse to call themselves ‘Filipinos’. Ruy Lopez Villalobos first gave the name Las Filipinas to the two islands of Samar and Leyte in honor of King Philip (Felipe) II of Spain. Miguel Lopez de Legazpi later applied the name to the entire archipelago. The name itself connotes Spanish colonialism and thereby, the name ‘Filipinos’ applies only to the people conquered by Spain, not to the Muslims. Throughout the Spanish occupation, therefore, the Muslim region was considered as foreign territory and the Muslims reciprocated the same attitude. Religious differences became a basic alienating factor between Christianized indios and Moros. Ties of race and culture that had previously existed among the natives were replaced by suspicion and antipathy. The Spaniards called the Muslims’ attacks against the Spanish colonial rule piratical wars. The Spaniards conscripted the Christianized natives for the wars against the Muslims. The Muslims retaliated and in turn, raided Christianized communities. The alienation between Christians and Muslims in the Philippines today can be attributed to the earlier Spanish antagonism against Muslims. It has been one of the Spanish legacies left in the country. American colonialism added an economic dimension to the old animosities when Christians began to occupy the Muslim ancestral lands. The animosities have persisted until the present and have been worsened by the emergence of the notorious Muslim group, Abu Sayyaf. Of greatest concern now is the increasing criticism of Muslims by their Christian brethren for not speaking out more against the Abu Sayyaf. This ignores the larger and smaller dynamics of Muslim society in the Philippines. The larger dynamics concern the fact that the Abu Sayyaf, for all its abuses, is a manifestation of Christian policies of repression, neglect and exploitation in Mindanao, and the smaller dynamics

refer to the ties of blood and family that can eclipse all other considerations. This is one of the factors that the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines, as a new way of being Church, must consider in their reflection and deliberation. In fact, it was one of the major issues that the first BEC’s of the Philippines faced. The BEC’s, then called BCC-CO (Basic Christian Communities-Community Organizing), started in Mindanao and the Sulu Islands, where Filipino Muslims are concentrated. Many Filipinos today have adopted the Spanish attitude towards the Muslims, calling them *Moros*. The escalation of warfare in heavily Muslim areas of the Philippines is often depicted as a “religious war.” But, according to the list of demands made by the Muslim Revolutionary Forces in Mindanao to the Marcos’ government in 1973, this is a gross misunderstanding. One of the 19 demands states: “Stop planting hatred between the Moros and the Christians; this is not a religious war.”

The crisis in dialogue between Christian and Muslims in the Philippines has endured until the present because of an unattended crisis of self-appropriation from both sides – Christians and Muslims alike.

Focusing on spirituality rather than religion may well provide the resolution for such crisis in dialogue. Sebastian Moore asserts that Lonergan’s shift from the classicist stance to that of the converted, religiously achieved subject shifts our understanding of spirituality from that corner called mystical or ascetical or spiritual theology to the foundational position where “Christian religious thinking, thus newly appropriated in a universally shared humanity will be newly empowered to recognize, in culturally very different expressions, the same religiously liberated dynamic in other faiths,” can provide some passage to the recognition of such crisis and point to a possibility point of dialogue.

6.1.2.2 A New Religion

Besides the most significant influence of paving the way for the countryside to be carved up by the originally foreign political elite and the introduction of new customs, the Spaniards introduced as well a new religion – Catholic Christianity. Spain’s greatest legacy to the Philippines, aside from giving its name, was that of having turned it into the first Christian country in Asia. Spain ‘christianized’ the Filipinos and we are recounting the historical form it took.

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77 Sebastian Moore’s foreword to *Lonergan, Spirituality, and the Meeting of Religions*, x.
78 At present, of course, Christian Filipinos struggle to understand and identify what Filipino Christianity really means: Christianity, no longer as a tool of colonization,
Like most of the people of the countries colonized by the Spaniards, the early Filipinos identified Christianity with Western culture. This was inevitable given the classicist mind-set of the missionaries who could not but conceive their own culture as norm for everyone. Part of the pacification process was the conversion of the natives into the Catholic religion. For the natives, then, the Christians were the Spaniards and they, the natives, were the pagans in need of conversion. To be a Christian was to submit and follow whatever the Spanish friars told the subjugated people to believe and do. Acceptance of the Catholic religion meant the acceptance of the authority of the friars as well as the development of a measure of personal loyalty to them. Here we can understand why it was difficult for a Christianized native to integrate being Christian and being Filipino at the same time. To be a Christian was to embrace the religion of the colonizers, who continued to oppress and inflict great suffering to the natives while preaching the love of God and the love of neighbor. To be Filipino, on the other hand, was to embrace the struggles so that the oppressive system of the colonizers would be crushed and changed into one where people could be liberated and enabled to live a peaceful and dignified life.

Various factions among the natives were created during the Spanish regime in the Philippines. One, mentioned earlier, was the division between Muslim Filipinos and converted Christians. But it was not only in matters of religion. Another was the rift between chieftains and, therefore, between regions and tribes. When a certain datu asked for the help of the Spaniards to defeat another tribe, this datu and his whole tribe became indebted to the Spaniards, making it easy for the colonizers to subjugate the members of the tribe. One of the problems within the BECs of the Philippines is factionalism, which have prevailed and endured until the present among Filipinos. It continues to raise havoc on the relationships among Filipinos at home or abroad. This relates to the misconception of the Filipino custom of *utang na loób* that proceeds into a cycle of debts. As mentioned earlier, in the early Filipino communities, before Spanish influence, there was lenient social stratification. There was a rank called the dependent population, whose dependence was created out of debt peonage. This implies that the imbalance inherent in a debt relationship must always tend toward equilibrium; that is, the debtor is bounded to the giver while the debt is being repaid. This has become the apparent sociological definition of utang na loób during the Spanish regime in the Philippines until now, which is a clear adoption of consumerism, where every debt solicits an interest. What is considered a sacred act of giving and receiving, as in the pre-colonial era, is lowered to a level of earthly materialism. The utang na loób relationship becomes an “asymmetrical and hierarchical one between two entities”\(^\text{79}\) – the creditor who

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gives the favor and the debtor who receives the favor. This has some political implications at the present, especially evident in every local or national election. Political leaders tend to come from the propertied class, members of the principia during the Spanish occupation, because they are able to give and thus bind the common tao (person) to them by utang na loòb. But if this was always the case, Ileto comments, why not simply use the term utang (debt)?

80 The presence of the word loòb must be given special attention to recover the true meaning of this Filipino cultural value. Loòb points to something more than the simple economic relationship between lender and debtor. Loòb is symbolic of human interiority, which is the object of Lonergan’s intentionality analysis. For Lonergan, ‘intentionality’ is “a conscious interior dynamism that works spontaneously to lift us from level to level.”

81 There are Tagalog terms, pinakaloob and kaibuturan (deepest interior) that indicate interiority of different levels and extensiveness. For De Mesa, loòb is the interior truth of the human and is the ultimate, organizing center of human reality. That which is given that instigates utang na loob is gift - kaloob or handog in Tagalog. The gift is a mode of strengthening the bonds between people. The bond created by utang na loòb is not that of a vertical subordinate-superordinate relationship, definitely not of a slave-master relationship, but a horizontal one akin to love. Utang na loòb, therefore, is a debt of goodwill. Language limitation forces us to use the word, utang or debt. A debt has to be repaid. But it is very important to realize that the indebtedness in utang na loòb not only rests on the receipt of the assistance or favor by the beneficiary but also is created by the benefactor’s kagandahang loob (goodwill) and this is done out of kusang loob (roughly, free will). The benefactor must be motivated by positive feelings, such as charity, love, and compassion and thus, must not anticipate any reward. The utang or debt is not imposed by the benefactor demanding reciprocity but by the beneficiary’s “self-imposed” obligation to repay kagandahang loob with

81 I will return to this issue in Chapter Eight.
82 See Chapter 3 of this current work.
84 Cf. R. C. Ileto, Pasyon and Revolution, 230. Ileto clarifies that utang na loob was the bond that held the followers of a charismatic leader to his or her followers during the revolution in the Philippines, especially in the Spanish colonization era. It was not the conventional patron-client type of relationship; thus, providing an image of society that turns things upside down. The leader and the followers belonged to the same social category. There was no pervasive influence of an elite. It was the leader who was indebted to the followers. The debtor is the person of power. (This will be further discussed in the section on Philippine Revolution.) This context, once again, shows that power is generated by a community and does not rest on individual capacities alone.
kagandahang loob (goodwill with goodwill) as a certain form of justice.\textsuperscript{85} Utang na loob, therefore, can never be equated to material things. Ideally, one cannot hope to repay utang na loob within one’s lifetime. This is one limitation that we have to accept, so that one must not feel guilty at all if she cannot reciprocate an act of charity, for example, with the same degree or more. Typically, the debt of goodwill relationship happens as grace and the joy it brings to the benefactor and beneficiary is beyond measure.

From the very beginning, the Catholic Church was a powerful and influential factor in the Spanish ventures of the colonization of the Philippines. Religious missionaries accompanied the Spanish conquistadors and represented the spiritual sovereign. In the colony, the clergy, due to their limited number and their important role in the pacification process, became more powerful than the king’s official administrators and eventually, became wealthier. The great demand and urgent need for priests caused the training period to be reduced. The clergy’s power and wealth made priesthood an attractive career rather than a spiritual calling. These brought about a lowering of the standards of the priesthood. Decadence set in among the religious. Even the mendicant orders lost their early ideals of poverty and self-sacrifice.\textsuperscript{86}

There was the inter-order rivalry among the friars, which led for the king to issue the royal decree (royal cedula) of 1594 to facilitate evangelization of the new colony. The order was for the archipelago to be divided following the particular geo-ethnic and linguistic characteristic of each region and religious groups were assigned to each of these regions. It is through this geo-ethnic division that we can identify the development of the mission among the various indigenous groups of the archipelago.\textsuperscript{87}

But the fundamental cause of the ensuing corruption of some of the friars was their acquisition of property. They became wealthy landed proprietors. First, it was out of a royal bequest. Then, they bought lands from the State. Later, they bought land from the natives. With their prestige and power, it was easy for them to pressure the natives into selling them their lands at very low prices. During the early years of Spanish rule, most of the abuses committed by the friars in their individual capacities were also inflicted on natives as individuals. Hence, there was no common grievance strong enough to call forth united action. But when religious orders began accumulating properties, friars’ abuses took on a different face. The friars had become landlords and economic exploiters that threatened the economic survival of the natives. Isolated resentments among the natives rose into common and bitter grievances that started the revolts against the friars. These grievances gave

\textsuperscript{85} See Leonardo D. de Castro’s article, entitled “Debts of Goodwill and Interpersonal Justice” in Philosophy in Asia.
\textsuperscript{87} Cf. Jose Femilou S. Gutay, OFM, “History of Mission among the Indigenous Peoples".
rise to a new form of awakening for the natives and provided an additional factor in unifying the people. The first revolts erupted in places where the friars held large tracts of agricultural lands. These places turned to be the strongholds of the Philippine Revolution.

Thus, when the attitude of the natives to the Church in the beginning of the Spanish conquest of the Philippine islands was initially obedience due to awe and fear and then loyalty and acquiescence owing to the acceptance of the Catholic religion, it finally resulted into a violent anti-friar sentiments because of the common experience of oppression and exploitation by the friars. The result was the demands for their expulsion and the rise of an indigenous Church.

6.1.3 The Revolution

The history of Philippine Revolution has made a great impact on the spiritual development of Filipinos. Confronted with the evils of colonialism and other forms of oppression, the people were impelled to act on behalf of their battered nation. There were those who opted for the easy way out, that is, to accommodate to the colonizers while others took whatever risks were involved and embraced the struggle. It is these different ways of responding to the situation that made up what can be considered as the Filipino of today. Their strength as a nation can be found to be rooted in this: in their common struggle as a people for a better and worthwhile future, where this strength is nourished by faith and by concern for others.

A revolution, in one way or the other, causes violence and pain to the people concerned. This is because a revolution calls for substantial change and the movement from the past mode to the new one is, more often than not, painful. Within the Philippine Revolution, Filipinos encountered different forms of betrayal – of people giving up their dignity in exchange for a comfortable, less complicated life. But it is also within these experiences that they felt and realized more deeply the value of family, of friendship, of pakikisama at pakikiisa (solidarity and unity), of katapatan (fidelity, devotion, commitment), and the value of kalayaan (liberty) – what it meant to be free – and how their faith in God and in one another sustained them.

Generally, a revolution is meant for reform. But like that magic power, mentioned above, that brought stagnation to the people in Indonesia when they tried social dynamics, a revolution in the interest of social reform may further accelerate the demise of communities or societies instead of building and promoting the intended common good. Matthew Lamb identifies a possible response that people in suffering can embrace. He calls it heroic discrimination, distinguishing it from another possible response which is apathetic resignation. Heroic discrimination seeks to distance itself from the histories of suffering by victimizing the victors, thereby making its own the very
bias of the victors. Those in power, on the other hand, can simply dismiss the dynamics at work in the cultural modes that effected the struggle for change as primitive, backward, or an historical aberration, especially if the main subjects of the revolution were the peasants.

Our difficulty in understanding the uprisings in EDSA (1986 and 2001), for example, can be stretched backward in time: do we truly understand what the Katipunan uprising and all the other peasant uprisings that came thereafter were about? The physical involvement of the common people in these revolts was palpable. But, to what extent did they perceive, in their own experience, the ideas of nationalism and revolution? What could be some of the factors that may bring to light the people’s own categories of meaning that shaped their perceptions of events and their participation in them. This may remain problematic for us at present, but surely, we cannot simply assume that their views and aspirations were fanatical, void and meaningless. Often, efforts to define the Filipino personality, social system, and even spirituality bear the imprint and articulation of either the elite or the middle class. Ordinary people, especially the poor, are hardly encouraged to participate in these efforts. The image of the Filipino common tao has always been of those thinking first and foremost of their and their families’ survival and therefore as having little interest in high-sounding policies, ideologies, or principles of good government and administration. But we have to take into account that there were numerous instances in the past when popular movements, supported by these common tao, threatened to upset and overturn the prevailing social status quo. In Pasyon and Revolution, Ileto points out the possibility of Filipino folk religious traditions and some cultural values, those which are customarily taken to be promoting passivity, having latent meanings that can be revolutionary. One of these traditions is the reading/singing of the Pasyon (Passion of Christ) during Holy Week.

Historicity is what human beings make of themselves, and it is perhaps most conspicuous in the long educational process of humankind. Religion, culture and social institutions all have their rude beginnings. They slowly grow and reach their peaks. Still, there are those that decline yet later undergo a renaissance in another time and setting. They adapt to changing circumstances and can be subjected to revolutionary change. All such change is in its essence a change of meaning, working in people’s minds and hearts. It is through this that communities are built, transformed, and purified. For human community is a matter of a common field of experience, a common mode of understanding, a common measure of judgment, and a common consent. It is through the struggles, through the revolutions encountered in

89 Cf. R. C. Ileto, Pasyon and Revolution, especially pages 2-4.
90 This is further discussed in the next sections.
their history, that the Filipino common tao were formed. It is through these that they discover their identity, their aspirations, their limitations, and their assets and strength as a people. Any effort for their empowerment, therefore, must take their continuing historicity seriously. The history of revolutions is the story of the aspirations of people for a better life and secure future; and the human motivation is deeply rooted in the human heart and the human spirit. These aspirations are manifest in the passionate commitment of the people, in the vibrant language that inspired thousands to rise and allow their voices to be heard. They are embodied in the traditional cultural forms that persisted in spite of the variations in Philippine social structure.

The union of Church and State was the most salient feature of Spanish rule in the Philippines. It meant the active participation of the friars in the colonial procedures. The Spanish clergy, in this respect, became the leading instrument of power and vehicle for exploitation. This led to various protests from the natives against the new religion imposed by the colonizers. The poor, with the sufferings and oppression they were encountering and the relation of these sufferings to the new religion, had an ideological basis for protest, a contraposition of the power of their old gods to the power of the new religion. It meant a return to the old native religion – nativism. This was one response. A rejection of the new religion was a rejection of the Spanish rule. The natives had to assert to themselves that they had greater support and succor from their gods; that their gods were more powerful than the god of the colonizers and could relieve them from the abuses and exploitation of the practitioners of the new religion.

It must be remembered that by the reduction policy, the city center or the poblacion was the hub of most of the activities of the Spanish friars and officials. The natives were congregated into clustered village or settlement where they could more easily be instructed and Christianized under the friar’s eye. But since most of the indigenous people did not find it suitable for their way of life, they went to the mountains instead and stayed there and relied on the richness of the earth for their subsistence. They refused the new religion and practiced their indigenous customs and traditions, including the native religion. Most of the Spanish friars, therefore, treated them as savages and uncivilized. Most of the indigenous peoples or indigenous cultural communities of the Philippines today are still congregated in the mountains

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93 Under the Indigenous Peoples Rights Acts of 1997, the indigenous peoples/indigenous cultural communities refer to: “A group of homogenous societies identified by self-ascription and ascription by others, who have continuously lived as organized community on communally bounded and defined territory, and who have, under claims or ownership since time immemorial, occupied, possessed and utilized such territories, sharing bonds of language, customs, traditions and other distinctive cultural traits, or who have, through resistance to political, social and cultural inroads of colonization, non-indigenous religions and cultures, become historically differentiated
and in the countryside. Aside from being separated from the rest of the population of the cities, a relational rift has also divided the indigenous peoples from their other Filipino sisters and brothers in terms of social, economic, cultural, personal, and religious status and values. Since the advent of colonization until today, the problems that the indigenous peoples of the Philippines face sound all too familiar, as if nothing has changed. In fact, the problems have not only increased but have also become complicated. Added to the situation of poverty and neglect of development by the government are other issues such as human rights violation including their right to their ancestral domains, the effects of globalization, and so on.

Nativistic revolts were transformed in the passing of time. They began to adopt certain features of the Catholic religion. This reflected the growing strength of Catholicism as taking hold on the consciousness of the people by that time. Although the beginning of the rebellion was animated by anti-religious feelings, the Catholic religion had been part of the life of the natives for quite a long time already and therefore could not just be abandoned. The rebels adopted and adapted the Catholic religion. But many of these adaptations were incoherent. Aside from having messianic tendencies, the leaders of some of the rebelling groups were religious fanatics. Religious fanaticism led these groups to do the same things they were against to those who opposed them. In his elaboration of the liberation of desire, Sebastian

from the majority of the Filipinos. ICCs/IPs shall likewise include peoples who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descents from the populations which inhabited the country at the time of conquest or colonization, or at the time of inroads of non-indigenous religions and cultures, or the establishment of present state boundaries, who retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions, but who may have been displaced from their traditional domains or who may have resettled outside their domains.” (IPRA, Chap. II, Sec. 3(h). Cf. Evelyn S. Dunuan, “The General Situation of Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines Today,” a paper presented at the Sixth Mission Studies Lecture Series on “Indigenous Peoples and the Mission of the Church,” Maryhill School of Theology, Quezon City, April 26-30, 2004. Take note that this is a present day identification of the indigenous peoples of the Philippines. But when I speak of the indigenous during the pre-colonial and colonial period, I refer to the Filipino natives – the early settlers in the islands of the Philippine archipelago and those who descended from them.

A clear example is the rebellion led by Diego Silang of Vigan, Ilocos Sur. Silang, in contrast to the previous leaders of revolts, was an ilustrado prototype. His parents belonged to the principalia. Orphaned at an early age, he lived with the parish priest of Vigan. He was captured once by the Aetas of Zambales but was ransomed by a Recollect missionary. Silang was a celebrated rebel leader of the British occupation period. He urged the people to organize themselves to fight the British, warning them that the British domination could result in the loss of their Catholic religion. Members of the principalia and the common people united for action against not only the British but against the abusive Spaniards as well. Diego Silang made some demands, which were typical of the principalia objectives and all these were to be achieved with him as the head of the province but in the service of the Spanish king and in defense of what he termed “our sacred Catholic faith.” He declared Jesus of Nazareth to be Captain-General and himself Christ’s cabo mayor. His house was full of images of saints. He urged his followers to hear Mass on Sundays, go to confession and receive the
Moore has emphasized that if what concerns us when faced with an evil is to fight that evil rather than further the good, we become the very evil that we are fighting against. Some of the rebels succumbed to this fate.

The adoption of modified forms of the Catholic religion as described above showed the halfway hold of the Church over the minds of the people. Though the people rejected the institution because of its participation in colonial oppression, they did not renounce its beliefs and rituals. Gradually, the revolts with religious contents had become transformed into their opposites. The movements, which were originally rejecting the Catholic religion, had been transformed to protests against being denied status within the Catholic hierarchy.  

One of these kinds of movements was the Hermandad de la Archiconfradía del Glorioso Señor San José y de la Virgen del Rosario (Brotherhood of the Great Sodality of the Glorious Lord Saint Joseph and of the Virgin of the Rosary), founded by Apolinario de la Cruz, better known as

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Sacraments. But he also ordered that those principales who were opposing him be arrested. Those who resisted were to be killed. He also imposed a fine on each priest and properties of the Church were taken. Later, when odds were against him, Silang opted for compromise and shifted his allegiance from one master to another. Convinced of the superior qualities of the English, Silang offered his allegiance and that of his people to them. He became a British puppet. He was a prototype of the future leaders from the elite who would capitalize on the genuine grievances of the people, especially of the poor. Cf. R. Constantino, Vol. I, The Philippines: A Past Revisited (Pre-Spanish-1941).

Son of devout Catholic peasants, Hermano Pule went to Manila with a desire to join a monastic order. His application was rejected because he was a native. Despite the rejection, he continues to regard himself as a regular Catholic and applied for ecclesiastical recognition for his confraternity. The Catholic Church, however, refused, at the same time, labeled his organization heretical. The meetings of the group were raided and its members were harassed while some of them were arrested. Since the confraternity allowed only “pure-blooded” natives for its members, the Spaniards suspected that religion was being used as a cover for political designs. Thus, Pule and his followers became insurgents in their attitude towards the Church and State. When Pule was captured, he was executed after a hasty trial, his body dismembered and exhibited in the principal towns of Southern Tayabas. He was only twenty-seven years old.

After Hermano Pule’s death, the remaining members of the confraternity retreated to the mountains. The mountain of San Cristobal became the sect’s Holy Land, which some religious groups later also considered as their Jerusalem. Since the members of the confraternity were so devout, they came to be called Colorum, a corruption of the et saecula saeculorum. The name colorum was used by other groups during the American occupation and was applied by the authorities to various rebel organizations with mystical characteristics. Later, the term colorum became a common word used to describe any illegal activity. Cf. R. Constantino, Vol. I, The Philippines: A Past Revisited (Pre-Spanish-1941).
Hermano Pule. David Sweet suggested that Apolinario de la Cruz “was able to attract and mobilize supporters because he preached a convincing message of redemption to the Tagalog peasantry.” Sweet claims that the religious character of the movement provided strength rather than weakness.

While religion was impressed by most of the Spanish friars upon the people to encourage resignation to “the way things are” – everything being part of God’s design – Filipinos, especially among the peasants, had found an expression and relation of their experiences in the life, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When lowland Filipinos were converted to Spanish Catholicism they creatively evolved their own brand of folk Catholicism. The experience of the people in the readings of the story of Jesus in the Pasyon and its dramatization in the Senakulo developed into a language for people to articulate their own values, ideals, and even hope for liberation.

6.1.4 American Education

Another major factor in the awakening of consciousness of Filipinos is education. Education is a vital tool of a people striving for emancipation and an essential component of people’s spiritual development. During the Revolution, people were said to be schooled in their struggles. By responding to the situation at hand in efforts of breaking through difficult situations, people learned new ways of doing things and acquired skills in the process. It also means learning from past mistakes and offering better alternatives for the future. The process of the realization of true education that leads to empowerment and emancipation requires that we be aware of our society's situation, understand the basic solution to problems encountered within these situations, and have the courage and real concern to work and sacrifice ourselves for the achievement of true liberation. The process of education affects greatly the mind-set of a particular group of people. If empowerment


98 Cf. R. Ileto, Pasyon and Revolution, 15-16.

99 An example would be that of Norway. In 1942, while the Nazi forces occupied Norway, the then president Vidkun Quisling set out to change the country into a corporative state modeled on the fascist Italy. He decided to start first with the teachers, they being the key to changing the minds of the young. The teachers, however, protested. They told Quisling and his troops that they would not cooperate with the plan to change the education of the children to a fascist model. The teachers were subjected to suffering but never gave in. Eventually, Quisling was forced to
is the Church’s concern, then education is a must. But what if education as a
mind-setting scheme is used for pacification, setting the scene towards
facilitating colonization and oppression?

If Spain has left a legacy in Christianity that affected the moral and
spiritual development of Filipinos, the Americans, aside from ensuring their
one and only colony would have a taste for consumerism and fast food, have
set up a school system which offered education to most of the population, thus
making the Filipinos one of the few, if not the only, English-proficient Oriental
people today. Due to this, the Filipino people are sometimes unkindly
described as Malays who have spent 350 years in a convent and 50 years in
Hollywood. Just like the Christianity that Spain brought to the Philippines
as part of the pacification process, the educational system put up by the
United States of America was also a means of appeasing a people who were
defending the newly-won freedom from an invader who had posed as an
ally. As occurred in the conversion of Filipinos to Christianity by the
Spaniards, educating the Filipinos under the American sovereignty was an
instrument of colonial policy. If education can be the best tool for
emancipation, it can also be the most effective means to subjugate a people.
With the conviction that there is no measure that could so quickly promote the
pacification of the islands as education, the American public school system,
adopting English as the medium of instruction, was rapidly introduced on a
large scale in the Philippines. Such a system of education required the
direction of American teachers as the Filipino teachers who had been trained
in Spanish methods and language were ignorant of the English language.
With American teachers and textbooks, the Filipinos started learning not only a
new language, but also a new way of life. This would have been a blessing
had not the educational program been the handmaiden of colonial policy. The
Filipinos learned no longer as Filipinos but as colonials. Indigenous Filipino
ideals were slowly eroded. The distinct Filipino identity was lost with the new
framework for it did not draw from the wellsprings of the Filipino ethos, which a
genuine Filipino education would have been done. With the original motive of
assimilating Filipinos to American occupation, Presbyterian and Methodist
missioners arrived with American soldiers in 1899 to teach in schools. In
1901, the transport Thomas, with six hundred teachers, sailed from San
Francisco to the Philippines. It became “a second army of occupation – surely
the most remarkable cargo ever carried to an Oriental colony.”

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100 Cf. Niall O’Brien, Island of Tears, Island of Hope: Living the Gospel in a Revolutionary Situation, 1993, 73.
101 Cf. The Philippines In Search of Justice, 7.
The Church of the Philippines, concerned with the empowerment of the poor and the emancipation of the people through spiritual development, has to take into account the educational process of the Filipino. Spiritual development is an educating process. Genuine education leads to maturation of the spiritual life. As educators, the people of the Church have to continuously re-examine and deliberate over their values and their general approach to the making of the authentic Christian Filipino. They have to be aware of the damage that mis-education and “over-education” have been causing to the individual loob. The point of education is to enable people to think, not only to impart skills but also to impart a vision, that is, not only to exist in the survival mode but with the understanding of how we and our world can be better.\textsuperscript{103} The point of education is to seek for direction that would break the cycle of ignorance, oppression, and hopelessness. There is a transforming power in true education.

But this power can be corrupted when people with vested interests want to perpetuate a particular meaning and this is communicated through schooling. In so doing, they displace the cultural moment; they marginalize the cultural process of the people that they want to subjugate. Through American education, Filipinos began to embrace and became dependent on the American way of life. Thus, the American way is the best way. Even until the present, this way of thinking is very dominant in the Filipino. To be educated like the Americans, to act like them, to speak their language, is the civilized and cultured way of life. It has become the norm of the good life. To go to the United States remains the dream of most of the Filipinos – the American dream. The educational system in the Philippines has tended to cater to the export labor market by producing standard applicants for it. So, what the Philippines suffers is a brain drain. And, even when time was dominated by the rhetoric of radical anti-imperialism, a good university became one that can produce political activists and not social workers. The measure of success in education for Filipinos has been to get rich and famous. Education for the service of the common good has been left on the sidelines.

The corruption of the transforming power of education is imposed by a system whose definition of the humanly desirable way of life excludes most of the human race. It is this definition that justifies our speaking of other people as under-developed or undeveloped. Underdevelopment is then regarded as servitude under the dominating culture. The exercise of true freedom has been taken from people for there is now an unquestioning reality that dominates their life, and this was inlaid by the education process.

Education is connected with our life of meaning and desire. Once a system has control over people’s life of feeling and imagination, then it becomes more deadly than a brutal coercive power that has guns at its disposal, because it now controls what the people can think. This is control at

the deep level, where people lose the capacity to imagine and think for alternatives.

If this is the working of the system in a society, not solely of the educational system but of the economic and political system as well, what will help people then or empower them to move out of the present helplessness? Brendan Lovett suggests that “if our problem is that our emotional life, our life of desire, is constrained, constricted, and controlled, then only an experience that enables a more powerful emotion or desire to be experienced by us helps us to break out of the whole pattern.” This is religious experience – an experience deep enough to exorcize “the risk of adventurers climbing to power through sagacious myth-making.” Here is where the effectiveness of education rests.

6.1.5 The Shaping of Filipino Christian Spirituality

I have been referring to ‘spirituality’ as the thrust of spirit negotiating the movement of life in people. This section aims at providing a continuity of the movement of the human spirit that has been working in the life of the Filipinos through their struggles in the past until the present as they search for meaning and direction to create the future. This movement has been affected by the different ways people respond to meeting the signs of the times. This takes shape in the different forms of spiritualities that Filipinos embraced in the process. The Christian Church lives within the dynamics of this process and, in that way, the basic ecclesial communities as well.

The reason for such a long space being allotted to the discussion about the Revolution in the previous section is that it was during this time that the ‘awakening’ of the Filipinos was brought about. From that awakening, arose the knowledge of and the desire for liberation. Their suffering in the hands of slavery and oppression was epistemic. The people’s response to colonization during the Revolution clearly reflected the praxis of conversion. It revealed the vitality of the Filipino mind and spirit as the people adapted to new situations and responded to limitations, most of which were imposed by the situations themselves. As Filipinos tried to integrate the faith they had inherited from their ancestors with the Christian Catholic faith that was introduced by the colonizers, there evolved a Filipino brand of folk Christianity. It is a fact that the majority of the Filipinos, especially lowland Filipinos, converted to Christianity. Therefore, though there is nothing wrong about evoking the ancient rituals of the babaylans or native priests (they too have to be considered and respected), it is not appropriate to glorify them as the sole indication of the true Filipino spirit.

Thus, Filipinos who have been steeped in dominant elitist discourses in schools cannot simply dismiss any of the popular movements that emerged in

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104 B. Lovett, A Dragon Not for the Killing, 179.
105 B. Lonergan, Insight, 543.
the nation as aberration in an otherwise comprehensible past. Instead, they have to search for meaning in them and not simply resort to convenient explanations like fanaticism, nativism, and millenarianism.\textsuperscript{106} This would only alienate them further from their brethren who lived through them. The world of their brethren is part of their world. There is no isolated individual. Authentic spirituality speaks of life lived in communion. The Filipino term for community is \textit{sambayanan}. Maybe, for Filipinos, it can provide a grammar that would help them understand their world and the wider world with their brethren. \textit{Samba} means worship. \textit{Bayan} (nation) is the people and \textit{bayani} (hero/heroine) is somebody who has offered one’s life for the life of the community. From this, one can discover that every authentic Filipino community is a worshipping community and thus, has a prayerful nature. This was evident in every emerging popular movement. It can be seen in the way faith affects and is integrated in the moral and spiritual life of the people. This, too, is the moral fiber of the basic ecclesial communities.

Having descended from different cultures, Filipinos can recognize and accept the reality that people are different. The many struggles that they have faced through the centuries and the moments that they were able to break through them creatively, made them realize that they too are capable of change and transformation. By exercising these capabilities, they can be enabled to overcome individual, group, and cultural issues and biases, thus, enabling them to understand and live with differences. Identity becomes a source of energy, where differences are not eliminated but embraced in sincerity and compassion. The others are not excluded but are reached out to.

Philippine history definitely is not limited to stories of defeats. Stories of courage pervade this history. Courage always involves fear. But it is the overcoming of fear that spells valor. And, it is fear overcome that makes one open for compassion. Compassion is the triumph of the spirit that promotes the healing of the world. Where a people get the courage to overcome fear and work in compassion to the healing of the world is the impetus of their spiritual development.

The revolts of the poor in Philippine history are often disregarded by psychological stress-strain theories. They are dismissed as “blind responses” to social breakdown, instinctual reactions to the social order, spontaneous, lacking in ideology and fragmented. In contrast, the elite-led movements are “rational” and “realistic.” But, if we are going to reflect on how the very tools used by the Spanish colonizers to encourage resignation to things as they are and to inculcate among the natives loyalty to Spain and Church were used by the poor to provide Philippine society with a language for articulating its own values, ideals and hopes of liberation, then we may be forced to think twice. The passion play or the \textit{senakulo} was one of these that proved to have been given latent meanings by the people to become revolutionary. Social change,

therefore, can be attributed more to some inner dynamism of Philippines society, through its people, than to external stresses and ideological influences. This inner dynamism enables the struggles for dignity and freedom to become occasions in which the hidden or unarticulated features of the society reveal themselves to the contemporary inquiries.

More detailed perusal of two popular revolutionary movements in the past – the *Confradia de San Jose* and the *Katipunan* – serves to consolidate the argument. Our interest here is not in the character of either of the leaders but in the provenance and power of the symbolism invoked.

A letter of Apolinario de la Cruz, leader of the *Confradia*, to console his brothers contained statements that revealed two facets of the meaning of personal response. The first one refers to what we in this present work name conversion. It talked about a break with the past “which does not have to be lived again”. From it, we can deduce that conversion as commitment meant a total passage from one state of being to another. The second one points out that response is indicated by a “flame of true love,” synonymous with “awakening” or “becoming conscious.”

The substance of the statements made by Apolinario was drawn from the teachings of the Catholic faith that were introduced by the colonizers to convert the people to the faith.

In passages of that letter from which the above quotations were taken, we encounter the ‘glow,’ a form of *liwanag* (light). This liwanag brings about the awakening and upon close reading seems to indicate that it is the union of humanity itself. The sparkling of this liwanag gives birth to an overflowing of the loób of the human race, which bears the fruit of happiness for all.

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107 Huoag ang aalala ala ay ng na caraan na para ng pagdararan pa yamang cayo ipinag papabor ng cahinusayang Gaua na sucat ycapag alab ng Sintang tunay cay S. Josef at sa Amg Dios nasya tatlo sapag catauo niya. [Apolinario de la Cruz (AC) to Confradia, 5 July 1840 (PNA)]

(Don’t let your minds dwell on the past as if that has to be lived again, for I have favored you with good works which have fed the flame of true love for St. Joseph and God who has three Persons.)

Munti bagang diquit con an mga batang masusunod sa atin ay agad maguisin nitong ating capisanan at siyang pagcalachang asal, at ano pa tayo ay manga matay man ay may masasabing ating pamana sa canila. [Ibid.]

( It’s as if there is a small but radiant glow (diquit) should our children be immediately awakened by our brotherhood and grow up in the best behavior, so that even if we shall die we can say that we have left them an inheritance.)

(Cf. R. C. Ileto, *Pasyon and Revolution*, 54.)
The metaphor of liwanag, which had a dominant place in the teachings of both the Confradía and the Katipunan can represent the ‘spark of light’ in the language of the mystics. In Lonergan, this is the principle, the impetus, and the crux of self-transcendence – the experience of God’s love that drives us into loving God and our neighbors. The overflowing of human beings’ loób, bearing fruit in good works, is what makes for authenticity. One is maginoo (noble) as long as the external signs of power are matched by an equally beautiful loób. This might just respond to the critique of some to the Filipino way of addressing the Blessed Virgin Mary as Aba (Ma)Ginoong María, puno ka ng grasya! (Hail Mary, full of grace!) Ginoo, here, does not refer to an address to a male individual that translates to ‘Mister’ in English. Rather, it refers to the nobility of the Virgin Mary, where her blessedness rests as a person excelling others because of her most beautiful loób manifested in her compassion and great love for humankind.

In the one and only issue of the organ of Katipunan, the Kalayaan, Bonifacio interprets the past, beginning with an account of the “Fall” of the Tagalog race. To communicate what he regarded as a matter of great importance to each Filipino, Bonifacio used the form that traditionally conveyed such matters – the pasyon form. He used the attributes of paradise to describe the pre-Spanish situation. And, as in the pasyon stories, Bonifacio says that the “fall” of the Tagalog race happened when the native leaders “became seduced by the sweetness of such enticing words,” the same with the world of Adam and Eve that began to fall apart when they succumbed to the words of the serpent. The “fall” of the Tagalogs is expressed in terms of increasing blindness or absence of liwanag. This condition made the people to live an inauthentic relationship that reduced them to lowly behavior

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108 “Listahan,” by AC, Manila, July 1840 (accompanies a letter to the Confradía bearing the same date; PNA. Cf. R. Ileto, Pasyon and Revolution, 55.
109 The Pasyon, written in verse, tells the story of the sufferings of Christ, beginning with the creation and ending with the resurrection, but with the emphasis on the trial, scourging, crucifixion and burial of Christ. The Pasyon, being used by the Filipinos until the present, was originally derived from that of Gaspar Aquino de Belen of1703, which was in turn based on Spanish religious texts dating back to the 16th century. The performance of the Pasyon is always by chanting, known as the pabasa (reading), but the forms it takes vary in different provinces as do the tunes and improvisations used. The passion play, senakulo, is now based on the pasyon texts, but they may or may not have evolved from the text itself. The pasyon is never used in a formal religious or church context. It is sung instead in the pabasa ritual held by one or more households within a barangay during Holy Week. The readings are usually performed in fulfillment of religious vows, usually associated with healing. It involves an all-night vigil, to which relatives, neighbors, and friends are invited. Depending on the vow, some people prepare supper for the readers, and others breakfast, but all will serve snacks at midnight, with salabat (hot ginger tea) and sometimes a small bottle of rum to ‘warm’ voices made hoarse by the night-time chill. Cf. F. Cannell, Power and Intimacy in the Christian Philippines, 167-169.
110 Cf. R. C. Ileto, Pasyon and Revolution, 82-84.
and dishonor. In the absence of love and compassion, the conditions were present for the breaking of relationships. What is lost in the context of blindness or darkness is the ability to keep to the right path. ‘Reason,’ in Tagalog, is *katwiran*, the root word of which is *tawid* (cross) or *daan* (way). Katwiran, therefore, connotes ‘straightness of the way,’ crossing the right path. To be reasonable is to follow the right path. Thus, katwiran, is also associated with the liwanag of the sun which shows the way. The East, the direction from which liwanag comes, is associated with the life-giving powers of the rising sun. It is related with rebirth and is also the destination of the “way of the cross.” The “sun of reason” enables people to “see” and participate in the restoration of wholeness even at the point of death. Human beings, as the universe brought to consciousness, must participate by taking the straight path and not merely passively wait for *ginhawa* (wholeness) to come. One must take responsibility of one’s life and of the world and must not entrust her right to life to anybody. We must die to our inauthentic relationships and be reborn in a new condition of wholeness. This wholeness, in the time of the conquest, was manifested in *katipunan* (brotherhood/sisterhood) or *kalayaan* (freedom).\(^\text{111}\)

In the emblem or the flag of the Katipunan, the letter *K*, in old Tagalog script occupied the center of the sun with an indefinite (later reduced to eight) number of white rays. Whether the letter *K* stood for “Katipunan” or “Kalayaan” is expressive of the emerging consciousness of the Filipinos during the Revolution, reflecting the interpretations of the Katipuneros themselves in terms of their experiences. Agoncillo\(^\text{112}\), in his classic study of the Katipunan, demonstrates that the *K* must have stood for “Katipunan,” the organization’s name, but admits that it may have changed its significance to “Kalayaan” probably because of the aptness of the letter *K* to symbolize the ideals of the revolutionists – Liberty – that was forced into their consciousness by intense nationalistic feeling.

At the foundation of the organization, the letter *K* in the flag of the Katipunan stood for its name. At the time that the people were scattered due to treachery and betrayal, with some of the leaders of the nation being swayed towards assimilation with the conqueror’s program, brotherhood (sisterhood) – solidarity and unity – was the prime essential virtue. Thus, it served as the guiding light of the people, to come together as one people and generate people power that would topple oppression and slavery. During that time as well, the word “kalayaan” had not really emerged yet. As Ileto illustrated, the root word, “laya” cannot be found in Noceda and Sanlucar’s 18\(^\text{th}\) century Tagalog dictionary.\(^\text{113}\) What can found is the word “layao,” which is defined as “bodily pleasure,” “satisfaction of necessities,” and giving to another what he wants. Later, Jose Villa Panganiban made a distinction between *layá*}

\(^{111}\) Cf. R. C. Ileto, *Pasyon and Revolution*, 86.


(freedom) and layá (synonymous with layaw). With the first term, the word kalayaan comes to mean freedom, independence, liberty and kalayaán refers to self-abandonment. With “laya” (true value of freedom) and “layao” (bodily pleasure and satisfaction), we can see that Filipinos too have the language that distinguishes true value from mere satisfaction. The value of “kalayaan” (freedom) imposed itself on the Filipinos during the Revolution that they were able to set aside and let go of their own “layao” for the sake of this value.

Ileto made an interesting and instructive footnote, comparing kalayaan with karayawan of the Tausug (one of the Muslim tribes in Mindanao). Karayawan literally means “goodness,” but also implies a state of pleasure and happiness in the afterlife. Most Tausug fighters believe that if they die in battle they will be automatically “inside of karayawan” since the religious merit of the killer is transferred to his or her victim. Correlating this with the Tagalog context, Ileto assumes that dying for kalayaan could mean automatically entering a state of bliss in heaven, particularly if the struggle is interpreted as a pasyon (way of the cross).

Prior to the rise of the separatist movement, kalayaan did not mean “independence” or “freedom.” In order to translate the ideas of “liberty, fraternity, and equality” that were learned from the West into the Tagalog language, propagandists like Bonifacio, Jacinto, and Aguinaldo built on the word layaw and transformed it into laya. If there is brotherhood, if there is unity and solidarity in compassion, then freedom is achievable. Ginhawa (wholeness) becomes a reality not in the satisfaction of one’s needs but in the realization of true freedom. The criterion of one’s decisions and choices shift from mere satisfaction to true values. This, in Lonergan’s term, is moral conversion. Ginhawa happens in the praxis of genuine and effective kalayaan. Effective freedom demands openness to grasping, motivating, and executing (here lies the fullness of effectivity) a broad or narrow range of otherwise possible courses of action. In biblical terms, freedom from slavery demands going out of a more or less comfortable Egypt and crossing the desert of uncertainties.

The manifesto written by Emilio Jacinto, which is the second major item in the first issue of Kalayaan, shows how the desire for freedom forced the people to act in order to claim it. In it, Kalayaan is presented as the shadow conversing with a youth (representing the oppressed nation) who is lamenting, at the same time, contemplating his miserable state caused by the mockeries and sufferings inflicted upon his people. The shadow tells the youth that

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116 Kalayaan is still a shadow because the people were still enslaved by the colonizers. But at the end of the Jacinto manifesto, as the people heed to the call of Kalayaan to love her and be willing to die for her, liwanag is seen to be with him, in his eyes, symbolizing the people’s experiencing the pasyon, a dying to a state of darkness and being conscious of the “way” that has to be traversed.
she\textsuperscript{117}, Kalayaan, always appears whenever stupidity\textsuperscript{118} causes the hardships and sufferings of people and nations. Stupidity causes blindness and tears only to those without life and blood to do something about the sufferings inflicted to the people. “To weep in one’s house, in the silence and darkness of the night, is inconceivable; it is all the more improper for a youth…it is not proper.”\textsuperscript{119} All the blind who cannot see the “way” does is weep and despair. The enslaved condition of the people is a result of the weakness of \textit{loób}.

The development in the consciousness of the people, expressed in the way they related and responded to situations, seemed to have followed similar patterns. Macario Sacay and his romantic katipunan idealists, who were at the helm of the revolution against the Americans, took up the kalayaan ideal to respond to the realities of the post-1902 colonial politics, while the bulk of the principales who supported the revolution accepted a revised program for the attainment of independence. One can also easily recognize in later popular movements of the poor, such as the \textit{Lapiang Malaya}\textsuperscript{120} during the Marcos regime, the continuity with the ways and ideals of the religio-political societies and other peasant-based groups of the past. The presence of the revolutionaries in the mountains, especially in the Mounts of San Cristobal and

\textsuperscript{117} Jacinto depicted Kalayaan as feminine. It should be noted that layaw, from which \textit{laya} and \textit{kalayaan} were drawn, means satisfaction of one’s needs that is equated to the pampering treatment by parents. Thus, \textit{kalayaan}, as a political term, is inseparable from its connotation of parent-child relationship that reflects lowland Filipino social values such as the tendency of mothers to pamper their children and develop strong emotional ties with them. The extensive treatment of Jesus Christ’s preparation to depart from home in the \textit{pasyon} is a classic exposition of the role of \textit{utang na loób} in defining an adult’s response to his mother’s care (layaw) in the past. Cf. R. C. Ileto, \textit{Pasyon and Revolution}, 87 and 14.

\textsuperscript{118} Stupidity here alludes to the refusal to embrace the three-phase conversion process (intellectual, moral, religious) as articulated by Lonergan.

\textsuperscript{119} R. C. Ileto, \textit{Pasyon and Revolution}, 89.

\textsuperscript{120} Also called the Freedom Party, Lapiang Malaya was headed by a charismatic Bicolano named Valentin de los Santos. His goals were similar to those of the early revolutionary religious movements: true justice, true equality, and true freedom for the country. Though he appeared to be a hero to some, he was also deemed to be a madman by others. He was, for example, a medium regularly communicating with Bathala (supreme god) and past Filipino patriots, above all Rizal and linked the attainment of freedom with the \textit{Parousia} prophesied in the New Testament. He subscribed to the ancient beliefs in the magical potency of sacred weapons and formulaic prayers. His demand, in early 1967, for the resignation of President Ferdinand Marcos was his final act of defiance against the political establishment, which he believed to have become too dependent with alien powers, most of all to the United States of America. His demand was dismissed and contributed to the heightening of tension that ended in the bloody “Black Sunday” (May 1967) massacre, where scores of his comrades laid dead on the street along a section of Taft Avenue in Manila after enthusiastically meeting the challenge of the automatic weapons fire from government troopers. He was taken to the Mental Hospital in the aftermath and pronounced insane. He was put into a cell together with a hopeless violent case and was mauled and beaten while sleeping. He lost consciousness and died after a week without regaining consciousness. Cf. R. C. Ileto, \textit{Pasyon and Revolution}, 1-2.
Banahaw, activated once again the remnant of the Confradía, the Colorum society. At present, Mount Banahaw remains the place of various religious groups including the Rizalistas, who believe that Jose Rizal is god. They practice ancient rituals and beliefs reminiscent of those of the Confradía.

The CBCP Pastoral on Filipino spirituality opted to view spirituality as a path arising from a spiritual experience that leads to holiness (*Landas ng Pagpapakabanal*).\(^{121}\) Surely, we can find the spiritual elements in the experiences of the people, especially of the poor, who were confronted with imposed limitations in their struggle to achieve *ginhawa* in the processes they had to undergo as illustrated and elaborated above. Time and again, whenever there is suffering to face and to respond to and when darkness blinds the eyes, Filipinos, as one *katipunan*, draw energy from the same well to allow the *liwanag* of *kalayaan* to shine again. This has become the movement of the spirit of the Filipino through the people’s historical struggles. As Christians, the path, the movement is defined as the Filipino’s historical encounter with Christ. The encounter is manifested within the life of witness and worship of the faithful and takes place in the day-to-day life of the Filipino. The mission of the community called the Christian Church is to allow that encounter to happen, deepening it as they journey with the people on the path to holiness. And, as “love, where present, cannot possibly be content with remaining always the same,”\(^{122}\) the spirit continues to move within the emerging Filipino Christian Church.

### 6.2 The People and the Christian Church

We now focus on the Christian Church itself, specifically the Catholic Church which is predominant in numbers and influence in the Philippines and the instigator of the building of what are now called Basic Ecclesial Communities. As elaborated above, the Filipino Christianity of today evolved from the people’s integration of their indigenous faith tradition with that of the new religion introduced by their colonizers in their struggle to search for a constructive response in the face of colonization. We have stressed the extent to which the religious system in the Philippines is interwoven with the cultural system. An authentic Christian response that facilitates the restructuring of the society will, therefore, give serious attention to the evolving consciousness of the people as they respond to situations.

It has been mentioned that accounts of pre-colonial Philippine native faith, beliefs and practices are very much limited. However, some practices are still

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prevalent and manifest in the ways of life of Filipino indigenous peoples at present. Through these, together with an explication of the emerging Church in the Philippines, we can somehow determine the kind of Catholic Christianity that is being lived by more than eighty percent of the total population of the Philippines today, and thus, examine the role and the kind of performance that the Catholic Church is carrying out in the authentic development of Christian Filipinos.

The Catholic Church of the Philippines, to be effective and authentic in her mission to preach the Good News, must consider all facets of the Filipino life. Spirituality is at the foundation of the fulfillment of such mission. To live life to the full, in authenticity, that is, living the creative tension is understood to be the response to the summoning of the spirit. In Christian terms, this is to live in the spirit of Jesus Christ. In what way can this spirit be embodied in Filipino life?

It is historically true that the colonizers bequeathed practices and influences—many enduring to the present—which exacted several problems and suffering to be carried by Filipino shoulders. Then again, as we emphasized above, there is no way forward if the sole response is to put the blame on the past for whatever suffering and hardships people can be encountering now. Every individual of the past and of the present is part and parcel of contemporary human and world situation. This is the reason why a creative and wise appropriation of the past is crucial in responding to the signs of the times. The past has to be known as it was and people have to learn from it so that the same mistakes will not be committed again. It is a common adage that history repeats itself. But history and the story of our emergence reveals that the movement of life is a series of insights and breakthroughs; that our memories, especially dangerous memories, can enable us to break through the mistakes of the past as long as we are able to grasp the insights and in faith have the courage to take the risks of responsibility and love. This is moving on to the future.

The Philippine Catholic Church has drawn from the precepts of liberation theology that tells us that being a Christian means making an option for those who are marginalized by history and society. This option is made not simply out of compassion but from faith that the spirit of Jesus Christ has been breathed unto us to become our own so that we can participate in bringing about the transformation of the human society as a whole.¹²³ Thus, the Philippine Church has opted to be a Church of the poor. What is the meaning of this option? To be Church of and for the poor is to be “a Church that facilitates the emergence of people who take responsibility for their own lives, their own history, their own faith.”¹²⁴ It is a Church, which is genuinely the space where freedom, growth, and authenticity for human beings become

¹²⁴ B. Lovett, On Earth as in Heaven, 39.
possible. It is a Church that enables and leads her members into the authentic
doing of what Jesus did.

6.2.1 Christ Crucified and the Filipino

Christian Filipinos show a deep affinity with the story of Christ Jesus, with
the story of Christ’s crucifixion. The Holy Week ceremonies of the Catholic
Church in the Philippines, for example, with the symbols of sacrifice, 
redemption and resurrection, have become a language for liberation used by
most peasant and religious leadership. But, what does it mean, for the
Filipinos, to invest their salvation in something “so mutable, so time bound, so
subject to pain and death as a [crucified] human body?” As Benigno
Beltran has emphasized, the notion held by Filipinos concerning the person
and function of Christ can only be clarified in the light of their suffering and the
“hideous poverty and oppression that burden them.”

We have seen that during the Revolution, the idiom of liberation,
especially among the peasants, had to do with a certain understanding of
Christ’s passion, death, and resurrection. This is widely discernible in the way
Filipinos appealed to the Pasyon at the height of the Revolution. The
Spaniards, who introduced Christianity and the story of Jesus Christ to the
Filipinos, presented the pasyon and the senakulo to discourage the natives
from enriching and educating themselves, for when they do, it would pose a
definite threat to colonial rule. Just like Jesus, the natives must accept their
suffering as part of the divine plan and simply wait for redemption to come in
the after life. However, Filipinos discovered that the pasyon and the senakulo,
which tell mostly of the story of Jesus Christ, abound with accounts that
suggest the potential power of the “poor and the ignorant” and possibilities for
them to challenge the prevailing oppressive social structures of the time.
Since Jesus, despite coming from their social class, was able to rise as a
savior and challenge the powerful of his time (the Romans and the religious
leaders), the poor were culturally prepared to enact such analogous scenarios
in real life in response to economic pressure and the appearance of
charismatic leaders.

The description of the pain and sufferings of the people is evocative of the
lengthy pasyon passages that describe not only the suffering Christ but also of
his mother, Mary, who was an active participant in the Christ’s experience.
The description of hardships and weeping in the pasyon is meant to evoke,

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125 Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, Julian of Norwich and the Mystical Body

126 Benigno Beltran, “Who Do You Say That I Am? A Theological Inquiry into the
Notion Held by Filipino Catholics Concerning the Person and Functions of Christ”, a
doctoral dissertation for the Facultate Theologieae Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana,
Rome, 1985, 1.

127 Cf. R. C. Ileto, Pasyon and Revolution, 19.
from the reader and listener, compassion and sympathy, which are signs of response and a change in loób.

We need some sense of how deep the religious experience of the Filipinos was during the Revolution in their desire to find meaning in their suffering and respond to it if we are to understand why the faith founded on their encounter with Jesus Christ has endured until the present time and continues to provide them with strength, power, and courage in their daily life struggles. Having such a sense is by no means easy for us today whose attention is focused on coping with the inexorable pressures of a market-dominated world. The freedom to attend to the victims of history comes across as a very special grace in our times. For the victims themselves the situation can be significantly different. Some of them can recognize the burning relevance of their faith to the present situation very clearly. It is in this sense that solidarity with victims is seen to be essential to our own healing.

The sacred and the profane, according to Beltran, are not clearly separable in the Filipino thought though they may be recognized as distinct. This is why there is the tendency of either taking the transcendent dimension of truth for granted (weight placed on the pole of limitation) or to put too much emphasis on the divinity of Jesus (weight on the pole of transcendence). There is the tendency for Filipinos to see Jesus’ humanity as different from them because he is God.

Beltran therefore suggests that a faithful identification with Jesus Christ must account for the unity of both the human and the divine in Jesus. The story of Jesus Christ, especially his suffering, death, and resurrection must be seen as a point, a source, where people can see the liberation and redemption of humanity in the midst of sin and suffering in their society. This is where Lonergan’s Law of the Cross can provide a critical aid. “The challenge will only be met by people who are keeping alive the memory and awareness of past and present suffering and whose lives and thinking revolve now about practical concern for victims, a concern that ensures that the evil will not keep happening.”

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128 We emphasize here again that in the human subject is the dialectic between limitation and transcendence. Being human means to be limited but at the same time to aspire or desire for the truly good – the capacity for self-transcendence. Not recognizing this dynamic within the human, that is, to concentrate or dwell solely on either of the poles collapses the balance (creative living) and would mean a total denial of what it means to be human. To plainly take the human as limited is despair. We are left as good-for-nothings. To purely take the human as transcendent, on the other hand, is the angelic fallacy, our feet above the ground. The creative stance, therefore, is to live the creative tension between our limitations as human beings and our capacity for self-transcendence. Our limitations provide the context to reach for self-transcendence. See B. Lonergan, Insight, especially 472-475.


130 B. Lovett, It’s Not Over Yet, 41-42.
“The human motivation is deeply rooted in the human heart and the human spirit must be given its due and rightful consideration.” Human motivations shape culture. The quality of culture lies in the quality of people who make decisions. Left by the Spaniards in the consciousness of the Filipinos is the bahala na (let it be) mentality, leaving everything to the gulong ng palad (wheel of fate). The ‘right moment’ for the Filipino is a coincidence of occurrences made possible by the will of God or by blind fate. Therefore, it does not need a moment of decision. But, in response to this, we can refer to the common Filipino saying, Nasa Diyos ang awa, nasa tao ang gawa, which is almost a translation of “God helps those who help themselves”. What is important then is for faith to mediate the Filipino culture to the dynamic views of human beings as capable of kairos, a moment of decision and transformation, a moment of shaping history and creating a future. This capacity is the movement of the spirit in people and is made possible by love. “The human heart, as we know from experience, is mad to love and hungers to be loved in return.” The power of Jesus Christ lies in the truth that sets the human spirit free – free to let God be God for us and free to become the true human beings that we are meant to be. In Jesus Christ, we are exposed to “the wisdom of God that shows us the imperative of breaking the shackles that do not allow our human heart and human spirit free.”

Now and always, as Filipinos continue to chant and perform the Pasyon, they have to bring to the fore all the sufferings of the people in our history and place them at the foot of the Cross of Christ. New life, resurrection, is life at

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131 J. X. Labayen, Revolution and the Church of the Poor, 71.
132 It is necessary to make a distinction here between this kind of “letting be,” which is passive from that of Meister Eckhart’s Gelassenheit. True letting be for Eckhart is letting God be God, being open for the Mystery to work in us. It is the trust in the Mystery that enables us to work for justice grounded in love no matter what it entails for us – my life for the life of the world. It is a kind of living in the world wherein both categories of experience, the transcendent and the existential are held in balance. Cp. Oliver Davies, Meister Eckhart: Mystical Theologian, London: SPCK, 1991, 174. This, I believe, is another way of articulating what Lonergan develops as the dialectic of the subject – living the creative tension between limitation and transcendence. Total letting be to God is to follow the paradox of the Christian message, “He who would save his soul must lose it” [Matt. 16:25]. The three central activities that Eckhart uses to describe how the soul attains its goal are detaching, birthing, and breaking-through. On this see Bernard McGinn, The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart, The Man From Whom God Hid Nothing, New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001, 132-134. The bahala na attitude can be creative for the Filipinos if it means the trust in the Mystery that enables one to lose one’s life for others so that others or the community may find life. Being able to lose one’s life for the sake of life in the community is the birthing of God in the world, breaking-through to something we never thought to be possible. This is the true bagong buhay (new life, easter, resurrection) for us.
134 J. X. Labayen, Revolution and the Church of the Poor, 82.
135 J. X. Labayen, Revolution and the Church of the Poor, 96.
the foot of the cross. Face to face with evil at its worst, the desire for the greatest good is at its peak. The total reversal (kairos) that happens does not stop at the person who experiences it but goes through that person to others. This is the indwelling of the Spirit wherever the Resurrection is preached. The Spirit falls upon the hearers and binds all in authentic friendship. Vox victimarum, vox Dei. It is by the Resurrection that the cry of the victims is heard.

...the love that must meet us can be mediated by others, but only if they are beyond getting caught in the darkness, only if they are capable of suffering from the darkness without being trapped by it into the hell of the night of their own private suffering, only if they are themselves capable of the suffering of compassion and forgiveness. And one will know oneself to be healed.

CONCLUSION

In spite of the diverse social and cultural influences that they received and inculcated within the history of colonization, Filipinos have always come up with the way of putting these diversities together to arrive at something that is uniquely their own. In other words, it shows that something good can emerge from bad and difficult situations, when events and experiences are taken seriously. Creativity can flow greatly from people faced with difficulties. There are two kinds of response that may be given. Under great pressures, one can get numbed and resign oneself to the way things are. But then, there are also stories of people rising to glory when pushed to the limits. The latter can pave the way towards authentic development and manifest the spiritual potential in a people desiring to transform their situation. This is evident in the different ways Filipinos responded to situations in the past. Because of the struggle, customary life was questioned. People had to look for sources of strength and wisdom to enable them to respond creatively and responsibly to what is going forward. They had to look into their values, into their meanings, and into their own capacities as a people. They had to look into their relationships with one another and to that ultimate value that sustains them through. They had to look into their faith.

The Catholic Church of the Philippines of today emerged from these stories of people struggling to find the meaning of their faith especially in

136 Preaching, according to Meister Eckhart, is the actuality of the Mystery being celebrated and drawing the community into this actuality. I want to underscore it here so as to clarify that every authentic believer of the faith, that is, the Christian faith, must become a preacher – to allow the Word made flesh to be present here and now. To preach for Eckhart is to bring out from within so that “your light may shine before people.” (Mt. 5:16). One has to experience the love of God to be love in return, to draw from that love and live and work for solidarity and compassion. Cp. Bernard McGinn, The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart, The Man From Whom God Hid Nothing, 27.

moments of difficulties and hardships. It is here that their faith and their solidarity as a nation are truly tested and necessitate the manifestation and execution of their full potential as a community. Limits are real and are not to be taken for granted. In the midst of limitation, there can be a way forward that is available to human beings. It is said that the surest way to betray the past is to repeat it. Therefore, the future depends on people being able to grasp with creative intelligence what is going forward, in creative re-appropriation. There is in people the spiritual potential to change situations, enabling them to resurrect from their buried selves into a community of kindness and self-sacrifice.

Given the frankly unflattering historical record of the Church’s leadership in the Philippines, it might seem highly improbable that a major creative initiative was to be expected from that source. However, the improbable happened. In the desire to counteract the socio-political dilemmas that generated grave poverty and injustices in Philippine society, the Church of the Philippines has committed itself to the building and promotion of Basic Christian Communities. The hope is that this initiative can tap the spiritual potential mentioned in the previous paragraph. The bulk of Chapter Seven will be devoted to the exploration of this initiative.
CHAPTER 7

THE BASIC CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES OF THE PHILIPPINES

Spirituality is constitutive of the meanings and values that motivate people to act. The manner in which these meanings and values are lived out is apparent in the history of a particular group of people. A positive evocation of change in the meaning constitutive of the situation will mediate a transition from the reigning status quo to an alternative situation that approximates more closely the reign of God in human affairs. Lonergan’s methodological reflections have illuminated how the transposition of a tradition from a world of classical-mindedness to a world of historical consciousness is possible. This historical consciousness demands commitment to what Lonergan called the “on-going, self-correcting process of learning” that is operative in all human living.

Chapters Five and Six provided for us the socio-cultural and historical-religious context from where the Christian Church of the Philippines emerged. In these two preceding chapters, we have consulted the past because of the light that it can throw into the present. The current Chapter that concludes Part Two is concerned with the situations and conditions of the present Basic Christian (Ecclesial) Communities of the Philippines and their movement on the way to the future. This Chapter focuses on the experiences of the people who are involved in building and sustaining these communities – the Church hierarchy and the laity. Constitutive of this are the decisions made by the people involved in these communities in relation to the present actions being taken.

Human life is a continuous dynamic process of becoming. And, if an institution like the Church is to offer true alternatives for liberation to its suffering people by putting the pastoral thrust into the building and promotion of Basic Ecclesial Communities, it has to consider the limitations and the possibilities that the process of human emergence holds. Aside from taking the position of a shepherd overlooking the flock, looking after its needs, the Church has also to take the role of a servant, recognizing the sensitivities and capacities of the people to work out their own history and to create their future.

In the midst of their present oppressive and miserable situation, the Filipino people continue to dream of a bright future. Along with this dream is a dream about a Church of the Philippines that is renewed. This Church is to be the Church of the people. It is not a Church that only ministers to the poor. This Church is to be Church of the poor. If the Church commits herself to the transformation of the society, then she has to be transformed herself. If the desire for transformation is to come true, the seed of renewal must be sown in the heart, be incarnated in good works, and grow in love.
Thus far, we have looked into the history of the Filipino people and the evolution of communities as an emerging church in Chapters Five and Six. Spirituality is at work within the history of a people and is manifest in every group of people striving to make sense of what they are going through. A truly transformational and liberating spirituality is contingent on the degree of authenticity in human performance. Lonergan asserts that authenticity is achieved in transcendence – a creative living out of the dialectics of the subject, of the community, and of culture. A large part of Part One (Chapters One to Four) above was devoted to the critical basis of this clarification.

A creative, responsible, and full living of the present, as the two phases of Lonergan’s method in theology suggest, involves a creative and responsible appropriation of the past and shaping of the future.① The present Chapter deals more with the second phase – creating a future, the future of the Filipino people with the building and promotion of the Basic Ecclesial Communities or BECs as the main pastoral thrust of the Philippine Catholic Church. Situations brought about by the interaction of social and spiritual dynamics in Philippine historical process elaborated above in Chapters Five and Six respectively, shaped what is Philippine society today. How do the BECs respond to these? To what extent are these communities, basic and ecclesial, a creative and appropriate response to the worsening condition of the Filipino poor? Like her Asian neighbors, the Church of the Philippines has opted to become the Church of the Poor. What does this mean? What is to be the spirituality that these communities must manifest and live out in order to be authentically human, basic, Filipino Christian, and ecclesial? To what extent is this being actuated in the present Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines? These are the main questions that this Chapter intends to address.

7.1 THE FILIPINO SPIRIT OF THE BODY, COMMUNITY, AND CELEBRATION

Why did the Church of the Philippines choose to promote the building of Basic Christian Communities (BCCs) in response to Philippine social problems in the first place? The promotion of BCCs in the Philippines was not a coordinated pastoral plan.② But what made the Catholic Hierarchy of the Philippines embrace it as a thrust to hasten the process of socio-economic development? The ‘BCC’ as a phenomenon is of the third world that is characterized by poverty and oppression on the one hand and religiosity on the other hand. There are some elements within the Filipino way of life that make up Philippine culture that are friendly or appropriate to the building of Basic Christian Communities. They were already discussed to some extent in Chapter Six. Following Albert Alejo, I will refer to them here as elements found within Filipino popular spirituality: spirituality of the body, spirituality of the many or community, and spirituality of celebration or that of the fiesta.③

① See Method in Theology, xi-xiii.
② Cf. W. Kinne, A People’s Church? The Mindanao-Sulu Church Debacle, 103.
③ I am drawing from Albert Alejo’s identification of what he refers to as the spiritual dimensions of the Filipino cultural religious practices, in “Popular Spirituality as Cultural Energy,” Lecture Series 3 on Spirituality: Context and Expressions of Filipino
The building and strengthening of authentic community is a crucial and indispensable element in Filipino life, especially if the communities formed are to provide an alternative situation to the prevailing oppressive and corrupt condition of Philippine society. The communal spirit is strong within the Filipino spirit. Filipinos greatly value the family. In any part of the world where there are Filipinos, they always tend to seek out one another and form communities and the bond of relationships that is formed is often that of the family. Philippine history reveals that power – people power – can be generated even in the midst of servitude that tyranny imposed on the people as long as they believed in their capacity as a community.

There are elements in Filipino popular spirituality\(^\text{141}\) that relate to the ‘instinctive’ formation and development of communities. One is the spirituality of the body. Filipinos are very sensual. It is important for Filipinos to touch, to hold, to feel. It is this sensitivity to the body that makes Filipinos reach out and express themselves to others physically. Feelings and ideas are more effectively communicated by the use of the body. Filipinos speak through touch, dance, and movement. Many aspects of the daily life of the early Filipinos and of indigenous peoples of today involve rituals that are constituted by body movements or dances. For them, “I dance therefore I am.”\(^\text{142}\) “We dance therefore we collectively exist.”\(^\text{143}\) Physical presence is therefore very important to a Filipino. Moreover, the indigenous people believe in the world of the spirits, the realm of the anitos. This world of the spirit interpenetrates the world of the humans. The invisible spirits are naturally part of life. The deities have their domains such as the rivers, mountains, and trees. The departed ancestors are believed to continue to live among the living. The seen and the unseen are both interconnected.\(^\text{144}\) This implies the aspect of

\(^{141}\) It is ‘popular’ because it is shared by most of the Filipinos, not only the ordinary folks or the masses but by professional and scientists as well. I am using also the term spirituality in its general category, to the movement of the spirit in every human being, the spirit that distinguishes the human from all other living organisms.

\(^{142}\) A. Alejo, “Popular Spirituality as Cultural Energy.”

\(^{143}\) A. Alejo, “Popular Spirituality as Cultural Energy”.

\(^{144}\) Cf. Leonardo N. Mercado, “Indigenous Malay Elements in Filipino Christianity,” Lecture Series on Spirituality: The Essence of Spirituality and the Relationship of Christian Spirituality with the Spirituality of other Great Religions, Quezon City, Center for Spirituality-Manila, 2003, 153-163. Generally, it is typical for a Filipino, especially among those living in the barrios, to leave some food after a meal to those ‘spirits’ who
interconnectedness and interrelationship with as many of the entities in the universe as possible.

Related to the communal aspect of Filipino spirituality, mentioned above, is the spirituality of the many where family and community are regarded with highest value. However, those who have been formed and educated in different schools, especially in foreign schools, found themselves in a dilemma as to how to manage this spirit of other-orientedness – how to put forward their nationalistic vision of freeing themselves from Western colonial rule while, at the same time, not denying the value of Filipino hospitality within a globalized world. One form of response, as evident during the Revolution, was assimilation from which developed the culture of dependence and of silence among Filipinos. This has continued through the years in the wake of the failure of Third World nations to move forward alone. It has to be remembered that during the time of the Revolution, the so-called ilustrados – the nationalist elite and middle-class, who were mostly educated in Spain, had thrown off their colonial masters in the name of political sovereignty and economic independence. They harnessed the demands of an impoverished people so they could install themselves in power on the back of popular discontent. But “[o]nce ensconced there, they would need to engage in an ungainly balancing act between radical pressures from below and global market forces from outside.”

Though not denying the astonishingly effective anti-colonial force nationalism had been at that time, it has deep repercussions on the way Filipinos now relate with one another and with other countries, more particularly with Western (or Northern) countries like the United States of America. Some of these foreign-educated Filipino elites and middle-class tended to absorb some Western concepts such as individualism, that is, relating and responding to others, accommodating the other, for one’s own individual interests.

But being other-oriented is within the inner resources (the lóob) of a Filipino. Filipinos are group-oriented. Leonardo Mercado notes that there is no indigenous word for private or privacy in the Philippine languages. In contrast, there are various Filipino words that refer to Filipino social interaction, such as pakikitungo (civility with), pakikisalamuha (inter-action with), pakikilahok (participating with), pakikibagay (in-conformity with),

may be present at the moment though unseen. Even after a harvest or after catching fish or any other organisms from the sea, a part of the harvest and the catch is given back to the land and the sea.

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146 As an example, see the possible influence of the secularization context of the Netherlands on Filipinos in Rico P. Ponce, *Spirituality and Quality of Life: An Empirical-theological Exploration among Filipino Migrants in the Netherlands*, a doctoral thesis from Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands, Quezon City: Institute of Spirituality in Asia., 2005, especially 216-218. See also his footnote in page xix for some statistics.
147 Cf. L. N. Mercado, “Indigenous Malay Elements in Filipino Christianity”. 206
Intersubjective relationships can occur at various levels and in different modes. This is seen within the process of the achievement of the common meaning of a particular community. The words that refer to Filipino social interaction, mentioned above, can be identified under two categories: ibang-tao or “outsider” category, which involves the levels of amenities, conforming and adjusting (pakikitungo, pakikibagay, pakikisama); and hindi ibang-tao or “One of Us” category, which involves the levels of fusion, oneness and full trust (pakikipagpalagayang-loob, pakikiisa). The first category constitutes the level of a common field of experience and the process of understanding the other as other, yet at the same time, discovering the elements that make for cohesion within this otherness. This category connotes a relationship that is conditional. If understanding is not complete and total, being with the other becomes simply a psychic contagion, such as in doing something because everybody else is doing it, or since you are a Filipino and to be Filipino one must join the group as a form of pakikisama. Being in the group becomes constraining and forced, without understanding at all the reason for such belonging. It was mentioned previously that true communities evolve in an ascending process that an individual is willing to engage in. Community building can never be imposed or forced. The second category, however, speaks of judgment, of decision and commitment to become one body, one community with others. Filipino communities, such as the basic ecclesial communities, need go beyond the first category and work for the achievement of the second category.

149 It is typical for most of the houses of indigenous Filipinos to have only one room; and if there are other rooms, there are no doors that separate them. The members of the family eat, work and do their chores, sleep, and enjoy together in one room. This can be, for a foreigner, quite unthinkable especially in virtue of the way privacy is valued by other cultures.
151 Miranda asserts that this is the reason why the dictum that pakikisama is a Filipino value has always been ambiguous. He suggests that it makes more sense to consider pakikipagkapwa (Filipino dictionaries render kapwa with “both” or “fellow-being,” thus underlining an understanding of shared identity and so, embraces both categories mentioned above.) as an authentic social value, while pakikisama would be no more than a social norm. Cf. Loob, The Filipino Within: A Preliminary Investigation into a Pre-theological Moral Anthropology, 50-51.
The last of the three elements of Filipino spirituality that pertains to the emergence of communities is the spirituality of celebration. This relates with the first and second elements above. Since Filipinos are very fond of being with others, every gathering usually culminated in a celebration, with a salu-salo (eating together). Since they regard the family and community with highest value, Filipinos can spend almost everything on a fiesta or spend most of their money in elaborate festivities. At one time, these festivities were considered to be acts of excess, at other times a form of contemplation. Some would interpret them as instruments used to reinforce and legitimize existing conditions. In contrast, other interpretations view these festivities as attempts to criticize and even to break down the ruling order. Two poles determine the range of these celebrations which were more evident during the colonial regimes: first, they enable the people to leave their everyday lives behind them for a while, to reflect at a distance upon the norms and constraints to which they are subject, or even through excess to overstep these and thus spontaneously and in self-determined manner – individually and then collectively – to form and confirm identity once again. Second, as a cultural-imperialistic instrument in the hand of colonial masters, fiestas contain elements which are often organized and directed ‘from above’, transmitting ideas, values, and concepts which legitimize and glorify the existing order. Yet, by participating in them, Filipinos found the opportunities to incorporate, and thereby bring pressure from, their own tradition. They presented the indigenous population with a means to assert themselves culturally under changed political and economic conditions, and then eventually to resist heteronomy outright. With the active part played by the indigenous population in the development of what is now considered Filipino culture, it would be wrong to see them simply as victims of a form of mental colonization.

These celebrations have undergone various transformations and developments through the years. At present, celebrations are sometimes held because of some special occasions. But there are also times when there is no special occasion at all. The reason for the celebration is sometimes simply made-up. On Fridays, for example, friends would gather together to celebrate the end of the week. This coming together is translated to gratitude for the blessings received during the week or acknowledgment for what has been accomplished; or, in the event that it has been a hard week, enjoying with friends is a form of relaxation; or sometimes it will mean simply that they have not seen each other during the week and miss each other. Whatever the reasons behind the gathering or celebration, being together somehow regenerates and invigorates Filipinos. Though Filipinos are very fond of eating

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152 An example of this is the Moriones Festival in Marinduque where, with their grotesque legionnaires’ masks, can be seen as an attempt to caricature and demystify the coarseness of the white colonial masters. Cf. Reinhard Wendt, “Philippine Fiesta and Colonial Culture,” Philippine Studies Vol. 461 (First Quarter 1998), 3-23.

and drinking together, *salu-salo* means more than sharing food; it is sharing life. The word ‘*salo*’ actually means to eat from one plate or to share one piece of food. *Salu-salo*, therefore, means solidarity. *Makisalo kal* (You join!) is *makilahok* (be part of an endeavor). *Lahok*, in Tagalog, means ingredient, mostly pertaining to food. Filipino food contains many ingredients mixed in different ways. There is the *sapin-sapin* (rice cake of different colors overlapping each other), the *halo-halo* (dessert made up of different fruits and beans, with milk and ice), and the *pinakbet* (a mixture of different vegetables). When these foods lack one primary ingredient, they will not taste as good as when all ingredients are there. All this talk about food points to the fact that Filipinos value diversity and they appreciate otherness. Translated to community life, the presence of each member of the community is properly acknowledged and every member has a role to play in the achievement of the common meaning. Each member transforms the community as the community, through interpersonal relationships, transforms every member.

These communitarian values need to be brought to the fore again and again so that Filipinos can be reminded of the meaning of their actions – why they do the things they do. It is not simply because what they do are parts of Filipino tradition and as a Filipino one is obliged to do the same, but because these values are within the Filipino, a shaping of sensibility emerging out of an arduous process of differentiation, complexity, and appropriation. Much has gone into the shaping of the Filipino soul (*loob* and *budhi*). Years of struggle and appropriation have shaped the Filipinos of today. Communities have been built even as other communities collapsed and were torn down. But like all other human beings, Filipinos are subjects-in-community and the spirit of community flows with their blood. This spirit of togetherness can take the form of solidarity and compassion to the extent that every person reveals to any other her or his predisposition to seek understanding, to judge reasonably, to evaluate fairly, and to be open to friendship. This, according to Lonergan, is the natural right that is the inmost core of our being.  

### 7.2 Basic Communities of the Philippines

Earlier, in Chapters Three and Four above, we have clarified through an elucidation provided by Lonergan’s work what a community that is basic and Christian might imply. Here our concern is to elaborate on what the terms ‘basic’ (section 7.2) and ‘Christian’ (section 7.3) mean in the context of the Basic Christian Communities of the Philippines. Aside from giving a critical eye to the extent to which these meanings correspond to the clarifications made in Chapters Three and Four, the following elaboration is significant in order to distinguish the BCCs from other communities or social and religious organizations. This elaboration includes the ecclesial dimension of these communities.

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The communities that are commonly known today as Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines are the ones that were and are formed through the initiative of the Catholic Church. The formation of small Christian communities was initially a parochial response to the growing number of Catholic Christians and the lack of clergy to administer or to attend to them, especially to those living in the far-flung barrios or villages. Following that of the Spanish structure of the visita, the communities were primary liturgical in the beginning. These communities, however, have in time undergone various transformations due to development and the changing situations and needs that development instigates.

The term ‘basic,’ as used by the Catholic Church of the Philippines, refers to small Christian communities and is to be understood in the quantitative sense. This is as per the agreement between the Magisterium and the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP). In the position paper presented to the 1977 Synod of Bishops, CBCP through its president at that time, Archbishop A. Mabutas referred to ‘basic’ as the quantitative aspect of a group of families in a particular locality or natural groupings. The group, usually composed of 10-15 families, is large enough to be able to sustain itself in its basic needs. The limit of size is governed by a concern for that which will maximally facilitate the effective participation of all the members. The communities are considered natural communities since they are taken where they are found. The families that comprise a basic community must be living near each other geographically, literally physical neighbors, so that it will be easy for them to meet regularly as a group without this interfering too much with their everyday work and chores. It is also assumed that geographical proximity means more or less similar needs and familiarity with one another. This will provide an easier space for openness and dialogue. All these factors are seen as favorable to the nourishment of independence, self-reliance, and self-confidence in the communities.

However, it was also emphasized that the communities are composed of groups of families. The family, being the basic community of the society and the basic church, constitutes a solid foundation for the formation of base-level communities. PCP II also identifies these communities to be emerging usually from the grassroots among farmers and workers (# 139, 52), who live mostly in the rural areas and on the urban peripheries. The communities have been more liable to take root and grow more rapidly in these areas and among the poor people.

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As communities, they are local, environmental and complete (not specialized). Being complete and not specialized is one distinguishing factor of the BCCs as compared to other Church movements and organizations and from other popular movements. Completeness refers to the concern that the building and development of these communities be not limited to the religious aspect but also include the socio-economic, political and cultural aspects of community living. This description of basic communities as local, environmental and complete shifts the use of ‘basic’ from being simply quantitative to a more qualitative sense, although as can be seen above, the quantitative has a qualitative implication already. As complete and not specialized, for instance, ‘basic’ means that community development is equivalent to the total development of the members. We have emphasized in Part One that authentic and integral human development requires a successful negotiation of the ‘critical point’ of the subject through interaction within communities. To be wholly basic, a community is not only small or composed of the poor. Rather, a basic community enables its foundational reality, that is, the people that comprise it are enabled towards authentic conversion. As authentic human communities, the understanding of the term ‘basic’ in the basic human communities of the Philippines must go beyond a merely quantitative sense to the qualitative meaning that regards the total human development of the people of the communities. So formulated, the term ‘basic’, when it comes to human communities of the Philippines, transcends exclusive identification with the Church to include any community formed by people engaged with one another for their total human development. This, as I see it, may be one of the reasons why it was necessary to include the term ‘ecclesial’ to signify the local communities built under the guidance of the Catholic Church.

Looking back to the history of the struggles of the Filipino people, such an understanding of ‘basic’ means that the phenomenon of basic communities was already existent among our predecessors in the past. Basic communities are formed whenever and wherever people form groups in response to their desire for liberation from imperialistic and oppressive situations. Though the poor more often initiate the communities, they are sustained by the cooperation of all the members of the society, both poor and rich alike. In order to survive, small communities have to let the larger community know what is going on.

Being basic, the community has to be associated with the grassroots, people from below, the poor. But to understand ‘basic’ as mere association with the poor is not enough if we are to take into consideration the meaning of ‘basic’ as that community which by its communal experiences and efforts to understand these experiences together leads to mutual judgments and decisions - that community that enables the members to negotiate

successfully the “critical point” of the subject. However, there are communities of the poor that do not achieve this level of operation. Why is this so? One can act based on false premises. The poor may seek only to be in equal social position with the rich rather than to be truly free from oppression. Such a goal, where it achieved, would only generate a new form of oppression. Communities of the poor may also be too individualistic and egoistic, so much so that they themselves fight with one another. All communities patently have the capacity towards profound alienation.

The impoverished social condition of a great number of the population has greatly affected the consciousness and morals of the Filipinos and, hence, the spirituality that emerges from this. Both the emerging consciousness and spirituality are reflected in the way people respond to their condition or situation. There is a Filipino adage that says, “Ang taong nagigipit, sa patalim ay kakapit.” (The person in great need will grip the sharp knife-edge.) This knife-edged existence causes people to make decisions and actions that are detrimental to others, inflicting suffering to fellow human beings and destruction to the rest of creation. But drawing attention to the desperate situation of the perpetrator of destructive activity clearly does not make the activity less non-creative. Historically imposed limitations are the fruit of sin and sin of itself never produces creativity. The limits that are to be embraced and from which creativity does flow are those of our shared humanity, of our species being. It is in experiencing the human and divine energy that comes from sharing that demoralization and destruction are overcome.

The sentiments and the grievances of the poor must be respected and their voices must be heard and listened to. But it need not lead to violence like an armed revolt, for example, if society can provide a place or a home wherein the poor can have a voice to express and talk about their grievances, their needs, and their problems and decide for themselves how they can act together to remedy these appropriately and be responsible for such actions. These are the poor who are empowered and who are truly free.

Responsibility does not mean standing up for oneself alone. It means standing up for others as well. Responsibility is possible only within a two-way process. For one’s voice to be heard, the other must take the responsibility to allow space for that voice to be heard. This other must be willing to listen. Otherwise any effort for dialogue will be futile. An authentic basic community must enable this kind of responsibility to emerge from and be practiced by its members. Thus, a basic community may not solely be composed of the poor. A basic community is composed of people who are willing to take such responsibility. Taking this kind of responsibility seriously demands a lot of creativity on the part of those who are deprived and a lot of giving up and letting go on the part of those who are privileged.
7.3 FROM BASIC CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES (BCCs) TO BASIC ECCLESIAL COMMUNITIES OF THE PHILIPPINES (BECs)

In any story of development, there is always a need for the exposition of factors that are involved in the unfolding of events in order to help people with differing viewpoints transcend either the present shortsightedness or oversights. This will make fruitful dialogue possible. History and culture condition the structures of the Church and the way in which authority within the Church is exercised.

The option for the poor adopted in Medellín by the minority of those Latin American bishops present there ratified the new experiment for the base church communities. Base communities started simultaneously from the beginning of the 1960’s in different parts of the world though mostly in Latin America especially in North-East Brazil, in Panama, and in Chile. The base communities in different countries emerged in diverse forms. In Brazil, for example, the base communities were officially adopted by the bishops’ conferences, while in others they were adopted by a number of dioceses such as in Ecuador, Peru, and Mexico. But in some countries like Colombia, the base communities developed against the wishes of the bishops.

There are views that the building of the basic Christian communities of the Philippines has been patterned after the experience of the Comunidades Ecclesiales de Base (CEBs) of Latin America. However, though the present structure of the BCCs of the Philippines may show a Latin American influence, it is clear from history that their emergence in the country was not due to Latin America. This means that if there was any influence from Latin America, this occurred after the BCCs had already emerged in the Philippines and it was on the level of theological reflection rather than pastoral praxis. The basic Christian communities are not a copy of the Latin American models. There are similarities due to “a similar history of Iberian Catholicism as the context of development and an identical source of germinal ideas,” that is, they have both the Vatican II Council as the triggering mechanism. As elaborated in the previous chapters, the reduccion policy of Spain in the Philippines had transformed the pre-colonial barangays into Christian communities. It was

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157 It must be kept in mind that the various forms of base communities that emerged during this time around the world were not all Christian. As in the Philippines, small communities among the grassroots existed already even before the introduction of the Christian faith.


also within these communities that the consciousness of the Filipinos towards liberation and unity as a people developed. When people gathered to sing the *Pasyon* or when they sympathized with the relatives and members of the family of a person who died and prayed together the novena to their patron saints, whenever they celebrated the fiesta, dancing and eating together, when they helped one another to transport their neighbor’s house in the *bayanihan*; these were already manifestations of basic Christian communities for they were living the faith in a communitarian manner. It can be said therefore that the BCCs of the Philippines were formed in accordance with the existing social-cultural structures. The BCCs of the Philippines emerged through the people’s attempts to meet their needs in their particular environment or situations.

Christian communities in the Philippines date back to the introduction of Christianity in the country by the Spaniards. Communities of the indigenous peoples composed of families, usually of the same clan, were transformed into Christian communities – indigenous communities were Christianized chiefly through the reduction policy implemented by the Spanish friars. Though these were not conscious attempts to build Christian communities in the contemporary sense, the movements helped strengthen the sense of community among the people. The communities became the place where Christianity came to life and began to have meaning for the people. These communities have now metamorphosed to new and diverse forms in line with the people’s search for the Christian ideal of being together and working together as a church. The spreading phenomenon of BCCs, especially in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, is among the most characteristic manifestations of this new search for Christian community building.

The official organization of Christian communities of the Philippines took place in the early part of the 1930’s in the Diocese of Tagum, Davao City, in the southern part of the Philippines, in the island of Mindanao. The beginning of small Christian Communities in Davao has been attributed to the PME Fathers (Foreign Mission Society of Quebec) who arrived there in 1937 and whose original intention was to do missionary work among the so-called ‘non-Christians.’ It must be remembered that Mindanao is the domain of Muslim Filipinos. But when thousands of migrants from the two other biggest islands - Luzon and Visayas - who were searching for greener pastures, began to settle in Mindanao, the mission was changed from conversion to re-evangelization. With the growing number of settlers, the missionaries saw the

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161 The impact of Spanish and American colonial administrations on the people of the Philippines was less in the Muslims and some of the tribal Filipinos of Mindanao than elsewhere in the country. For the migrants, therefore, Mindanao was envisaged as “a land of promise”, a new frontier. But for the indigenous inhabitants of the island, whose ancestors had fought zealously against the Spaniards, the arrival of the migrants in large numbers meant dispossession, especially of their land, and cultural diminishment. Cf. W. Kinne, *A People’s Church? The Mindanao-Sulu Church Debacle*, 35.
demand to look after the spiritual needs of the migrants. Most of these migrants were Catholics but nominal ones.

The contribution of the PME Fathers in the groundwork for the emergence of small Christian communities was their apostolate on the Barangay Sang Birhen\textsuperscript{162}. The apostolate was meant to bring the people to active participation in the church especially in the teaching of the Christian religion, which was carried out by the laity. In 1958, the first Maryknoll missionaries (officially known as Foreign Mission Society of America) arrived in Davao and took over the parishes that were opened by the P.M.E. Fathers. The Maryknollers continued to establish more parishes in addition to the ones that their predecessors left. Schools and mandated organizations were built and formed. The present diocese of Tagum credits these movements with having laid the ground for the emergence of the small Christian communities (Diocesan Pastoral Assembly I Proceedings; Tagum, 1983; 12), the sole purpose of which was to activate the people in their faith life, gauged by their participation in the parish.

The real efforts to build Basic Christian Communities in the Philippines, however, began after Vatican II in response to the changes brought about by the Council, specifically in the way the Church relates to the world. One of these changes refers to a new theological ethical methodology in social issues that modified the older natural law approach. “There can be no false opposition between professional and social activities, on one hand, and religious life on the other.” (Gaudium et Spes, n. 43, O-S, 192) Also relevant was the universal call to holiness and perfection. The laity are also called to such holiness and perfection and thereby “a more human manner of life is fostered also in earthly society”. Life in the world, then, is intimately connected with the Gospel and Jesus’ call for discipleship. (Constitution on the Church, n. 40, in Flannery, Vat II, 397)\textsuperscript{163} Some changes were then made to the existing lay organizations that were initiated by foreign missionaries. Most of the BCCs, though, were formed after the declaration of Martial Law\textsuperscript{164} in 1972. In this particular time, the BCCs changed the Philippine Church’s thrust of

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\textsuperscript{162} Barangay Sang Birhen (BSV) was a movement popular in both urban and rural communities. It was organized by lay people and organized the barangays into communities based on the popular devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The main activity of the movement was the praying of the rosary. Cf. A. L. Picardal, Basic Ecclesial Communities in the Philippines: An Ecclesiological Perspective, 77.

\textsuperscript{163} Cf. C. Curran, Catholic Social Teaching 1891-present: A Historical Theological and Ethical Analysis, 32-33.

\textsuperscript{164} Martial Law, declared on September 21, 1972 by Ferdinand Marcos, began a period that was euphemistically called “constitutional authoritarianism”. In January 1973, a new constitution was introduced extending the presidential term indefinitely and naming Marcos not only the president but the prime minister as well. In March of the same year, an armed revolt by the Muslim Filipinos broke out in Mindanao, the primary cause of which is generally considered to be the question of land. In August of that year, rice shortages were experienced throughout the Philippines and famine ravaged some parts of Mindanao. Cf. Warren Kinne, A People’s Church? The Mindanao-Sulu Church Debacle, 30-31.
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evangelization from “saving souls” to “total human development.” It was at this moment that the BCCs took root right in the very heart of the Christian community. Amidst the oppression and injustices inflicted on the people by the Marcos dictatorial regime under Martial Law, the BCCs became immersed in addressing various societal concerns like sensitive issues involving the violation of human rights and other forms of injustices. The BCCs took root among the poor and depressed communities.\footnote{165}

The emergence and development of the BCCs in the Diocese of Tagum can be attributed to three main factors: the desire of the Maryknoll missionaries and the first ordained Filipino priests to respond to the immediate needs of the parishioners in their faith life; the spirit of renewal/updating spearheaded by Vatican II; and the convening of the Mindanao-Sulu Pastoral Conferences (MPSCs) especially MSPCs I and II in 1971 and 1974.\footnote{166} A group of American Maryknollers had started building small Christian communities in Lupon deanery in Tagum and later promoted in the Nabunturan deanery by the first local priests that were ordained in the province. The newly-ordained local priests, anxious to find their own style of pastoral work, introduced changes in their respective parishes. Each of them had his own style of effecting pastoral changes “but all were motivated by the desire to change the status quo and implement the principles of dialogue, participation and co-responsibility set by Vatican II.”\footnote{167}

When the adoption of BCC approach to pastoral renewal was formally endorsed and approved in the pastoral planning, a shift in the understanding of the parish arose. Instead of being seen as a Christian community, the parish came to be considered as a center of Christian communities.\footnote{168} The conventional parish structure seemed too limited to provide adequately for the kind of mutual belonging and working together which the building of communities requires. All parishes in Tagum were encouraged in building BCCs/GKK (Gagmay ‘ ng Kristohanong Katilingban - how the people of the basic ecclesial communities of Tagum call their BCC’s, which translates to Small Christian Communities) in the poblacion and in the barrios. Service entities or apostolates were created to serve the growing needs of the small Christian communities. The success of organizing the BCCs, however, was


\footnote{166} Cf. George Rimando, “Basic Christian Communities: Tagum Experience,” an article written for the Lay Formation & Training Center, Diocese of Tagum, Davao, October 4, 1996, 1. The article was written basically to provide the lay leaders, seminarrians, and newly-ordained priests with a “sense of history of the early beginnings, growth and consequent development of the Basic Christian Communities of Tagum.”

\footnote{167} G. Rimando, “Basic Christian Communities: Tagum Experience,” 3. The account about the strategies set up by the first ordained local priests was based by Rimando in an interview with Milagros Hitalia, former parish worker of Mawab.

\footnote{168} Cf. A. L. Picardal, \textit{Basic Ecclesial Communities in the Philippines: An Ecclesiological Perspective}, 81.
credited to the ‘diocesan will’ to make BCC building a common thrust. In this sense, the official organization of the basic Christian communities in the Philippines is considered a parochial response to what was seen then as the need for more participation of the laity in parish work, which included “not only the unity of people with Christ in love, trust and justice but also interest in the total development of the people involved, that is, social, economic and political aspects.” Since it was the clergy of the parishes who initiated the building of the communities, the problems that were encountered later were of a parochial nature as well. One of these was the growing negative sentiment among the priests against the traditional organizations in favor of the BCCs. These traditional mandated organizations were the main vehicle by which the lay participated in Church life before the BCCs were formed. Another problem lay in relation to the implementation and exercise of the laws and policies in the BCCs. This had been attributed to the lack of proper understanding of the BCC leaders of the rightful place of these laws and policies. Thus, future efforts were centered on the formation of the lay leaders of the basic Christian communities. Lay formation centers were established and formation seminars became a regular part of the people’s life in the BCCs.

Today, as Christians continuously search for meaning and direction, rediscovering along the way their primordial sense of “being together” but now adopting and living out the Christian values, new models of communities emerge and are hopeful signs for the church of tomorrow. As Basic Christian Communities, the communities become an integration of being effective vehicles not only for social, economic, and political development but also, of church renewal. What does this renewal call for? To what extent can the Church of the Philippines renew herself, through the BCCs, and lead the people towards that collaborative creative imagination that bears fruit in authentic self-giving, deeply concerned with life – life for all? As emphasized earlier in Chapter Four, this is what fidelity to the just and mysterious law of the cross calls for. What kind of stance do these communities have to take and embrace in order to hold in creative fidelity the integral dialectics of history in relation to the authentic following of Christ? Mutual belonging is crucial to the building up of communities. Belonging cannot simply be presumed or left to chance. Belonging must be based on personal decision and implies commitment to the group and acceptance by it. An authentic ekklesia is church of the people and not solely a church for the people. Parochially based though they may have been in the beginning, the Basic Christian Communities

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of the Philippines must learn from the various experiences, contexts and struggles that the people as a church undergo. The Church has to allow the people to own these experiences and struggles. The Philippine Church herself is within the continuous process of emergence as love is a growing experience and does not content itself with remaining always the same. A truly universal Christian Church respects the various processes of differentiation, complexity and communion within the story of her emergence. She does not undermine the enormous diversity of the emerging communities but use the differences as energy to empower the least among her members so that the Church for the poor can be transformed into the Church of the poor.

7.3.1 Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) of the Philippines

Being basic and complete may distinguish the BCCs from other groups and movements but it is the middle terms, Christian and then ecclesial, that ultimately gives these communities their distinctive identity.

The crisis in 1983 that resulted in the dissociation of the bishops from the Mindanao-Sulu Pastoral Conferences’ (MSPC) secretariat and board diminished the active role of MSPC in promoting the development of the communities. This was following the 1983 MSPC V organized by the bishops that had as its theme as “The Building Up of Ecclesial Communities in Mindanao and Sulu: Faith and Reality.” This was the first time that MSPC adopted the term “Basic Ecclesial Communities” to emphasize the ecclesial nature of the faith-communities. It was mentioned before that in the Filipino context the basic community is already in existence as a sociological community. In order that it becomes also a faith community the basic community has to be also ecclesial. The meaning of what it means to be ecclesial is captured in this statement of the Conference, alarmed with the “political unrest, increasing militarization, escalating poverty and eroding social and moral values”:

Our faith responses are those of ecclesial communities. We are people whom the Spirit brings together in the world of our day, seeking its transformation so as to make present the New World where Justice reigns and God will be all in all.  

Since the basic Christian community has been seen to have an inclination to the left, that is particularly to the New People’s Army during the height of Martial Law, the name Basic “Ecclesial” Community had to be adopted instead of calling it “Christian” so as not to be misconstrued for an ideology.  


173 In preparation for MSPC III, Bishop Francisco Claver claimed that the government looked at the Christian communities program “as nothing more than a communist effort at subversion and rebellion.” F. Claver, “MSPS III: Towards Justice
In 1991, PCP II took place and MSPC VIII that was held in Tagum a year after focused on the implementation of the Pastoral Council. For over two decades the MSPC has been instrumental in promoting the growth of BECs in Mindanao and Sulu. But the actual organizing of the BECs depended on the initiative of the parish priests and the support of the bishops. This is the reason why most of the problems that the communities encountered later have something to do with the collapse of support and understanding on the part of the clergy and the bishops for the lay people who were involved in MSPC and, indirectly, in the building of the BECs.\textsuperscript{174}

To clarify the extent to which the BCC can be considered ecclesial, the CBCP declared:

There are five essential elements which identify the local Christian community as ecclesial, i.e. the Gospel, the Eucharist, the Church, the Bishop and the Spirit. If one of these marks is missing, or is not at least inchoately present, the assembly may be made up of Christians, but it is not (or it is not yet) truly an ecclesial community.\textsuperscript{175}

The four elements: the Gospel, the Eucharist, the Church, and the Spirit have already been elaborated on previously as necessary elements of basic Christian communities. As human cooperation with the grace of God in history by serving as a catalyst of the alternative situation that approximates the reign of God in the world, Christian communities must embody the Christian message, that is the Good News, in their everyday life. The Good News or the Gospel, which is to be preached to the whole world and to every generation, is remembered in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. The celebration of the Word and the Eucharist is therefore found at the center of the life of the basic Christian communities. The celebration, as celebration, is participated in by the members of the communities as a church that facilitates the spiritual and cultural developments of its members, inviting them to transform by Christian charity their personal and group relations.\textsuperscript{176} The Spirit embodied in Christian charity is the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the Spirit that is God’s love, revealed in his suffering and death on the cross and fulfilled in the resurrection.

Looking into the five elements in the CBCP declaration given above, we see that what is new or what was added and therefore, where the emphasis of

\textsuperscript{174} The dissociation of the bishops from MSPC was initiated by the mistrust of some of the bishops of the MSPC Board members composed both of the clergy, the religious, and lay people. These bishops feared that there was networking and sympathy from the group with the “underground”. This was exacerbated by tensions deriving from how the Church ought to respond to political situation. The staff, too, made an error of judgment in their counter-accusation against the bishops. Cf. W. Kinne, A People’s Church? The Mindanao-Sulu Church Debacle, 97.


\textsuperscript{176} See B. Lonergan, Method in Theology, 363.
the declaration rests as a clarification of the ecclesiality of the local Christian communities of the Philippines at that particular point in time, was the presence and function of the bishops. In order that the communities be not identified with subversive and ideological movements growing and proliferating at the height of the Marcos’ dictatorship and amidst the suspicion mounting that church bodies were being manipulated by the Communist Party under the guise of NDF (National Democratic Front), the identity of BCC’s as church had to be emphasized. The presence and the function of the bishop particularly in his diocesan community is essential in constituting this community as church.

The CBCP declaration above seems to imply that the change of the name from BCC to BEC that highlights the ecclesial aspect of the communities depends on being under the guidance of their respective bishops. Historically, the Church has profound symbolic power in the Philippines and is a focus of Filipino values and beliefs. When Martial Law was declared by the dictatorial government of Ferdinand Marcos, the Church was “the only national institution which has retained its independence and credibility when political parties, the courts, the military, the bureaucracy and the media have all been coopted or discredited by a regime intent on centralizing all power on the president.”177 This gave the Church the “power over the powerful and at the same time it often made it the last refuge of the powerless.”178

The power and influence of the clergy in social, political, cultural, and religious life of the Filipinos have been potent ever since the Spanish crown sent the priests and the bishops to the Philippines on the condition that besides preaching the gospel, they would educate the people of the Philippines to absolute allegiance to the ‘crown’.179 Aspects of this Christendom era remain in both the lay and clerical mentalities and in the understanding regarding church and state. Until the present, the political significance of the Church in the Philippines goes beyond its human and institutional resources. Conflicts arise when the governing structures of the church are translated from authority to control. In an article in Communications180, a church worker noted “a heavy residue of authoritarianism” in the institutional church.181 Some form of authority and leadership from the bishops and the clergy is needed for the proper and efficient continuation of the Church’s pastoral programs. The question at stake is more on the nature and exercise of that authority. Church leadership cannot be cast adrift from its basis in a lived discipleship, of service and

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177 Dennis Shoesmith in “Church and State after Marcos,” Australian National University, Philippines after Marcos Conference, October 1983, 3, quoted by W. Kinne, A People’s Church? The Mindanao-Sulu Church Debacle, 199.
178 W. Kinne, A People’s Church? The Mindanao-Sulu Church Debacle, 199.
181 Cf. W. Kinne, A People’s Church? The Mindanao-Sulu Church Debacle, 199.
humility whose primary purpose is to allow the faithful, the people of God to live their humanity and faith to their full potential and authenticity. This is what empowerment is all about and therefore should not be ever taken as a threat to the ecclesiastical power of the Church.

It has to be recognized that the Church as a community within the process of the search for meaning and direction can also be misled and miss the movement of life itself. But a faithful and sincere analysis of situations and of history can bring people to a realization of what the mistakes had been and thereby enables a process of renewal and transformation. At present, the participation and the extent of concern given by the bishops to the Basic Ecclesial Communities in their respective dioceses remain an important factor in sustaining these communities. The realization of the dream about a renewed Church in the Philippines depends largely on the degree of involvement of the bishops and the whole Church in general and the support that they give to the effort in building basic ecclesial communities. But first and foremost, the seed of renewal must be sown in the heart. The Church, as Evangelii nuntiandi maintains, must be “conscious that the best structures and the most idealized systems soon become inhuman if the inhuman inclinations of the human heart are not made wholesome, if those who live in those structures or who rule them do not undergo a conversion of heart and of outlook.” (n. 36, O-S, 316)

This means that the commitment must be real and the vision clear and understood. The task must be accomplished as cooperation between the bishops, the clergy, the religious, and the lay people who authentically crave for change in the Church and in society. This is the meaning of a participatory church that is one of the features of the basic ecclesial communities. The renewal of the Church towards a new way of being Church, constitutes a movement toward authentic discipleship that begins in an encounter with the Lord and conversion. Such a Church is only possible if those involved in it learn from the experiences of the past and are sensitive to the signs of the times: such experiences and sensitivity lead to authentic responsibility to the world as a whole. This includes a well-grounded understanding of what Christianity really means for Filipino Christians today – how the symbol of the crucifixion of Christ and of his resurrection speaks to the people and affects their daily life.

Orlando Quevedo noted that the proclamation of PCP II (nos. 137-40) that regards the movement to foster Basic Ecclesial Communities as one

182 Lonergan saw the teaching on religious liberty and the new developments in Vatican II precisely in terms of historical consciousness. For him, historical consciousness does not only mean recognizing historical change but also involving differentiation of subjective human consciousness. It is going beyond a classicism that tends to see reality in terms of the eternal, the immutable, and the unchanging. Cf. C. E. Curran, Catholic Social Teaching, 1891 – present: A Historical Theological and Ethical Analysis, 58-59. See also B. Lonergan, Collection, 252-67.

183 “Notes on BECs and the Church of the Future,” an address to the BEC National Assembly in Cebu City, Philippines, 14 November, 2002.
ecclesial movement where a Church that is renewed finds expression today is bold enough yet quite humble. BECs are not the only expression of renewal, but one expression of renewal. There are other forms of small faith communities. What makes the communities ecclesial is the mandate that comes from the Church hierarchy, which means that the BECs belong to the programs of the Magisterium in its effort to participate in the transformation of the society by developing and promoting Christian values. In contrast to other “traditional Church organizations,” which respond to a particular need of the lay faithful to belong to a group supportive of Christian aspirations, the BECs have a wider scope of service and draw their membership from the whole parish.\(^{184}\) In most of the BECs in the Philippines, conflict usually arises with the traditional Church organizations when an entire diocese definitely decides to use the building of BEC as a strategic tool of systematic and coordinated renewal in line with the vision of PCP II. This conflict between the BECs and the traditional Church organizations is one of the main problems that impede the process of renewal. Unless these traditional organizations are re-oriented and integrated toward diocesan pastoral priorities and programs that are in line with the building of the BECs, the diocese becomes simply an arena of competition for membership and apostolate. This creates the necessity to identify and clarify the real meaning and purpose of the building of the Basic Ecclesial Communities and the value of making it the main pastoral thrust of the Catholic Church of the Philippines.

Quevedo concludes, “The Church in the Philippines has, to our shame, also remained unchanged in some respects.” More deeply, he suggests, failures in renewal are “due to hardness of heart and resistance to conversion.”\(^{185}\) What is needed then is a radical conversion that promotes a communitarian environment where every individual no longer operates simply to satisfy one’s needs but cooperates in order to meet one another’s needs or the needs of the community. The radicality rests on the extent one is able to turn her or his life and thinking to a genuine and practical concern for the victims when one is confronted by evil face to face. This puts a stop to the vicious cycle that that evil creates. It is radical because it demands ceasing from something one has been accustomed to: satisfying oneself to meeting the needs of others. Authentic transformation happens when people are encouraged and enabled to get involved in the continual effort to understand situations and to act responsibly not only for themselves but more so for the good of the entire human family. The human good is at once individual and social and involves commitment to values and principles that are both intimately personal and publicly shared. As a setting of people empowerment, the BECs promotes progress proceeding from originating value, that is the subject being one’s true self, and it builds people up in human collaboration. Value, in this case, is about ends, not calculated satisfactions. We do not

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\(^{184}\) Cf. “Notes on BECs and the Church of the Future”.

\(^{185}\) “Notes on BECs and the Church of the Future,” an address to the BEC National Assembly in Cebu City, Philippines, 14 November, 2002.
choose value. Rather, value imposes itself on us and our moral judgment is an acknowledgment. The BECs are composed of people who are ‘awakened to their vast potential’, and who are liberated by their own involvement ‘in pursuing the dream of societal transformation’. As they discover the roots of their basic problems they realize the relevance of the struggle.”

Human collaboration that characterizes the BECs – as participatory Church and a movement to authentic discipleship – makes possible the performance of the task of cooperating with the God revealed and given to historically emergent humankind in Jesus Christ. That God is at work in the world operating the divinely originated and only solution to the mystery of evil. This is the only way that the BECs, as an ecclesial ministry, can be a catalytic agent of the transition from the prevailing situation to an alternative situation that approximates more closely the reign of God in human affairs.

7.3.1.1 Interpreting Different Communities: Stages of Growth

The phenomenon of the BECs can only be described and not defined. This is because, even in the Philippines, there are different types of such communities formed and emerging. The growth and development of the BECs in the country varies because geography, socio-economic, political, cultural, and religious traditions, all affect the kind of BECs that a particular group comes to form and develop.

In the Philippines, there are three types of BECs that have been distinctly identified. However, I would rather consider them stages of growth in relation to which the communities can verify and gauge their development and transformation. The transformation and development of the BECs can be referred to the envisioning of the Mindanao-Sulu Pastoral Conference as worshipping, serving, and witnessing communities.

The communities in the first stage are the liturgically oriented or traditionally oriented BECs. This is traditional because this was the form that the first faith communities in the Philippines took. As mentioned previously, one stream feeding into the emergence of the basic Christian communities in the Philippines was the movement called the Barangay Sang Birhen, which was based on the popular devotion to the Virgin Mary. The praying of the

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189 From the studies/research conducted in 1983 by F. Claver with J. Carroll and in 1984-85 by the Bishops-Businessmen’s Conference led by G. Mendoza and F. Escaler. (Cf. “Introductory Course on BCCs/BECs” by George Rimando, Diocese of Tagum.)
The second stage still has the attributes of the first stage. However, the communities tend to open themselves up to the broader concerns of the “secular” community and other problems of economic development. Since most of the families involved in the communities are poor, there came a realization that one cannot preach to an empty stomach. Thus, the communities started to concern themselves with organizing different cooperatives, livelihood projects, credit unions, agricultural productivity, etc. As awareness and conscientization seminars were given, members of the BECs began to be awakened to the reality of the situation so that the liturgies also started to be correlated with situations of poverty, oppression, violation of human rights, and other forms of injustices. This second stage is called developmental/liberal and has total human development as its main thrust with its spirituality of service.

Most of the BECs became centers of resistance against Martial Law during the Marcos’ regime. This was even one of the reasons why the name of the communities was changed from basic Christian to basic ecclesial in order to counter the ideological orientations being attributed to the communities by their opponents. The ecclesial character of the communities had to be emphasized. But in this third stage, the liturgies become spaces where people could break the culture of silence and dependence. Worship allows the expression of thoughts and feelings that have been silenced by fear and encourage the people to participate in the struggle against the oppressive system. The third stage also involves the characteristics of the developmental stage but goes beyond it in the sense that communities of the third stage are concerned with social transformation in liberational terms. Thus, the third stage is described as liberational/transformative. Witnessing as a community becomes the prevailing spirituality and martyrdom could be a consequence.

True transformation can only occur when the community activities are an integration of the three stages. However, based on a survey conducted by the National Secretariat for Social Action (NASSA) in 1995, only 34.47% of the BECs of the Philippines were engaged in integrated liturgical, developmental and transformative activities. This means that most of the BECs of the Philippines have not really reached that significant stage that can bring a substantial change in Philippine society. There is a crucial need for education and development of skills to effectively analyze the concrete situations and the problems and thereby search for ways to solve them. But first and foremost, it

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is necessary to awaken in people their desire for transformation, to deepen their commitment to the common good and to inspire them not to give up the spirit (of love and hope) even in the face of overwhelming difficulties but to continue the search for the true meaning of their faith and their common humanity. Members of the educated class are seen to be a major key to social change. However, they need to learn to connect the gospel with social and political life and cease fleeing to the mountain of metaphysics. They need to get involved, applying the gospel values directly to their communities and not exclusively to their own individual life. This can give them the heightened level of social and political consciousness, which is necessary for them to realize that there is a problem. This, in turn, will enable the poor to realize their possibilities.  

7.4 TOWARDS A NEW WAY OF BEING CHURCH

7.4.1 The Call of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II)

Charles Curran emphasizes that liberation theology first appeared in the Latin American context not as a new area of theology but as a new method which took root in the soil plowed by Vatican II. This new approach begins with the perspective and experience of the poor and oppressed people. Although not clear to all from the beginning, liberation theology turned on a methodological issue. This led Juan Luis Segundo to eventually say that the real issue was the liberation of theology, a liberation from conceptualism to experiential learning. Together with the many changes that have taken place in the Church as a result of the Second Vatican Council, the Church of the Philippines took up from this new approach brought about by liberation theology in order to respond to the worsening social, cultural, political, and economic levels of human existence in the country. The Gospel message of liberation must be incarnated not only in the religious level but in all levels of human existence. The church is the community of the people of God living in the world and, through their concrete experiences under the inspiration of the Spirit, strives to be faithful to the Gospel call for liberation. Thus, the basic Christian communities that were already present in the Philippines underwent some transformations in order to adapt to the call of the present situations. These transformations are discussed above as the stages of growth of the communities. But it was not until the convening of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines in 1991 that the Catholic Church of the Philippines fully recognized the value of the basic ecclesial communities to the transformation of the Church and society. Coming from the experience of the EDSA Revolution in 1986, where the Marcos’ dictatorial regime was overthrown in a

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192 See N. O’Brien, Island of Tears, Island of Hope: Living the Gospel in a Revolutionary Situation, 134.
193 Catholic Social Teaching 1891-present, 66.
195 For a thorough evaluation of these changes, see C. Curran, Catholic Social Teaching 1891-present.
peaceful process (through the power of prayers), the Church realized the impact that a community of faith could have in social transformation. “Social change results not from moralizing principles and models authoritatively imposed from above on a passive people but from active involvement by people themselves, especially those who are poor and oppressed.” Thus, the Church placed her main pastoral thrust in the building and promotion of these communities of faith – the BECs. With this, a new way of shaping the future – one that relies on the power that a community of faith can generate and whose main agents are the people of the grassroots – began.

PCP II was concerned with the identity of the Catholic Church in contemporary times. This identity, detected through an encounter with Christ, is to be defined by the Church’s interaction with the people at the base. Thus, the Church must be open to pastoral breakthroughs that shift the clerical dominance to the active participation of the laity in the apostolic work of the Church, “the shift of emphasis from top-down administration and control towards the encouragement of creativity and participation from the bottom-up through small ecclesial communities.” (PCP II, LXXVII). The Council stressed the need to reform the relationship of paternalism and dependency between the clergy and the laity, which goes back at least to the time when colonizers subjugated the people in the name of the Christian faith. Grassroots participation in social and political life is blocked by an authoritarian system that has its roots partly in the culture itself and had its antecedence in colonial conditioning. “The second-class status of the laity maintained in some areas prevents the articulation of a mature spirituality of Filipinos.” (PCP II, LXXVII). For the manifestation and embodiment of the authentic spirituality of the people cannot be imposed by another. Rather, it must arise from the people themselves. In this respect, the institutional Church, through PCP II, called for the complementary presence and support of institution and charism, of tradition and prophecy, one that concerns the process of appropriating the past in order to create a vision for the future.

A Catholic Church that gives voice and space for the full potential development of the common people is a Church that submits herself to the bidding of Christ to be a Church of the Poor. PCP II identifies this Church to be one

… that lives in evangelic poverty which combines detachment from material possessions with a profound trust in the Lord as the only source of salvation;

… that defends and vindicates the rights of the poor even when doing so spells for itself alienation or persecution;

… where the poor, equal to all others in Christian dignity, are not only evangelized but become evangelizers themselves.

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196 C. Curran, Catholic Social Teaching 1891-present, 63.
197 See W. Kinne, A People’s Church? The Mindanao-Sulu Church Debacle, 43.
... where no one is so poor as to have nothing to give, and no one is so rich as to have nothing to receive.\footnote{Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, XCVI-XCVII.}

The Church of the Poor is modeled after the first Jerusalem community, where no one was in want (Acts 4,34) because everyone shared out of love. But what does a Church of the Poor entail for the present Philippine situation?

\subsection*{7.4.2 Church of the Poor}

The “Church of the Poor” is a phrase that the Asian bishops formulated during their first meeting in Manila in November 1970. The majority of the people of Asia are materially poor. In the Philippines alone, approximately 35\% of its 82.66 million population live in poverty.\footnote{Preliminary estimates of the Demographic and Socio-economic Indicator System (dseis) of the Commission on Population, Republic of the Philippines, as of January 2005.} The bishops of Asia felt that the Church should not be “an island of affluence in the midst of a sea of poverty and misery.” Thus, they stated: “We feel that God is calling the churches in Asia to become the Church of the Poor.”\footnote{J. X. Labayen, “The Call of the Church of the Poor: Challenge to Christians Today,” a paper presented to many parts of the world. This edition was made available by the Socio-Pastoral Institute (SPI), Quezon City, Philippines.}

The option for the poor that was adopted in Medellín (September 6, 1968) was the option for justice and solidarity directed to the transformation of the world. The phrase, “Church of the Poor,” directs the option not only to the transformation of the world but simultaneously to the conversion of the Church to the Gospel and, hence, to a new way of being Church at the present time. In this way, the Church becomes not solely an institution administering the poor but herself the community of the poor within which the members nourish one another in equality and participation.

Although the Church in the Second Vatican Council remembered the radical teaching regarding the limited nature of the right to property in the face of the need of the poor,\footnote{Cf. Gaudium et Spes, \# 69.} appropriation by the highest level of the \textit{Magisterium} of the insights of Medellin and its language of the preferential option for the poor was first manifest in 1971 with the publication of \textit{Justitia in Mundo}, consequent on the Roman Synod. In Asia, following the Asian Bishops’ Meeting in 1970, the First Plenary Session of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC) held in Taipei, Taiwan (1974) entitled, “Evangelization in Modern Asia” stated “a local church in dialogue with its people, in so many countries in Asia, means dialogue with the poor. For most of Asia is made up of multitudes of the poor.” (\#19). And, in 1991, the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II) called for the renewal of the Church and for greater participation of the laity in Christ’s mission. The Church, according to PCP II, has become the sign of renewal by taking upon itself the
sufferings of the people and electing to be Church of the poor. This means that the Church is to work not only for the poor but also with the poor. Why the option? Why the poor? Why empower the poor? To what extent is this empowerment possible? What does it entail to be Church of the Poor?

Meeting Objections

Before the above questions are illuminated, there are other questions that must be addressed regarding the Church’s preferential option for the poor. Is such option compatible with God’s universal love for all people – even the sinner and the enemy (theological)? Does partiality in favor of poor people mean that ethics must treat people differently and no longer maintain an impartial respect for all (ethical)? In relation to this, does the biblical belief that “the poor merit preferential attention, whatever may be [their] moral or personal situation” represents a suspension of the ethical ideal of the common good? Finally, does the option for the poor deny other persons and aspects that must be considered by the human (epistemological)?

William O’Neill argues convincingly that the privilege of the poor, in its moral and epistemic aspects, is vindicated by the ideal of impartiality by itself. A preferential option, in this case, does not deny the basic dignity and the rights of all. Impartiality or equal respect justifies preferential treatment for those whose basic rights are most imperiled. Through this general ethical assessment, he concludes that the distinctive theological implication of the privilege of the poor for the disciple who “sees and has compassion” (Lk. 10:33) is illuminated.

In Chapter Two, we have elaborated on Lonergan’s notion of the human good. The human good is at once individual and social. The individual operates to attain a particular good. But, again, relationship is the essence of existence: we are born within a family and authentic growth and development is possible only in relation with others, the attainment of a particular good is contingent to the commonly understood and already accepted basis and mode of cooperation. Instances of the particular good, therefore, are distinct but not separate from the good of order. For example, rice on my table to nourish me is for me an instance of the particular good. But before cooked rice reaches my table, the farmers need to work hard to raise the crop, as well as all the others who have a part in its production. Another thing, I have to make

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202 See the Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, Manila: Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, 1992, LXXXVI.
204 Cf. C. Curran, Catholic Social Teaching 1891-present, 186.
206 Cf. B. Lonergan, Method in Theology, 47-52.
sure that I have no more than enough since any surplus on my behalf will mean a deprivation to all the others. Thus, moral conversion, in Lonergan’s elaboration, is a movement from what is just apparently good because it satisfies us personally to what is truly good because it is an option that leads to actions that do not disregard the good of all the others, and therefore, is a true value. “[M]oral self-transcendence is the possibility of benevolence and beneficence, of honest collaboration and of true love…”

This offers a critique of the Kantian maxim that prescribes that one must respect and try to understand another person’s conception of the good, as if what matters most is the particular good of the individual. The problem arises when this particular conception of the good is a distortion of that which is truly good, like if we judge something as good for as long as it satisfies our personal interests. Another thing, which William O’Neill points out when he quoted Bernard Williams, is that the maxim works only for those who are in the privileged position to think for themselves what can be good for them. Under conditions of exploitation, especially in cases of a more extreme degradation, this consciousness that Kant was appealing to may be suppressed or destroyed. The victims “do not see themselves differently from the way they are seen by the exploiters; either they do not see themselves as anything at all, or they acquiesce passively in the role for which they have been cast.”

Such passive submission in servitude is deemed inconsistent with the moral conception of freedom and equality. One can say, therefore, that a servant who is ill is worthy of greater attention than a son or a daughter who is not. “The satisfaction of equal basic rights, in materially dissimilar conditions, justifies a discriminate response.”

The poor are the group of people who are deprived of so many things. The Hebrew anaw and the Greek ptōchos refer to the poor as oppressed and exploited, humiliated and enslaved. They are victims of injustices. In addition to material deprivation, they have no voice and no ‘power’. Those who have the voice and the power to dominate are denying them their dignity as human beings. They are dehumanized and have been reduced to non-existence and to non-persons. The integral scale of value is constitutive of the epistemic privilege of the poor that is, seeing the point of view of the poor, taking the side of the victims. Economic value, for instance, is properly defined not in terms of profit and market forces, but in relation to vital value, ensuring that the vital needs of the entire population are met. The epistemic privilege of the poor becomes the criterion of the legitimacy of our prevailing institutions and reveals the partiality of what Habermas describes as the “systematic

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distortions of our communicative interactions."²¹⁰ Academic work and university knowledge is also subject to the primary ethical and practical requirement to respond to the cry and needs of the poor. The voice of the victims provides the center our personal and existential discernments. Such a ‘reading’ of the world does not only mean taking the victim’s side (moral conversion), but the formal, existential demand of love, that is, taking the victim’s side as one’s own (religious conversion). Our metanoia is to “turn” to the world of the poor, “becoming incarnate in their world… proclaiming the good news to them,” even to the point of “sharing their fate”.²¹¹ As Christians, to follow Jesus on the “way” is to be in Christ, who is always already in communion with the anāwîm. “To be a Christian,” says Gutiérrez, “is to draw near, to make oneself a neighbor, not to the one I encounter in my journey but to the one in whose journey I place myself.”²¹² Our discernments must reveal the individuum ineffabile of the other.²¹³

The poor do not have a place in the present society and hence they continue to struggle for a new and just society. It is in relation to their relentless desire and effort to change their present dehumanizing condition that the predilection to empower the poor comes to the fore. If there is to be a transformation of the society to one that is truly humane and live-giving and approximates the reign of God in the world, then it has to come from these people who constitute the majority and who have experiences strong and deep enough to aspire for transformation. Out of their struggles, the “power to will” in the poor is strongest so that the “victory of the will” is most possible – their weakness becomes their strength. Strength flows from the people’s age-old quest for release, for freedom, for liberation. Faced with supreme deprivation, the aspiration or desire to transcend the miserable condition is immense. Thus, the poor are more likely to rejoice in the proclamation of the Gospel – “the good news to the poor”: God’s predilection is for the victims simply because they are victims. The revolution of God’s kingdom makes them powerful and eloquent, enabling them to recover and restore the gift that was with them since the beginning – the goodness of all creation. The impoverishment of the masses that deprives them of the possibility of living a dignified life is a disregard and a disrespect to the Creator’s universal purpose for created goods. God looked at everything created and found that everything is good.

This does not, however, in anyway mean that the Church should include only the materially poor and that there is no place in the Church for those who

²¹⁰ See W. O’Neill, “No Amnesty for Sorrow: The Privilege of the Poor in Christian Social Ethics”.

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are not. *Centesimus annus* and the bishop’s pastoral stress that the preferential option for the poor is not an exclusive option. The pastoral letter of the U.S. bishops on the economy states that the “‘option for the poor,’ is not an adversarial slogan that pits one group or class against another. Rather it states that the deprivation and powerlessness of the poor wounds the whole community” and that “[t]hese wounds will be healed only by greater solidarity with the poor and among the poor themselves.” (nn. 87-88, 599-600). In the words of Gustavo Gutiérrez, “The poor are preferred not because they are necessarily better than others from a moral or religious standpoint, but because God is God… for whom, the last are first.” But “the ‘theocentric, prophetic option…demanded by [God’s] love’ is not an ineffable command…[f]or in the words of the prophet Micah, the divine will is not veiled in mystery; ‘this is what Yahweh asks for you, only this: to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God’ (Micah 6:8)”

The option for the poor is one thing that leads to another, the option to be Church of the poor. As an authentic following of Christ, the option to be Church of the poor is grounded on the love that God revealed in Jesus Christ, a love that embraces everyone, rich and poor alike. The “Church of the Poor” is a Church that embraces and practices the evangelical spirit of poverty, which combines detachment from possessions with a profound trust in the Lord as the sole source of salvation (PCP II # 125, 48). It means becoming a community of people who are able to give up everything, including if necessary life itself, for the life of the community - that ‘I’ may decrease so that love in the life of the community may increase. Love for life will not deter them from death. The “Church of the Poor” is one that is willing to follow Jesus Christ through poverty and oppression in order to carry out the work of salvation (PCP II #135, 51). The “Church of the Poor” is a community where, at the very least the poor are not discriminated against because of their poverty. It is a community where the poor can dialogue without hesitation or restriction with people of any social and economic status.

This is the reason why we have to ask some historical questions such as: How does institutionalized injustice come about? How is it imposed and who impose it? Subsequently, we have to ask how can this be broken and the people be set free. The answer to the last question is a way for moving on, a thrust towards creating a future, where faith is the source of the energies put in the endeavor for its fulfillment.

When the Catholic Church of the Philippines opted to be Church of the poor, she made this thrust to the building of the basic ecclesial communities. The power and the energies of the poor were to be revived and recovered. Their voices, silenced for a long time, were to be heard and listened to once

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again. The Church believes in the power of the poor to build and create communities that will serve as alternatives to situations where tyranny and oppression rule.

For four hundred years, the Filipino people lived as a colony under Spain, and for another fifty years as a colony of the United States of America. The culture that resulted from this extended colonial era is the culture that resulted is the culture of silence, passivity, and dependence. What will happen or what kind of society will it be if this culture bequeathed by the colonial era is perpetuated? What if people will be completely silenced by the threat and violence of the dominant group? What if the oppressed masses are resigned to their lot, attribute it to fate and become impotent under the injustices being inflicted on them? The struggles of the Filipino people in history show that when the need arises, the poor can organize and mobilize themselves and claim what was taken away from them – freedom and human dignity. And when they do it as a community, with the common good as their primary concern, their imagination comes alive and creativity flows. Power is generated from the poor the moment they open their eyes to their dehumanized situation and do something about it, take responsibility and make a stand of holy defiance, as in a stand to never again allow a certain dehumanizing condition to plague their children. A holy defiance is a stance that does not break other communities for the sake of its own but builds communities through authentic solidarity and is a witnessing of the Good News, leading a people to the supreme testimony of martyrdom.

The Church as a community of Christians cannot take the poor for granted and become neutral. “There is no such thing as neutrality in an interconnected and inter-acting complex mechanism that society is. For not to decide is to decide; not to speak out, is to approve of; not to be with the exploited is to be with the exploiters; not to be in solidarity with the dominated is to support the dominant.”

The Catholic Church of the Philippines has taken a stand. She is to be a Church of the Poor.

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216 Cf. J. X. Labayen, “The Call of the Church of the Poor: Challenge to Christians Today”.
217 In the Prelature of Infanta, as Bishop Labayen testifies, the Philippine Church has witnessed already God’s rich harvest of these modern martyrs. “They offer their lives for a greater value that they cherish: human dignity, human life, human society, human rights and responsibility, human family… they bravely look at death in the eye in order to create conditions here and now, that the Kingdom of love, justice, freedom and peace may come.” (“The Call of the Church of the Poor: Challenge to Christians Today,” 10.) This has been embraced as well by the first basic Christian communities in Mindanao, especially during the period of Martial Law and dictatorial rule. And it continues to be at the heart of every Filipino community whenever people discover their strength as a community in faith.
When the Church in the Philippines becomes truly this Church of the Poor, the poor will feel at home in her, and will participate actively, as equal to others, in her life and mission. The Church will then become truly a communion, a sign and instrument for the unity of the whole Filipino nation.  

(PCP II # 136, 51-52)

Church of the Poor?

It may be that the true meaning of the Church’s option to be Church of the Poor was not properly understood by many of those who work for the basic ecclesial communities. Or, perhaps, it was not appropriately communicated by the people concerned. Worse, perhaps its true meaning was not incarnated wholly in the life of the Church. At any rate, people continue to ask: What does it mean? What is the Church of the Poor? What implications does it have on the life of ordinary people?

In the encounter of the basic ecclesial communities of the Philippines held in Cebu City in 1999, one of the main themes discussed was about the meaning of the Church of the Poor and its impact in the lives of the Filipinos, especially of the poor. This was the main question raised in the group discussion which included the bishops, the clergy, the religious, and the lay people. Why the Church of the Poor? Poor families are involved in BECs. Is this the sole reason for the phrase ‘Church of the Poor’? This shows that the meaning of the Church’s preferential option for the poor as elaborated above can only be grasped by people of the local communities when it is incarnated in concrete actions. We now look into the life of some of these communities in the Philippines and see if this is being done.

In the BECs of the Diocese of Maasin, for example, which comprises the Province of Southern Leyte and belongs to the twenty least-developed provinces of the Philippines, each member of the Diocesan work team has her and his own understanding and interpretation of the ‘Church of the Poor’. There are those who feel that it is better to use ‘Real Church’ patterned after the early communities of Christ instead of ‘Church of the Poor’. The Church of Christ is for all – rich and poor alike. It was difficult for the lay people to understand the Church of the Poor vis-à-vis the practice of the Church to cater to the request of the rich people, who have the resources to support the various activities of the Church. Take the case of Sorsogon. Sorsogon Province is located in the southern-most tip of Luzon, belonging to the Bicol region. Bicol is considered to be the country’s most economically depressed region and, among the six provinces of the Bicol region, Sorsogon is considered to be the poorest. The Diocese is as poor as the Province, perhaps so poor that, without outside funding, the Diocese could not finance its own programs. As a form of response to this, the priests of the Diocese...

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219 An Encounter of the Pastor and the Flock Toward A New Way of Being Church, Cebu City, Philippines, 24-26 February 1999.

220 Cf. The documentation of the Encounter in Cebu City in 1999 entitled Sharing Our Stories, Sharing Our Spirit, Manila: Socio-Pastoral Institute, 2000, 8.
give the curia ten percent of what they receive during the month and another ten percent of their personal income.\footnote{Sharing Our Stories, Sharing Our Spirit, 14-15.}

In the case of the Archdiocese of Nueva Segovia, the Archbishop himself decided that the structure of the Archdiocesan Council of the Laity was not appropriate since leadership was exclusively in the hands of the elite. The clergy was therefore exhorted to see to it that a new parish council should start from the bottom. New leaders emerged from the villages.\footnote{Orlando Quevedo, “Communion and Solidarity: Toward A New Way of Being Church. A Case Study,” Archdiocese of Nueva Segovia, August 1997. Excerpts of this article can be found in the Annexes and Appendices of Sharing Our Stories, Sharing Our Spirit, 2000, 39-41.}

With these experiences, some lay people suggested that probably the Church of the Poor refers to the situation of widespread poverty in the country since the situation determines the kind of Church that a country should have. What is therefore evident is that for most people, especially the laity, the meaning of the option of the Catholic Church of the Philippines to be Church of the Poor needs to be clarified.

The Prelature of Infanta is in the vanguard of putting into action the option of becoming Church of the Poor. It started by tearing down the pyramid of power and transformed it to a circle of nourishment. The lay people are the central force in the Church. The bishop supports and accompanies them. The deacons and the deaconess take care of the organization in which the struggle of the poor is put centerstage. This kind of direct relation (ugnayan) between the bishop and the lay people provides the communities’ life-giving energy. The Prelature’s First Pastoral Conference in 1973 stated that “to be a Christian community is to assume responsibility for living and promoting a four-fold relationship: God-community-society and-nature.”\footnote{Sharing Our Stories, Sharing Our Spirit, 17.}

In the Second Plenary Conference in 1979, the “Christian Community” was further specified to read “The Church of the Poor.” The plenary revealed that eighty-seven percent (87%) of the people of Infanta live below the poverty line. Through the YAPAK Program\footnote{Yapak ng Panginoon (The Footsteps of the Lord) is a Lay Leadership Formation Program that provides an immersion for the participants to discover the face of God among the poor, enhancing solidarity based on the perspective of the poor, deprived and oppressed and strengthening the dialogue of life with faith communities and cultural minorities. Cf. Sharing Our Stories, Sharing Our Spirit, 17.}, there came more participation and involvement from the different sectors with one another – from the peasants, small fisherfolk, tribal Filipinos, women, youths, and professionals. The basic sectors took on more responsibility in shaping their own image of the church and society.

It can be seen that the option to be Church of the Poor can be manifested in different ways. Another example was the effort of the Archdiocese of Nueva
Segovia\textsuperscript{225} to equalize the rich and poor in the celebration of the sacraments. The priests were the ones who brought up the matter in one of their monthly meetings. They were dissatisfied with the traditional support system called arancel, by which the fees were paid for baptisms, marriages, and funerals. This is the system of the so-called first class, second class or ordinary, which depends on how elaborate the celebration is. Of course, the more elaborate, the higher the fee. The priests argued that this system discriminated against the poor. So, in 1992, after a study and refining the recommended guidelines, the equalization of the celebration of the sacraments for the poor and the rich was implemented. This took away most of the income of the parishes. In order to compensate for the deficiency, a modified form of tithing was installed, wherein each family would pledge monthly whatever the family decides as within their means. A minimum was set at five pesos each month per family. The purpose of this move was for communion and solidarity between poor and rich in a true community of disciples. The great majority of the people accepted the new pastoral initiative but a few of the rich and powerful expressed their objections. Some of them actually went to other dioceses for first class celebrations of the sacraments.

It is clear from the sharing of stories of different communities that there is a constant need to strengthen the relationship that binds the people together, including their relationship towards the entire creation. The binding force will have to come from the people’s relationship with God, that is, their faith. The relationship between people within a community and between communities is a response to the call of global solidarity for the sake of justice, lasting peace, and integrity of creation. There might be differences in the ways of worship and in some beliefs in different religions, but common humanity urges each one of us to search for meaning and direction in life. Every human being tends to reach out to all of life for the sake of happiness. Nobody would want to get stuck in that experience of loneliness described by Fred Lawrence which, according to him, has come to dominate most of the Western culture.\textsuperscript{226} Moreover, individual happiness does not exist. One can never be happy “on one’s lonesome”. Loneliness is being alone, nobody to share life with. This is what happens when one think only of oneself, only of one’s own good. An egoist is a very lonely person. Therefore, we reach out to a community. We build bridges instead of walls. We become attentive to the presence of the other, to what we share together, to our experiences. We make efforts to understand each other no matter how difficult it could be at times. We understand together. We make moral judgments and decide together for the common good. As human beings, we desire to be loved and when we do experience love, we are enabled to love all the more. We become love-able. And, we grow in love. St. Therese of Lisieux sums up our

\textsuperscript{225} Sharing Our Stories, Sharing Our Spirit, 41.
\textsuperscript{226} See F. Lawrence, “Elements of Basic Communication,” Lonergan Workshop Volume 6. See also section 4.2.2.1 of Chapter Four above.
meaning in life: to love and be loved, and make love, be loved. This is what transcendence is all about.

There is an obvious dialectical relationship between the existence of the poor and that of the rich. The surpluses of the rich are the deprivations of the poor. Life has become the survival of the strongest, the wealthiest, and the most powerful. True, some of the rich may have worked so hard to gain such wealth. But why gain so much if, in so doing, we deprive others of the possibility to have some for their own? True, there are some of the poor who are lazy. Their desires can also be misplaced. But the majority of the people are poor, some of them dirt poor. Surely this is not only because they are lazy. Just look at the mothers of poor families. Mothers will do anything and work until their backs break in order to feed their hungry children. No wonder that the personification of the hard-working poor in the Bible is a woman – the bent-over woman in Luke’s gospel (13, 10-13). Again, the issue here is not about romanticizing the poor. As the late bishop of Bacolod City, Antonio Fortich once commented: “I have no problem with a world in which there are rich and poor; you have an automobile, I have a bicycle, so what? But I cannot accept that some people have to live by scavenging for food in the garbage cans of others.”

The sole ground of God’s stand turns on the truth of the oppression and not on the morality of the oppressed. It is about the morality of two conflicting causes: the cause of the rich and the powerful and the cause of the poor. Which does the Church of the Poor support? It is very clear in the above discussion that a basic community is not necessarily a Christian community. For a basic community to become Christian it would need Jesus, the Crucified and the Risen One, as its inspiration and center of life. As followers of Christ, Christians are called to be in touch with the living God as Jesus was, seeking out the victims, identifying with their cause, and supporting them in their struggles for life. If one happens to be the victim, just as Jesus was as well, one cannot allow oneself to succumb to a culture of silence or dependence. To do succumb would be fatal. For the Jews, especially for the survivors of the Shoah, to act responsibly even in the face of unspeakable evil refers to the spirituality of kiddush ha-hayyim: to cling to life not for the sake of one’s own but to offer a possibility for life to the other; in other words, not to give up easily but to do something even in the face of radical vulnerability. This is transcendence – going beyond ourselves even with the pain involved in it, embracing limits and transcending them, so that life could be better for the wider human family. This is what I take being Church of the Poor to mean and it needs to be emphasized, communicated, and incarnated by the Church. It has the spirituality that is about relationships,

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229 Cf. B. Lovett, On Earth as in Heaven, 38.
about right relationships, with all the different groups with whom we interact. If this is present, then the resulting sense of God’s presence will be authentic.231

The option of the Church to be Church of the Poor is directing simultaneously the option for the poor, which is directed to the transformation of the world, to the conversion of the Church to the Gospel. It is the Church’s way of evoking her transformation as her contribution to the effort of transforming the world. The Church of the Poor is a response to the culturally imperialistic model of the church in the past. Thus, the Church of the Poor is a new way of being Church today.

7.4.3 Integral Human Development

The whole issue of the discussion of the response of the Church as a new way of being church, especially in the Philippine context is, as PCP II points out, authentic human development. Authentic human development has been discussed quite extensively in the previous sections and chapters of this work. Taken into consideration and given emphasis there is the fact that development could be either authentic or inauthentic.

We have elaborated on the notion of development in Chapter Two and from there we have seen how the understanding of development can be distorted as much as it can be a way of transcendence. Development, understood and pursued wrongly, promotes the development of the distortion. The meanings in which we are involved can either bring life or death to people. In Lonergan’s clarification, human development occurs upon getting hold of an insight within our process of emergence. This is conducted initially in the commonsense mode of our intellectual operation, where conscious and intentional operations occur in accord with their immanent and spontaneous norms.232 But the scope of the commonsense operation must change or be transformed in order for development to occur. Otherwise, the very existence of another mode is truncated. The value of language and other forms of communication come to the fore. To be able to use a language to express oneself, to be understood by another and to understand the other is part and parcel of relating and responding to life and therefore interchangeable with being human. It is in the measure of this understanding and the corresponding judgments and decisions we make that values are shaped and that culture emerges. Thus, human development is contingent on the dynamic structure of our inquiring intelligence and on the way that this intelligence is actualized in judgments and decisions. Life consists of so many different kinds of events and humans, spontaneously and then intelligently, combine these events to establish schemes of recurrence. In order that these schemes be realized, they must first acquire a probability of emergence and then a

231 Cf. N. O’Brien, Island of Tears, Island of Hope: Living the Gospel in a Revolutionary Situation, 183-185.
232 Cf. B. Lonergan, Method in Theology, 97.
probability of survival. Hence, human development, as everything else in the universe, occurs within the process of emergent probability.233

The above formulation of human development can be summarized in this: all human achievements are fruits of insights and decisions. Insights are discovered in relationship with the environment, as we live our daily life, trying to find meaning in what is going forward, working hard to make life worthwhile. The extent to which these insights are grasped and appropriated conditions the authenticity or inauthenticity in the process of human deliberation and, if I may add, of discernment.

‘Integral’ refers to the whole and all the parts that make up the whole. Every part is a function of the whole. There is no whole unless all the parts are there. Integral human development, therefore, involves the whole of the human and the whole of humanity, including humanity’s relationship with the whole of creation, embracing the whole of God’s creation both heaven and earth. If all human achievements consider this, if in every deliberation and decision humans take the universe into account, then humanity is on its way to authentic integral human development.

In the issue of integral human development, the Church of the Philippines has to deal with both the external and internal factors that retard this development. The historical background that we have provided above, points to that internal element that continues to impede the integral development of Filipinos. This internal element has been generated by external factors such the economic and political conditions and had its antecedence in colonial conditioning. It is internal because it has made its way into the Filipino psyche and way of life as a consequence of many years of colonization in different forms, and has persisted until the present, especially among the poor. I am speaking of the culture of silence and dependence.

7.4.3.1 Culture of Silence and Dependence

In the Philippines, the colonial era has brought a lot of damage to the country and its people. Colonization exploited the natural resources and this includes human resources, which was done by the disregard and destruction of the culture of the colonized people. The colonizers imposed their own worldviews, meanings and values to the subjugated state. Because of this many Filipinos, especially the poor, still live under the culture of silence and dependence at present. What is terrifying is how this kind of culture has become a way of life, perpetuated in history in various forms unconsciously, accepted as the way things are and hence not given much attention anymore. People have been immersed so deeply in it that it has found its way to manipulate their life of desire. Their life of imagination, their life of feelings has been trapped into the system they can no longer escape. They are controlled

by the system through participation in it and the capacity to imagine alternatives has been numbed. Those who happen to have the power and the resources to have a voice share the lack of imagination and the entrapment of feeling and so tend to dominate the subjugated and silence the voiceless all the more.

The movement that relates the levels of the integral scale of value to one another shows that the destruction of the physical environment affects inevitably the vital, the social, and the cultural value and, eventually, the personal and the religious value. An instance of the distortion in the understanding of development is manifest in the continuous devastation of non-renewable resources in the name of development that is being done in a way that is destructive of the environment. This pushes the majority of the people, already extremely poor, towards non-survival. The one possibility of their continued survival lay in the health of their environment and their having access to the means to meet their vital needs and live a dignified life. The path to this present reality has been a long story of great hopes and aspirations. Yet, hopes and aspirations can be misplaced. In Lonergan’s terms, these hopes and aspirations can be corrupted by different biases, which can lead to alienation, tyranny, and at their worst, violence.

In terms of human resources, Filipinos can be very diligent and skillful. This is manifest in history and today in the involvement of Filipinos in various fields all over the world, when given the opportunity. The continuous utilization of these resources in production and in the market, however, are mostly controlled and manipulated by foreign capitalists and multinational companies. When it comes to intellectual power and technical skill, Filipinos, like most of the people in the Third World are treated as inferiors by their Western neighbors, or the nations of the so-called nations of the First World. The terms ‘Third World’ and ‘First World,’ in the first place, are fruits of colonization. The First World is the norm of what is humanly desirable. The definition of development has become self-serving. “[T]he grossest injustice that has been perpetrated in the name of the good by this concept of development by the Western World has in fact been a travesty of the truth of people…”\textsuperscript{234} The people of the Third World are not allowed to name their world; this move can only be justified if their right to name themselves in their own way has already been taken away from them.\textsuperscript{235} They have to be forced to reject their own traditions – their own tested mediation of the human through meanings, values, languages, etc. – and embrace the Western definition of what it means to be human. This is the deeper injustice that a group of people can mete out to another, deeper and more radical than economic injustice – the marginalisation of people precisely as people, the undermining of their cultural integrity.

\textsuperscript{234} B. Lovett, \textit{A Dragon Not for the Killing}, 170.
\textsuperscript{235} Cf. B. Lovett, \textit{A Dragon Not for the Killing}, 170
This has generated the culture of silence and dependence. The greatest problem is that most Filipinos seem to be resigned to it. For them, the white race is better and so the brown race has to look up to them. The West has had initial clear advantages in the achieving of scientific and technological advance even though the term ‘First World’ is rapidly expanding to include more and more of Asian reality. Those who are losing out in all this – those still referred to as Third World – are easily assumed to have lowest priority, destined to be servants of the people of the First World. This shows that colonialism persists in the present Philippine context because Filipinos belong to those who have acknowledged their inability to “go it alone – that political sovereignty had brought with it no authentic economic self-government, and could never do so in a West-dominated world.”\(^{236}\) This gave way to a new form of colonialism. Even when it comes to finished goods, Filipinos go for those coming from abroad as if imported goods are better than local ones. No matter how the country promotes “Buy Filipino” to patronize locally-made products, the response from the people in favor of this is very minimal, if there is any at all. I once heard a woman share her story about how the family sold their meager possessions in the province to start a small food business in Manila. But even if they tried so hard to serve good Filipino food to the people, they realized that they could not compete with McDonalds, which Filipinos patronize more. Accordingly, this dependence on the West, impaired by corruption, led to the partial failure of the national revolution. Present theorists, either too young or too obtuse, have forgotten that nationalism had been in its time an astonishingly effective anti-colonial force. They could not find anything in it but a “benighted chauvinism or ethnic supremacism”\(^{237}\).

Another colonial bequest that has affected greatly the life of Filipinos and has contributed to the culture of silence and dependence was the imposition of a new religion. The colonization was done in the name of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; this Gospel, which is at the heart of the basic ecclesial communities of the Philippines and is the center of the life of most of Filipinos, the Philippines being predominantly Christian. Spain christianized the Filipinos. It was in the time of the colonization that the people were forced to do away with their traditional practices in favor of the teachings of Christianity. It was a Spanish Christianity that was also in enmity with the Islamic religion which had proliferated already in southern Philippines even before the Spaniards came. But though Spain has left the Philippines more than a hundred years ago, Christianity endured because Filipinos, through an authentic shared life by some missionaries, found the true values of the Christian faith and the Christian way of life with its fidelity to justice, charity, and peace. These are the values that must be kept and promoted in the Filipino search for an authentic Filipino Christianity and spirituality. The BECs, being the main pastoral thrust of the Church of the Philippines in building the Church of the Poor must be able to promote and live out these values, if they are to be the locus of transformation that breaks away from the culture of silence and

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dependence. Are there still possibilities of maintaining some of the traditional practices of the people even if they seem to contradict the teachings of Christianity? What does it entail to purify the popular devotions and rituals from some of the alleged superstitions that are seen to contaminate them? Is there still room for native religions and indigenous spiritualities? To what extent is the other still allowed to be ‘other’?

Most historians say that the colonial era has passed, but the colonial mentality and relationships persisted. A new face of colonization – a neo-colonization – is tearing Philippine society and communities down. This face is seen in the economic rationality and instrumentally conceived science of the culture of the rich and the powerful, where development is measured by the more wealth one acquires and by how powerful one becomes. The poor are simply considered as plain recipients of charitable projects. This dole-out mentality that is being propagated by different institutions including the Church in the name of humanitarian programs has reduced the poor to begging, curtailing the people’s creativity to utilize resources within their midst. Authentic development, however, depends upon the participation of people, which is based on equality in human dignity. And, it has to be whole. It needs to involve the whole human being in a process wherein limitations are overcome in a creative way, leading not to numbness and despair but to the way of authentic transcendence. “The root culture of the human subject is the culture of value and meaning, and the culture of life – which is rooted in the human spirit, the human heart – the seat of authentic human love.”

The BECs can just be the venue, the place where we can start awakening our imaginations once again, to imagine alternatives that can question and transform the status quo. Cultural process, as Lonergan has elaborated, refers to the people’s capacity to raise more and deeper questions about what is going forward in the world. Insights can be grasped when we start opening our hearts to the pain of the victims. An insight leads to other further insights by giving rise to further questions. This leads us to a breakthrough – to break free from the slavery that constrains and constricts our life of desire. This is empowerment and this is what authentic and integral human development is about.

The development and proliferation of basic ecclesial communities in the Philippines was not accepted and supported by everyone. The military, for example, along with some people in the government, considered them as a “dangerous form of threat from the religious radicals.” In the BECs people of the grassroots are “practically building an infrastructure of political power”. True enough, for the communities enable the people involved in them to be aware that they can say ‘no’ to oppression and violence from above and, at the same time, they can also say ‘no’ to counter-violence from below.

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238 Julio Labayen, “The Role of Culture in Achieving Integral Salvation and in Building the Church of the Poor,” 2.
239 Cf. N. O’Brien, Island of Tears, Island of Hope: Living the Gospel in a Revolutionary Situation, 130.
Christian communities have given the peasants a voice. In this way, N. O’Brien can refer to the BEC’s as an antidote for the culture of silence and dependence. However, he also goes on to stress that this has to be sustained with specific long-term strategies and accompanied by short and medium-term tactics. Along with this, the communities need the spiritual resources to meet the inevitable increase in repression which can come their way. All of these are to be considered in the education and formation of people involved in these communities.

7.4.3.2 Education and Formation

In response to the culture of silence and dependence that has remained and persisted among Filipinos, rich and poor alike, the Church, in the building of BECs in the Philippines, gives due attention to the value of education and formation. Education is one of the primary values that Filipinos uphold. No matter how poor the family may be, parents work so hard in order to send their children to school, when they can to good schools, to enable their children to get the best education possible. For Filipino families, especially for poor families, this is the best heritage that they can bestow to their children, more than any other material possessions and wealth. The hope rests in the possibility of the educated to find good jobs and consequently, have a better life than the parents had. But more than this, I feel, is the possibility for the children to become better persons. The first motive only requires people to acquire as much information as possible, while that of the second requires a sound formation: integral and whole, and which I believe is the true purpose of education.

A sound formation means a shaping of the person, through education, towards the ability to make sound judgments and appropriate decisions. The soundness of the judgments and the appropriateness of the decisions are measured in the effects of the actions to which these judgments and decisions lead. Education is a process of allowing a person to develop her or his own point of view. It is never an imposition of one’s own principles and perspective to another. When I studied chemistry, for example, my teachers were trying to impart to me their own learning to collaborate in shaping my own views about the world in the field of chemistry so that I may become a good chemist, whose doing of chemistry is a contribution to the ongoing building of a better world. The same is true for any other field of endeavor, including doing theology. This is the meaning of education that can promote a more human world, where science and technology can be basic tools for authentic development. It is also in this sense - in the shaping of one’s own point of view - that education can be a tool for oppression, subjugation, and corruption, especially if my education serves only my own interests and disregards my relationship with the rest of the human family. This is very clear in every history of colonization. If one does not conform to the (one valid) culture of the

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240 Island of Tears, Island of Hope: Living the Gospel in a Revolutionary Situation, 131.
colonizers, then he or she is considered un-cultured, which is the same as uneducated.

In the basic ecclesial communities of the Philippines, education is very important. This education starts in the experience of life. The real educated person, therefore, is one who is deeply in touch with life. Most of the BECs of the Philippines were organized during the Marcos dictatorial era. It was then that the Church realized that there was a need for a renewed pastoral mission to change the thrust from “saving souls” to total human development.

The Archdiocesan Manual on Basic Ecclesial Communities for the Archdiocese of Lingayen-Dagupan describes the environment formed in the BECs as not that of prayer groups, neither that of sectoral and mandated organizations but a living out of the Christian faith in a communitarian way. The BECs are loci for communion and the structure is there to guard that “communion.” This communion can be achieved through a common awareness (kamalayan) that paves the way towards a common point of view. The common point of view must be wholly accepted, embraced and lived by the members of the community. It is an acceptance that is based on sound judgment and decision. It should never be imposed. The people have to see the value of the meaning they are embracing so as to live it fully in authenticity. Formation programs have to respond to this. We have heard of conscientization — a heightening of awareness that leads to a meaningful life and the enrichment of value system. The commitment to values, in turn, endows people with the willpower and confidence to make morally proper decisions. Meaningful participation of people in the process of their development is essential in order to assure the sustainability of that development.

A key part of the pastoral agenda with regards to the building of the BECs is integral faith and value formation at all levels and all sectors in view of lay empowerment to respond to religio-cultural problems. The Church that Filipinos have been sharing so far is a Church that places heavy emphasis on the clergy and the hierarchy. The BECs tend to shift that emphasis to one on the laity, enabling the laity to do what they should be doing as their part in the mission of the Church. Education and formation must be a process of continuing renewal of the entire Church – the clergy, the religious, and the laity. The Church’s mission to evangelize is inherent in baptism. It is therefore the duty of every baptized person to evangelize even in the absence of a priest. In order to share the true meaning of the faith, one has to know the faith by heart. It has to be an informed faith. Actions on behalf of justice cannot be simply guided by instinct and goodwill. They have to be grounded in love. Of course, if we do not love, we certainly cannot serve, but loving also

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242 The word was introduced into English from the Portuguese of Paulo Freire’s little classic, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972.
necessitates knowing. It is in this context of education as the process of understanding the faith that the value of theological reflection becomes necessary; that theology becomes universal in the sense that every baptized person can and must do theology, including the poor. *Gaudium et spes* states that “it is the task of the entire People of God, especially pastors and theologians, to hear, distinguish and interpret the many voices of our age, and to judge them in the light of the divine Word” (n. 44, O-S, 194) Grassroots theologizing is at its best as the people share the pamalandong (reflection) drawn from their struggles, hopes, and dreams. In doing so, the connection between their faith and commitment is established and their spirituality and collective outrage fuse into a world of meanings and symbols. These faith-life reflections shared during their prayer sessions could easily humble those who are tempted to glory in their theological training.243 Warren Kinne talks about the hermeneutical advantage that poor farmers and fisher-folk have over us who have the middle-class urban background, when in 1973 the Philippine Bible Society published a well-translated and very reliable version of the New Testament in Cebuano – *Ang Maayong Balita alang kanimo*, farmers and fisher-folk excitedly struggled through the text by oil lamps into the night. “Their experience of life close to the soil and the sea, their anxieties with palpable danger, had an immediate resonance in the scripture text.”244

To promote real teamwork and co-responsibility within the BECs, a leveling-off through formation programs among Church workers, clergy and sectors is vital. The laity, religious and clergy have to be politically educated so they can have a more objective understanding of the various issues in society. It is commendable that the Prelature of Infanta made the study and propagation of the Church’s Social Teachings part of the formation program of the Church of the Poor, the formation program (YAPAK), which is common to all – the clergy, religious, professionals, non-professionals and basic sectors, especially the indigenous groups to whom priority is given since their participation is considered essential to making the endeavor more human.

Formation in education is the key to change. For creative and life-giving change, formation has to be rooted in the situation, in reality. In the case of the BEC of the Philippines, its necessary starting-point lies in the reality of the poor and the victims of the oppressive and corrupt system. Its concern is to maximize people’s appropriation of the richness of Philippine culture. It needs openness to the changing times while, at the same time, remaining faithful to its authentic traditional values – the expression of the wisdom of ages past. By conscientizing education within the BECs people could move from a culture of silence and dependence to take control of their own lives. This type of education within community context provides an antithesis of a “purely private education” where people become enslaved to a system that maintained the

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244 *A People’s Church? The Mindanao-Sulu Church Debacle*, 107.

status quo and one that can also unwittingly educate them away from community.  

Finally, true education is rooted in the heart. For “the heart of authentic and lasting renewal is the authentic and lasting renewal of the heart” (Bishop Julio X. Labayen). “Deeply inculturated education and formation… is meant to recognize and promote authentic human love and thus finds its authentic expression in politics, in economics, in education, in science and in technology.” This rootedness is crucial especially in the face of globalization or else we will all be lost in the system that corrupts education, deforms the human person, destroys communities, and violates cultures. Having had Hispanic Christianity as the predominant religion and an American-bequeathed system for education, going back to the roots enables Filipinos to build a moral foundation of the national character that would pave the way for a recovery of certain spiritual values, which have nurtured the Filipino and Philippine society. By true education and effective formation in the Basic Ecclesial Communities the hope towards a serious dialogue between a newly-awakened grassroots’ movement and a socially conscious middle-class can be realized.

Conclusion

In the recent BEC National Assembly, Bishop Ricardo Vidal clarified the distinction between the Basic Ecclesial Communities and the “trans-parochial and covenanted” communities. He pointed out that covenanted communities are trans-parochial and start with the conversion of individuals who needed to be sustained in their spiritual experience. In contrast, the BEC’s are of neighborhood structure and those who form them come together because their common experience of faith empowered them to work for the common good within their small communities. In other words, religious experience is the starting point of the BEC, which is directed to the common good. The BEC is a new way of being church that must channel God’s grace of conversion and must be sustained by a spirituality that nourishes that conversion experience. Spirituality bears fruit in praxis and the BEC must bear fruit in order to sustain itself. The BEC must mediate the transformation of people’s life in a fundamental way.

There are various forms of basic ecclesial communities in the Philippines. These forms emerge in the people’s way of responding to their experiences and needs. It has also partly something to do with geographical location. Geographical location affects the lifestyle of the people and thereby their

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246 Cf. W. Kinne, A People’s Church? The Mindanao-Sulu Church Debacle, 131.
248 In his homily during the opening Mass of the BEC National Assembly 2005 (September 19-22), held in Cebu City, Philippines with its theme, “Creating a Culture of Sustainability for BECs.”
needs and assets as well. But the flourishing and the development, the endurance and sustenance of the communities, the progress and decline depend a lot on the involvement, the degree of commitment and responsibility of the people, and thus, on the spirituality that animates and nourishes these communities.

It is for this reason that the Church of the Philippines realized that in building and sustaining the BEC’s, one cannot simply create or establish one program or one schema to be followed by all dioceses and parishes. There can be no particular model of being a local church that can serve as the yardstick. The strength of the BEC seems to rest in the way that it is enfleshed in the specificity and particularity of a given people’s cultural context. The Church must allow the diversities created by the aforementioned factors to be the generating facet for the communities to flourish and enrich one another. This means that the people at the grassroots, those who are strongly involved and engaged in their situations are to be empowered and motivated. The BEC needs to become a home where people can recognize their potential and capacity to empower themselves. Nobody, after all, has the monopoly of the Spirit.

The regular meetings and encounters of the different communities around the Philippines provide the venue for the communities to share each other’s stories and to learn from one another. In Northern Luzon, for example, they call this encounter BEC Exchange, which suggests an exchange of experiences that include successes and failures, dreams fulfilled and dreams not attained. No community is better than the other so no single program of one community is imposed on the others to follow.

The key principle to this empowerment and motivation is ountry, which is possible only through ountry. ountry is to connect. ountry is connection or to be related with one another. The primordial interconnectedness of all beings in the universe, which is given and is a gift, is the basic source of community and therefore must be a living part of the spirituality that a community manifests. We feel for each other. To be

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249 It was told that during the revolution, the mountains provided not only shelter and protection for Filipinos but also a form of livelihood. Needs, assets, geographical location, situations, and faith – all these affect the kind of communities formed.

250 Cf. Manuel G. Gabriel’s lecture in the BEC National Assembly, entitled “A Pastoral Approach to the Sustainability of BEC’s in the Light of Culture”.

251 This was also the common realization of the people of the BECs from different dioceses and parishes around the Philippines, which was articulated in their reports during an encounter held in Cebu City, Philippines in 1999. The encounter was entitled Sharing Our Stories, Sharing Our Spirit: An Encounter of the Pastor of the Flock Toward A New Way of Being Church (24-26 February). ountry and ountry were the words that they themselves used. There is just a crucial need to expound and deepen the true meanings of these words especially to the Filipinos. Cf. The documentation of the said encounter, prepared by the Socio-Pastoral Institute, Manila and Lay Forum Philippines-National Center, Davao City, 2000.
indifferent to the needs and to the very presence of our fellow beings is a denial of our humanity. It is inhuman. As human beings, we are lured to respond to the other and to be attentive to her or his needs. We just cannot take the other for granted. And so we go beyond ourselves to reach out or else we will feel incomplete. Incompleteness leads to a form of restlessness and emptiness and if not given the proper remedy might lead to self-disintegration, which is the main cause of most of our problems today. The response to this natural lure to the other is *damay* – to sympathize with the other. *Damay* is an active sympathy. It is doing something, to the best of our ability, to relieve the other of her or his suffering. *Damayan* is active solidarity, a reaching out to the other in love that truly transforms the society. This is the transcendence by which human authenticity is achieved. This must be the spirituality that pushes and encourages the persons in the community so that the mission, the goal and the objectives in building the communities will not be left translated only into organizational and functional charts.

The Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines, in other words, form a communion of shared life, imbibing in one’s self the selves of a number of human beings, as Bonhoeffer puts it.\(^{252}\) This is also what a responsible life means. People are able to commit themselves to this sharing of life because they firmly believe in the Good News that the Gospel proclaims. They sincerely worship together and this gives them the vitality to generously serve one another. This generosity is manifested in their prophetic witnessing and the result is a joyfully radiating community of persons. These are the elements that identify an authentic basic ecclesial community. As the BEC’s of the Archdiocese of Cebu express it, the basic ecclesial community is a “community of disciples, the company of Mary, inspired by the Word of God, nourished by the Holy Eucharist, prophetically witnessing Christ, sincerely worshipping in the Spirit, and generously sharing the love of the Father.”\(^{253}\)

The BEC’s or the Basic Ecclesial Communities refer to the local communities of faith that have emerged at the grassroots, the grassroots who continue to struggle to live creatively the situations present in contemporary Philippines, beset by grave poverty, corruption, and sub-human living conditions. Within this creative struggle are historical details, especially concerning colonization of the country, that make inroads into the psyche of the Filipino poor whose self-image is eroded by their humiliating poverty. But, trust in the Spirit that heals and creates keeps Filipinos moving on and participating in that healing and creating. The beacon of light in these troubled times in the Philippines are the Filipinos empowered by the spirit of authentic loving to reach out and have concern for others and, who, schooled by their


struggles, form authentic communities of faith that concretize the Church, realize, localize and experience what it is to be the body of Christ today.\textsuperscript{254}

Part III

‘Spirituality’ in meeting the challenges to growth and empowerment in the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines

Main question: To what extent does the Lonergan-based elucidation of fundamental spirituality critically analyze the challenges to growth and empowerment in the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines?
The Basic Ecclesial Communities are meant to empower the poor, the voiceless, and the weak in society. The statistics provided in Part Two above indicated that something approaching success in this project could only be claimed for some 34% of the communities.\(^1\) Although such success is to be marveled at in itself, it is clearly valid to point out that serious challenges to the growth of the remaining communities remain as yet unmet. My unifying thesis is that the wellspring of growth and empowerment is the spirituality constitutive of human authenticity. As in any history of civilization\(^2\), Philippine history is a story of the struggle for order. People are responsible for the current order or disorder that exists. This means that the outer breakdown of social order can be traced to some inner breakdown of the personal order.\(^3\) Consequently, growth and empowerment of communities depends fundamentally on the movement of the spirit in the people who comprise them. My proposal is that an appropriate attention to the dynamics of the spirit within the people of the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines can guide us in meeting the challenges to the growth and empowerment in the communities.

In relation to this, we now ask whether the Lonergan-based elucidation of fundamental spirituality, elaborated in Part One, can help us meet and critically analyze the challenges to growth and empowerment in the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines. Part Three will serve as the concluding part of this book and is dedicated to answering this question.

Part Three is composed of two chapters. Chapter Eight brings Lonergan’s explanatory perspective on transcendence (a perspective which has been argued to yield normative understanding of human authenticity) to bear on the empirical data provided by Part Two in order to test its capacity to illuminate the path to true development of the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines. Lonergan succeeded in gaining explanatory perspective on spirit, uncovering the normative unfolding of human consciousness as a dynamic process of search for the direction found in the movement of life itself. For Lonergan, spirit refers to one of the mutually defining terms in articulating the human as an instance of emergence in our universe. As with every instance of emergence, it is a matter of creative tension between limitation and transcendence. The pole of limitation is that of organism-psyche, where psyche refers to our sensitive consciousness, while the pole of transcendence is spirit. This clarification provides us with the heuristics of human authenticity as the creative living out of the tension between the pole of limitation and the pole of transcendence (what Doran refers to as the dialectic of the subject). Such heuristics have central importance for a critical reflection on human spirituality but adequate reflection on the subject in history is only made

\(^{1}\) See Part II, page 224 above.


\(^{3}\) See Tad Dunne, *Lonergan and Spirituality*, 1
possible when these heuristics are supplemented by the heuristics of the
dialectic of community and those of the dialectic of culture.

The culminating task in any integral theological reflection will be that of
Communications, carrying the reflection through its implementation in regard
to specific cultural context. A significant sub-theme, here in an excursus, is
indicating the extent to which existing cultural resources are open to
expansion in ways congruent with the path suggested by the explanatory
perspective. Pursuit of this gives some indication of how gains of this heavily
theoretical argument can be mediated to a Philippine world largely marked by
the absence of a theoretical differentiation of consciousness. While the basic
validation of the theoretical perspective is a matter of self-appropriation, the
demonstration of the congruence, albeit at the commonsense level, of current
Filipino linguistic meanings with the normative dynamics identified by interiority
analysis provides its own confirmation of the basic validity of our approach.

Chapter Nine builds on Chapter Eight and concludes the book by bringing
to the fore the value of Lonergan’s contribution and of the book as a whole
through a clarification of the relationship between theology and spirituality.
The effort throughout was to do a fundamental (theological) study of spirituality
with the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines as its context. The
purpose of such a study is to provide a possible pastoral approach that can
facilitate the creative use of systematic enrichment in service of genuine
liberation for all. Precisely as fundamental, the study gives rise to at least as
many questions as it solves. This leads us to end with indications of needed,
future research.

\[\text{4 Cp. B. Lonergan, Method in Theology: “They must grasp the virtual resources of}
\text{that culture and that language, and they must use those virtual resources creatively so}
\text{that the Christian message becomes, not disruptive of the culture, not an alien patch}
\text{superimposed upon it, but a line of development within the culture” (362).}\]
CHAPTER 8
WELLSPRING OF GROWTH AND EMPOWERMENT IN THE BASIC ECCLESIAL COMMUNITIES

The trajectory of our argument is towards showing that spirituality is the wellspring of power to be generated by the people of the basic ecclesial communities – spirituality as lived authenticity. Spirituality was located within the human story of emergence. The human story, on the other hand, is part of an emerging universe of increasing differentiation, complexity, and communication. Thus, spirituality as lived is to be understood not only by what Lonergan defines as special theological categories, but involves essentially as well what he names general theological categories.

All of the general theological categories that we were concerned to present in Part One are centrally relevant to a systematic project which would take the form of a theology of history, a theology which can embrace cultural and social change as a complex process of progress, decline, and redemption operative within human history. Our purpose now is to apply the special and general theological categories presented earlier in an attempt to understand the challenges faced by the Basic Ecclesial Communities. These general categories were drawn from a philosophy where metaphysics no longer provides the basic terms but must take the derivative form of an integration of heuristic structures, a move which links it to all sciences. The special categories have been identified above as his exposition of emergent probability, the integrity of the triple dialectics, the integral scale of values of the human good, his were drawn from the Christian religious tradition. All categories need to be critically appropriated by the religiously, morally, intellectually, and psychically converted subject.

At this point, it will be enough to simply enumerate these categories as emergent probability; the integrity of the triple dialectics to be found at the interconnected cultural, social, and personal dimensions of human community; the scale of values of the human good; intellectual, moral, and religious conversion; the explanatory transposition of evil into the general theological categories of four-fold bias: dramatic, individual, group, and general; the healing and creating vectors in human consciousness with their healing

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movements down and creative movements up the scale of values. At the level of special categories, our concentration was on the law of the cross.⁶

One important aspect of our explanatory framework was inadequately presented in the earlier exposition of Part One. In virtue of our step by step mode of presentation, the interconnectedness of all the general theological categories was at best hinted at rather than demonstrated.

Since all of the general categories are critically derived from the same transcendent base in intentionality analysis, they constitute a web of interrelated meanings to be employed by a contemporary systematics. If in what follows we shall be concentrating on the categories of conversion and the integral human good as those most appropriate for illuminating the problems of growth and empowerment in the basic communities, these always remain linked to all the other categories mentioned in our opening paragraph above. Achieving explanatory perspective is a matter of grasping the intelligibility of a given area through arriving at a nest of basic terms and relations which implicitly define one another. For example, understanding the collapse of the creative tension of the social into a dialectic of the social will involve introduction of the general theological category of group bias.⁷

An Anecdote

In the course of my research in the GKK (Gagmay’ng Kristohanong Katalingban)⁸, one of my questions in my informal conversations with the people was whether they had a native word for spirituality.⁹ I raised this question because I hoped to learn by the way it was expressed in the Pilipino language how the people might understand spirituality. Such understanding would, I thought, point to the way spirituality is lived or manifested in their daily life. As far as I knew, Filipinos habitually translate spirituality as espiritualidad, which is actually a Spanish term. Recent Filipino projects, mostly by theologians and psychologists among others, trying to use Tagalog terms to understand the spirituality of the Filipinos, relate spirituality to kabanalan (holiness) or landas ng pagpapakabanal (way to holiness).¹⁰ The answer of

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⁶ The earlier insistence on the centrality of the healing vector for human empowerment and the identification of the specifically Christian focus on this vector should not lead to any dichotomy between general and special theological categories.

⁷ The reference here is to how Lonergan defines the achievement of reaching explanatory perspective on any given issue. Explanatory perspective involves a system of basic terms where the terms are defined by their relations to each other, and the relations fixed by the terms; a matter then of implicit definitions. Explanatory understanding grasps an immanent lawfulness or intelligibility or regularity in data as empirically apprehensible. (See page 16 above.)

⁸ This is the way the people of Tagum, Davao name their BECs. It translates as ‘Small Christian Communities’.

⁹ There was earlier mention of this exchange towards the end of Part Two above.

¹⁰ There are recent works, however, that use the Tagalog term diwa to refer to the spirit. Spirituality, in this case, is pagsasadiwa (embodiment of the spirit). Thus, Holy Spirit translates to Diwang Banal. (See Estela P. Padilla, “BEC Spirituality,” BECs in the Philippines, Dream or Reality: A Multi-disciplinary Reflection, 259-302).
the people to the question I raised was also *kabanalan*, referring to spirituality. This means that Filipinos associate spirituality with holiness. An authentic and liberating spirituality for them is that which leads people to holiness.

I pursued my questions further by asking the people of the GKK how they felt *kabanalan*, what it was that made one holy, and even why they wanted to be holy. Why were they willing to give so much time and effort to working in the GKK? They did not think twice as they answered these questions. According to them, they know they experience holiness out of the joy they feel when seeing a person or a family alleviated from their miserable situation. They told me that they could not describe in words this kind of happiness. Yet, it is there. They feel it. Could it be the same joy felt by a person in love and loved in return? One can just imagine the kind of church and, consequently, the kind of society there could be should this kind of experience be the foundation for building and sustaining the Basic Ecclesial Communities.

The important point in their answer was the reference to the praxis in and through which this experience of holiness was had. They spoke of a joy that was concomitant with a very specific practice: the practice of enabling the poor to break free from debilitating poverty. Motivating such a practice calls for a very definite kind of evangelization which reveals Christian discipleship to be a matter of participating in redemptive process, a joyfully accepted self-giving to promote the healing of a broken world. That which empowers such participation is one’s own experience of healing. Where this has not been experienced in sufficient depth, we will simply be unable to rise to the challenge of effective historical loving.

### 8.1 Lonergan, Fundamental Spirituality, and the Filipino Basic Ecclesial Communities

One major and important realization within the experience of the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines is that an imposition and implementation of a previously prepared program and plan of action to the communities without prior consideration of the people who comprise these communities and what is going on within and among them is not going to be fruitful at all. The parish priest and the members of the parish pastoral council are the people who usually bring the program to the communities. Once these people leave, it is highly likely that the newly formed communities start to dwindle away. There are very few among the people who commit themselves truthfully and faithfully to the development of their communities. It seems that many people in the BECs cannot fully commit to the implementation of the program that it becomes simply hard for them to give their full support.

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12 This is not to set aside the fact that some of these communities endure, maintained by the active participation of some few members. In most cases, however, what eventually comprises these communities is what I call ‘remnants’, the chosen few
Authentic progress in communities relates to empowerment. The life of a community, its progress and decline, depends heavily on the personal involvement and commitment of every member, where persons-in-community become both the objects and subjects of their own religious-political history, enabling them to make a stand for what truly matters, a stance authentic enough in its motives to build communities. The argument is that the progress or decline of communities is critically dependent on the people who make them up and on the deep dynamics operative in their valuing and decision-making. At the heart of every community is the human subject who experiences, understands, decides, and loves authentically or unauthentically. Historical development, social and personal, is contingent on these dynamics. Together, as a community, all members have to actively participate in creating their history and identity, “living in faith and hope and putting love to work.” It is here in its clarification of basic dynamics that the value of the work of Bernard Lonergan becomes apparent. Lonergan’s work on intentionality analysis and method provides a thematisation which enables us to grasp wherein authenticity consists.

8.1.1 Stages of Growth Revisited

Towards the end of Chapter Seven an attempt was made to order the various existing kinds of Basic Ecclesial Community in the Philippines. The emphasis in that earlier presentation was on the stages through which actual communities had grown and so the language of ‘types’ was avoided. However, there is clear evidence that the majority of Communities are ‘not growing and this fact needs to be addressed in a critically constructive manner. A stage of growth that resists transformation has ceased to be a stage of growth. We can usefully ask why by ‘bringing the program to the communities’ by outsiders such as the parish priest and his town-based council never really works.

The 1995 survey of the National Secretariat for Social Action (NASSA) has already been mentioned. It reported that only 34% of the Basic Ecclesial Communities were engaged in integrated liturgical, developmental and transformative activities. This means that a majority 66% continued to be liturgically oriented or traditionally oriented. These communities continued to be fixated on a kind of spirituality that is concentrated on individualistic piety and personal holiness. They thrived by and large on popular devotions that were mostly introduced by foreign missionaries, which could have been who have really committed themselves. There are no new members. The communities only stand as long as these committed few are still there. These communities cannot be considered progressive.


14 See Section 7.3.1.1 above.
constructive if not of the culture of silence and dependence that has clouded and distorted the judgment of facts and value of many Filipinos, leading to a failure in critical appropriation of what the missionaries had started.

An initial issue is the extent to which clerical practice and the mode of liturgical celebration have both tended to be characterized by conceptualism.

8.1.1.1 Overcoming Conceptualism

Lonergan set out to write a book on theological method to fulfill his youthful aspiration to speak to the need of the times on the level of the times. It was a response called for by the degree to which Catholic thought had fallen behind the times. It is therefore a method that has something to do with the general renewal of Catholic thought, enabling us to move out from the trap of conceptualism. Conceptualism can be defined as the automatic imposition of concepts onto experience. In Lonergan’s view, conceptualism fails to find the act of understanding where it really occurs. The key issue, according to him, is “whether concepts result from understanding or understanding results from concepts.” In the method in doing theology that Lonergan proposes, understanding is the fertile source of all concepts. Conceptualization follows insight as an articulation of the relations grasped in the act of understanding. But the understanding which comes to expression in concepts is had in relation to relevant experience.

As can be seen from the history of the Church in the Philippines, conceptualism also features as a disease afflicting the pastoral practice of the Church in that country and, therefore, impeding the growth and empowerment in the very communities that it seeks to build and promote. Participation occurs to the extent that people are encouraged to their own act of insight. Understanding can never be given to anybody.

This part of the situation being addressed by Lonergan, starting with his first major work, Insight: A Study of Human Understanding, where he called for a radical intellectual conversion – the notion of understanding that we have been discussing above: reason illumined by faith that inquires diligently, piously, soberly towards “a highly fruitful understanding of the mysteries of faith both from the analogy of what it naturally knows and from the interconnection of the mysteries with one another and with man’s last end (DS 3016).” In the analogy of conversion in his later work, Method in Theology, Lonergan emphasizes that intellectual conversion is the fruit of moral conversion, which, in turn, is the fruit of religious conversion. He recognizes

17 See F. Crowe, Lonergan, 82.
18 See footnote on page 336 of Method in Theology.
19 Method in Theology, 336.
the insufficiency of philosophy without the love “flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us (Rom. 5,5).” It is the human response to the offer of unrestricted love and meaning in religious experience that brings about the transcendence which Lonergan designates full transcendence, because “being in love with God“ constitutes “the basic fulfillment of our conscious intentionality.” Our capacity for self-transcendence becomes an actuality when we fall in love. One’s being becomes being-in-love, from which “flow one’s desires and fears, one’s joys and sorrows, one’s discernment of values, one’s decisions and deeds.”

Since we can assume that the gift of God’s love is a constant, what needs to be understood is the complexity of factors that block our reception of this healing power. We need to understand why communities fail to grow. Growth from one stage to another happens to the extent that conversion is ongoing. The focus needs to be on that in the communities which facilitates such conversion.

8.1.1.2 Liturgically-Oriented Communities

Reverting to the three-stage model introduced in the closing pages of Part Two above, a high proportion of the instances of Basic Ecclesial Communities who failed to grow were identified as exclusively centered on liturgical practices. Love of its nature promotes the good. However, if our attention is never drawn to the manner in which the integral human good is being violated, we will fail to take the requisite steps to redress the situation and never rise to the demands of historical loving. Where such attention is lacking, the power of love is constricted by the working of the mutually reinforcing dialectics of the person, the social, and the cultural.

Convinced of the importance of sacramental celebration in their lives, people find it hard to imagine that liturgical celebration could never ever be a problem. However, if transformation and the desire for it is not present in the liturgy, there is something deeply inauthentic happening. It is being forgotten that the Eucharist, for example, is a ‘sign of unity’ precisely in confronting us with the lack of unity in the human world and a challenge to us to ‘overcome the world’. The Gospel is reduced to innocuous moralism when the language of its proclamation has become individualistic. The use of idealist language in preaching makes it difficult for people to even begin to see where true value might be found in their societies or what the path of genuine historical loving might be demanding of us.

One defining mark of the next stage as being one of growth is that their liturgies are explicitly related to situations of poverty, oppression, violation of human rights, and other forms of injustice.

20 Method in Theology, 105.
21 Method in Theology, 105.
22 Cf. Herbert McCabe, God Matters, 76-89.
8.1.1.3 Development-and Service-Oriented Communities

The evidence of the transformation that has occurred in moving toward the second stage is to be found in people beginning to transcend the individualistic self-preoccupation engendered by general bias. For a community to even begin to have a sense of the common good, the manner in which the good of each is necessarily tied to the good of others, is to have traveled a long way in overcoming our economistic cultures, dominated as they are by market forces. To come to question the absoluteness of evaluations generated by such forces involves very real conversion, a significant overcoming of general bias. Since general bias works as a powerful reinforcement of group bias, some weakening of group bias can be expected with such a level of conversion. But each of the biases has its own generative dynamics, its own form of blindness, and so it is that basic communities which reach this second stage can become blocked at this level of growth where people are willing to promote as best they can the chances of advancement for the poor as long as it is compatible with the unchanged status of their own social identity.

8.1.1.4 Liberational/Transformative Communities

The typical context within which Basic Ecclesial Communities made the breakthrough to a third stage of transformation was that of lived resistance to the Martial Law regime. The experience of being labeled ‘subversive’ as a result of their attempts to further the cause of the poor put in question the values of the New Society, values which had previously been taken for granted by some members of the communities. A truly creative response to this new situation needed a yet deeper level of conversion than that already experienced. In increasingly trying circumstances, liturgical worship became the space where people could break the culture of silence and dependence. It allowed the expression of thoughts and feelings that had been silenced by fear and encouraged the people to participate in the struggle against the oppressive system. Above all, conversion took the form of Gospel-inspired solidarity between all the members of the ecclesial communities. The liberationalist thrust of this third stage became manifest in the way the free participation of all members of the communities was affirmed both in liturgical practice and in lived solidarity. Witness as a function of the whole community in all their interrelationships became the prevailing spirituality and such witness exacted a supreme cost for some.

The explanatory framework which we have been developing enables us to understand both the instances of success in the BECs and the much more numerous instances of failure. In the case of the failures, what is enabled is a series of inverse insights\(^{23}\) which acknowledge the absence of intelligibility, an

\(^{23}\) Cf. B. Lonergan, *Insight*, 711. (For the definition of ‘inverse insight’, see *Insight*, 19-25: “While direct insight grasps the point, or sees the solution, or comes to know the reason, inverse insight apprehends that in some fashion the point is that there is no
absence to be found wherever the biases are operative. Thus, failure to live out religious value at the personal, cultural, and social levels is indicative of the absence of integral spirituality and this may be due to our being enslaved by personal, group, or general bias, or, more usually, by a complex combination of all three. Where religious value is celebrated in isolation from the specifically Christian task of ‘overcoming the world’, the danger of our way of living blocking the dynamics of religious conversion is very real. Despite the irreducibly personal dimension of religious conversion, it is as a community that the alternative living made possible by such conversion begins to be actualized as the dynamics of forgiveness, caring and sharing shape the community ever more deeply.

We come to see that, since the promotion of the BECs was consciously intended as a means of actualizing the mission of the Church, and since this mission is to be conceived as the transformation of this present situation to anew situation that more closely approximates the reign of God on earth, actualizing this mission is to be conceived in terms of the restoration of the integrity of the scale of values through the mediation of grace found in the redemptive self-sacrificing love of the Church members. Such restoration will embrace activities not only at the level of religious value but also at the personal, cultural and social levels of value.

Is there a danger of our having imposed an interpretation on the data?

Lonergan’s approach is carried out on a level of analysis so basic that it can cut through the prejudices and dichotomies of our time with pervasive healing effect. His base is the dynamics of the human spirit, present and active in every human being. That his formulation of these dynamics is culturally determined is something he himself recognized and accepted. But what is being brought to formulation is the dynamic structure of consciousness which is operative in the generation of all cultures. The openness to the method he proposes lies in our attention, not to the way that it is formulated, but to the normative unfolding of the human spirit, an ongoing process that calls for creative collaboration and which is the base of growth and empowerment, or – in its neglect – the decline and oppression, in communities. The theological principle in this is, as we have mentioned above, religious conversion – the gift of God’s love poured out into people’s hearts. Lonergan’s work can, thus, provide elucidation both in understanding spirituality and in critically analyzing the experiences and challenges within any human communities, such as the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines.

An empirical check on the validity of the whole approach can be found in the following extended excursus on conversion in Philippine linguistic contexts. In relation to the flow of the main argument, it has the form of an excursus but,
as such, it is appropriate at this point. Through actual language use we can see how the dynamics of the human spirit analyzed in explanatory terms in Part One above are manifest in the performance of people whose culture is neither interiorly not theoretically differentiated. Beyond a word for word translation, the challenge here will be to communicate the meaning within the words and the way people use and understand them.

8.1.2 Excursus: Conversion in Philippine Linguistic Context(s)

The question about indigenous words for spirituality, as mentioned above, needs to be raised in order to help in articulating the concrete effect of the movement of the spirit in the life of the people in their particular local context. This articulation can facilitate for the people of the BEC’s a more lucid understanding of the foundational value of spirituality in human development and in building communities. A people’s language is an expression of a form of life. For the BEC to become a decisive pastoral approach it must take root in the people’s cultural context. A major part of this cultural context is language. Hence, any theological reflection and articulation, any understanding of spirituality for that matter, must find its expression in the local language.

In Christian terms, faith is a commitment to God and neighbors. Faith makes community. Human beings commit themselves to what they value most and desire communion with the object of that value. This is faith that generates commitment. In what Julio Labayen identifies as the ‘heroic element’ in us, it is the experience of a person or a cause that is much greater than ourselves and our own cause that motivates us or gives us the will to lay down our lives for that person or cause. Faith is a crucial element of cultural development. Personal involvement and, hence commitment, is an internal demand of faith. It is here that spirituality is seen to be an essential, foundational, and motivational element in building and sustaining human communities.

In reflection on the experiences of the BECs of the Philippines, it appears that spirituality is not given the necessary attention and that its value and role in the life of the community are not properly defined and appropriated. Starting as a parochial response, the people involved in building and promoting the BECs preoccupy themselves with programs and activities that become routine and most of the time even compulsory and stagnant. They are busy with objects, such as languages, concepts, ideas, symbols, inculturation of the liturgy, etc. while neglecting the subjective element – the people who make community.

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24 Cp. B. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 362. “[Communicating the Christian message to all nations] presupposes that preachers and teachers enlarge their horizons to include an accurate and intimate understanding of the culture and the language of the people they address…..” [See footnote number 4 of Part III above.]

The following sections are an illustration of how conversion, as thematized by Lonergan, can be expressed in the Pilipino language and appropriated in the Filipino experience. The three-fold conversion process can speak of all the other categories articulated by Lonergan that were mentioned above since all these categories are linked with one another.

8.1.2.1 Subject in Love and Loòb (the soul) in the level of Psychic and Intellectual Conversion

The pastoral thrust of building basic ecclesial communities was the fruit of the Philippine Church’s engagement with the wider Filipino socio-cultural context: the perceived need was for an articulation of the meaning of faith in relation to the situation of Filipino life as a whole. Parallel with what was happening in other ecclesial contexts, the Church of the Philippines focused on works of liberation and alternatives for the worsening condition. Within this process, the Church realized that movements for liberation must be in the hands of the people who were most affected by the evils in the society. The victims themselves have to take matters into their hands. The subjects of such actions would have to be the poor and the oppressed in history. The transformation of the world, co-constitutive with the transformation of the Church, depends on the conscientization of the people, and primarily of the poor. Lonergan’s work on the operations of the human subject, as mentioned earlier, resulted in the grasp of our emergent conscious process as a structured dynamism issuing in operations on four levels of conscious intentionality: experience, understanding, judgment, decision. This refers to the thrust of the spirit in us, a negotiation of the movement of life in people that enables them to respond to situations and which I identify as the heart of what spirituality is about.

This conscious intentionality corresponds with one meaning of the Filipino term ‘loòb’. The term ‘loòb’ is rich in meanings. It can refer to a local or spatial interior, that which is not open to the naked eye, carrying with it a notion of invisibility. In this sense, it is translated in English as ‘inside’ or ‘within’. Once what is hidden is revealed, there always appears a definite something; but for as long as it is hidden, that something can only be imagined. Picking up on the meaning of loòb as applied to the human being, Filipino theologians and scholars have put forward the value of loòb in structuring the Filipino personality. Aside from the visible and invisible worlds that Filipinos associate with the sensitive physical realm and the realm of the spirit respectively, there is also the notion of the outer and the inner world of the human. Loòb comes to be understood as a symbolic interior, more particularly human interiority. It becomes the core of creaturehood, where the

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26 For a wider discussion about ‘loob,’ see Dionisio M. Miranda, Loob: The Filipino Within. A Preliminary Investigation into a Pre-theological Moral Anthropology.
27 See section 4.2.1.1 above for Crowe’s communication as movement from within outwards.
truth of the person lies. In our present exploration of spirituality and authenticity, I would associate loób with the human soul (etymologically “heart”; lev in Hebrew)\textsuperscript{28} that bears the true worth of the person. Metanoia is often referred to in Tagalog as pagbabalik-loób – a “return to the soul” and a “return of the soul” to God and to a relationship with others. It is a return to the true worth of a person made in the image and likeness of God. In the soul (the loób), the intellect and the psyche function together. It means that there can be no dichotomy. Our feelings urge us to think and understand, and our thinking and understanding is always influenced by what we feel.

Filipinos, in company with most Asians, are often regarded as a feeling people more than as thinking people such as those of the West. Since most of the Filipinos are poor and cannot avail of the proper education in the academe, it is frequently considered that they are intellectually inferior (especially when it comes to thinking objectively) to those of the more wealthy and advanced nations. Colonially induced dependence on other nations for their ‘development’ and for the ‘solutions’ of most of their problems has contributed much to this way of thinking. In terms of religion, it is evident that Asians in general and Filipinos in particular are open to the religious. It is certainly true that theology, systematic critical reflection on a religious tradition, has not developed among Filipinos to an extent comparable to that achieved by some other peoples of our world.\textsuperscript{29} Definitely, this is not because Filipinos do a lot of feeling and a lot less of thinking. All that has been said above about the primacy of intentional feelings in human thinking and living would militate against any such facile contrast between feeling and thinking. People who feel more deeply understand more profoundly. As we have been

\textsuperscript{28} The local term for ‘soul’ in the Pilipino language is actually kaluluwa, which refers to that which continues to exist, although not seen, after a person’s death. It has been suggested that kaluluwa came from the Arabic ruh and is also related to the Hebrew ruah or breath. This etymological explanation seems quite conceivable since “death” in major Philippine languages is often referred to as nalagutan ng hininga (loss of breath). [Cf. D. Tesoro and J. Jose, The Rise of Filipino Theology, 190.] In line with this, the soul as loób refers to that which is not seen – the interior, which gives the body (katawan) – the exterior, life. And, even if the body dies, the soul lives, symbolically by the effects the loób of one person has on others.

\textsuperscript{29} Yet it seems that Filipino theology has come of age. This is the testimony of the study made by Dindo Rei M. Tesoro and Joselito Alviar Jose compiled in the book The Rise of Filipino Theology (2004). In the prologue of this book, Angel Lagdameo (bishop of Jaro) writes, “... by integrating various influences – Spanish, American, Asian, etc… one can come out, not with a lesser theological form but with a masterpiece of theologizing which is indigenous.” Though much is still to be done, continues Lagdameo, the process of mental evolution and theological genesis is necessary and that Filipino theologians must continue to pursue consciously and passionately the ‘blossoming’ and ‘rising’ of Filipino theology.
reiterating, doing theology is not about *content*\(^{30}\) as much as it refers to an *activity*, or more accurately, a complex of related activities.\(^{31}\)

Lonergan has also emphasized that though cultural differences are profound and manifest, they are not differences that lie within the intellectual pattern of experience. Conversely, when the poor inquire and understand, reflect, and judge, they perform the same operations as the rich. And, if they are more attentive to their struggles, then there is more than just a vague hope of success attaching to Filipinos doing transformational and liberating theology that is coming specifically from the grassroots. However, what is relevant here is the issue of stages of meaning and of differentiations of consciousness as a strictly historical issue. Achievement of a particular differentiation within one human tradition does not resolve the challenge for others. Only sustained application over time can give rise to a particular differentiation of consciousness in any particular people. Of equal importance is giving due attention to historical events that have contributed to the shaping of a local community’s mindset.

An important factor in the shaping of Filipino spirituality is native religiosity, which due to constraints from more recently arrived cultural forms, has not been encouraged nor given the opportunity to express itself and to develop to its full form. Nevertheless, within Filipinos, especially the poor (sometimes categorized as ‘uncivilized’ on the basis of their being as yet only mildly influenced by modernization), popular religiosity is still widespread and enduring. We emphasized above that pre-Spanish Filipino society was already well established. The shaping of Filipino consciousness in history, therefore, would tend to be strongly influenced by the early Filipino tradition rather than by incoming foreign intervention. Such is the case with religion. It was the religiously fertile and culturally hospitable historical bedrock of Philippine culture that facilitated the growth of the Catholic faith in the people. Imbedded in it and the Filipino loób are its ancient roots of Filipino spirituality. This underlines the point that in the Filipino pre-Hispanic roots, one can find a history of people, who were not weak and immersed in superstitious rites, but of “strong and noble ancestry with a developed sense of social order and a deep religiosity which can serve [the] present needs for renewal and reform.”\(^{32}\)

The real breakthroughs and genuine achievements of the human spirit lie in people who, in whatever situation they may be, are sensitive and attentive to what is going forward. These are people who do not allow what the context imposes to blind their understanding and certainly do not judge according to their own satisfactions. Values impose themselves on the subject in love. The

\(^{30}\) Those who claim that theology is only for the academe may be taking theology too much as content rather than as activity.


loòb in this ultimate level of the inner dynamic structure of our conscious living – the subject in love – is love ‘wanting’ to be shared and given. “On that ultimate level we can learn to say with Augustine, *amor meus pondus meum*, my being in love is the gravitational field in which I am carried along.” This subject, therefore, is always a subject-in-community, living out its relationships. Even in the expression of the experience of being-in-love in words, the Filipino language captures the relational aspect, the sense of community of Filipino culture and spirituality. Filipinos say “*Mahal kita*” instead of “*Ako (I) mahal (love) ka (you)*”. The “I” is not separated from the “you” but become one in the pronoun “*kita*” that joins “me” to “you”. The religiously converted subject is the subject in love.

The concept of loòb contains intellectual, volitional, emotional, and ethical undertones due to the Filipino’s holistic view of the human person. Thus, here, I identify the fount of intellectual and psychic conversion as it is touched by divine love and impelled to respond to the needs of others. Lonergan defines intellectual conversion as the “radical clarification and, consequently, the elimination of an exceedingly stubborn and misleading myth concerning reality, objectivity, and human knowledge.” Reality known is not just simply looked at but is given in experience, organized and extrapolated by understanding, and posited by judgment.

Normally, intellectual conversion is the fruit of both religious and moral conversion, moral conversion is the fruit of religious conversion, and religious conversion is the fruit of God’s love poured into our hearts. Good judgments and decisions are fruits of intellectual conversion, which in the first place, are undergone by a subject urged by a responsibility to understand the other, to be sensitive to the otherness of the other but sensible enough to understand this otherness. The absence of such a thrust results in the terrible solution which Marie L. Baird describes as follows: since one cannot understand the other, why not then change the other into someone one understands and if that cannot be done, why not just consign the other to an “out group” and either neglect or ultimately persecute and perhaps even kill her or him? This is exactly what will happen if human beings do not pay particular attention to the operations or the dynamics of the spirit within them for the dynamics can be corrupted by biases. An example is the experience of the disciples of Jesus. Why, for example, was Jesus crucified and killed? It was because he insisted on living in a manner that contradicted the death-bound culture of his contemporaries. It would be an understatement to say that he was not

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understood, not even by his own disciples. The moment of understanding for them, therefore, became the moment of resurrection. At that particular moment, they came to experience true and forgiving love. It was love that made them understand and empowered them to preach the Good News with their own lives until the point of death.

The two interrelated poles in the dialectic of the subject are neural demands for conscious integration and the conscious orientation of the dramatic subject. The subject can bring about the exercise of either a constructive or repressive censorship over these neural demands. This conscious orientation has intentional and psychic components. “Psychic conversion is the transformation of the psychic component of the censor to a share in the antecedent willingness that meets the problem of moral impotence.”  

Willingness does not only have intellectual consequences but must extend to the psyche and Lonergan has emphasized how willingness affects the cognitive and decisional dimensions of the censor through religious, moral, and intellectual conversion.

A transformation of the social order necessitates a transformation of the loòb. In order to sustain the true meaning and the root of the building and promotion of Philippine BECs, this transformation must be characterized by continuous growth. But continuous growth seems to be rare. People show reluctance to keep on taking the plunge from settled routines to an as yet unestablished but richer mode of living. And this does not only apply to those who live a comfortable and secure life. The “monster that has stood forth in our day,” as Lonergan describes it, can also be found even in the vulnerable life of those in poverty and oppression in the BECs of the Philippines. It is incredible how general bias comes to embrace the consciousness of those who are most victimized by the systems which operate beneath its sway. The insidious undermining of the value of community began with the impoverishment of people on the land, a situation significantly instrumental in the drift towards the cities. People living near the garbage dumpsite in Quezon City, for example, do not want to leave the place no matter how dangerous their life there (especially for the children) can be.

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38 R. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 211. See also Section on Psychic Conversion of this present work.
40 In one of my visits to one of these communities in Batasan Hills (Quezon City, Philippines), I overheard a conversation between children of five to seven years old. They were afraid that the mountain of garbage would erode and bury their houses, along with themselves. They have experienced it before, where people died buried in the pile of garbage. The government at that time offered relocation, but most of the families declined. It has been the way of life for them, the only way to earn some money to feed their hungry families. They said that there is ‘gold’ in the garbage. Others are still fighting to have ownership of the land, so they refused the relocation offer. A strategy of family furtherance for survival seems to be all that is left. But the family by itself cannot resolve the issue of non-employment.
What is so evident, then, is that the dynamic embraced by most poor people of ignoring, belittling, denying, and rejecting higher values is to be understood as a secondary reflex, effect of the institutions of social injustice which structure the lives of the poor in the society. For the rich in Philippine society, to pay even one fifth of what is considered normal taxes in a country such as the Netherlands, would at present be rejected by them as outrageous. The result is a total absence of social services for all. The embrace of disvalue whereby one comes to love the really evil and hate the truly good may, then, occur as a result of individual, group or general bias. Lonergan warns against assuming that this calamity is limited to individuals. It can expand to groups or communities, to nations, and to humankind, especially when the denial creeps into the people’s life of desire, into the Filipino loob for that matter. It becomes almost permanent, accepted as the way things are, and becomes a way of life. This, as mentioned before, is very evident in the culture of silence and dependence that has endured in the life of the Filipinos.

Authentic conversion takes the form of withdrawal from this unauthenticity. Though conversion is intensely personal, it is not purely private. Individuals contribute elements to horizons and these elements accumulate within a social group. Conversion is a turn from the individualistic life of an egoist into the shared life of a community whose primary intention is the welfare of humankind.

8.1.2.2 The Struggle of the Poor and Budhi (conscience) in the level of Moral Conversion

The life of Filipinos as history reveals is one that is forged in the crucible of continuing struggle. The basic ecclesial communities were founded as a result of this struggle. In them is the hidden movement of God’s Spirit as people participate in the ongoing struggle. It is spirituality that sustains the struggle, the spirituality that listens and acts on the voice of the conscience that is the hope and the yearnings of God’s struggling people. The Filipino term most commonly used for conscience is budhi. The voice of the Filipino budhi

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41 Cp. Joseph A. Komanchack, *Foundations in Ecclesiology*, Boston: Boston College, 1995: “The call to Christian hope is always a challenge to withstand the temptation to be content with the horizons in which local varieties of sin are comfortable. The invitation to Christian love is always a call to overcome quite specific temptation to selfishness and alienation.” (90).

42 Perhaps the term budhi is correlated with the word bodhi which means “waking up”. Talking about the many ways to reflect on and discover many layers of meaning from the *Triple Gem* of Buddhism, Santikaro Bhikkhu emphasizes that the Buddha is more than the human person, the historical figure. The Buddha is enlightenment: the potential in every human being for waking up totally; and that the Buddha comes from the word bodhi. Thus, one can look for the Buddha in one’s own heart, in one’s potential to wake up. [Cf. “Selflessness and Selfishness in Buddhist Spirituality” in *Spirituality, the Activists, and the Social Movements*, Mariquita S. Mendoza and Zone C. Narito (eds), Bangkok/Manila: Asian Cultural Forum on Development/Socio-Pastoral Institute, 1992, 37-43 at 39.] In Lonergan’s term, this can be related to one’s potential
compels the subject in love to change the criterion of one’s decisions and choices from satisfaction to value, thereby, opening one’s heart and hand (damay) to the needy neighbor in the land. To talk about budhi is inseparable from talking about loób. In fact, the word kalooban is also employed for conscience in the Tagalog language. It is the budhi that puts the loób to action on something the budhi finds wrong. So, it is the budhi that is the seat of moral conversion as elaborated by Lonergan. Responding to the budhi is an exercise of freedom of opting for the truly good, definitely not only for one’s own sake but more so for the greater good of the greater whole of humanity and integrity of the whole creation. It is through the budhi that what is known is responded to appropriately and responsibly in such a way that something truly good results from it, bringing joy to the responding subject. This is the moment when consciousness is promoted to conscience. This requires a lot of feeling and listening, of learning from others, and of deepening of knowledge regarding reality and potentiality.

Generally, Filipinos see budhi as a divine voice and have little difficulty in referring it to God. Nevertheless, as conversion can be authentic or unauthentic, the motions accompanying conscience, such as shame, guilt, and fear, as found in Filipino culture can also be misdirected. In an immature conscience that is, more often than not, the outcome of the usual low self-worth of the Filipinos especially among the poor, shame and fear are stronger than moral guilt. Hence, instead of refraining from sin or evildoing because of being convinced of its insidious effects upon one’s self and one’s relation to God and to other fellow human beings, one avoids sin and evil because of a concern for what others might say or think, or because of fear of being seen, caught, exposed, or punished. Budhi has a lot to say about our own scale of values. And, as Gorospe observes, social scientists have been pointing out to the ambivalence of Filipino values. This ambivalence is dependent on how values are handled. This poses a challenge that confronts moralists. But, I believe that the challenge can be responded to by appealing to the budhi of people, for when the budhi is at work, when the nagging conscience discomforts us, pushing us to the limits, our values are questioned urging us to discern and forces us to take necessary and appropriate actions.

As may be recalled from the discussion above, the act of compassion and solidarity refers to damay in Pilipino language. Damay is an integration of dama (feeling or sensation) and malay (awareness or knowledge). Budhi urges us to go and respond in damay to our needy neighbors. It is in the kind to be open-eyed: an occasion of authentic self-discovery. [See section 3.2 on Basic Community of Chapter Three above.)

of response given by the Samaritan in the gospel. The Samaritan was moved with pity (Lk. 10, 33). It was his budhi that was stirred and he moved, acted in compassion. But this pity that arises from the promptings of the budhi is more potent and dynamic than indulging in tears for the sufferings of somebody else. The budhi that occasions ethical responsibility and realizes moral conversion demands an involvement in a particular situation with a view to changing it, especially in the presence of suffering.\textsuperscript{46} Budhi prompts us to realize that the world created by God’s hand was created for everyone’s need and not for everyone’s greed.\textsuperscript{47} Poverty, in this case, is historical and not accidental.

It is a disturbing experience to stare evil in the face. Yet it is incredible to see how the people of the grassroots can confront and respond to the ‘powers and principalities’ of our times. Perhaps it has a lot to do with presence, being there as witnesses of their and others’ sufferings. As it is said, it is easy to destroy others at long range, but not when you have to listen to their screams. Terry Eagleton argues that morality is basically a biological affair, that like everything else about us, morality is rooted in the body. It is the material body that we share most significantly with the whole of the rest of our species. Our material bodies are such that they are, indeed must be, in principle capable of feeling compassion for others and, it is on this capacity for fellow-feeling that moral values are founded.\textsuperscript{48} Most of the Filipino poor believe in a God who loves the poor. What they do not believe is that it is God’s will that a few should own the land and the resources of the country. They believe this central fact to be the root of the hunger and destitution of the majority of the Filipino people: they ask why they are deprived of what is rightly theirs. Why are there people who seem too callous to feel for them and their suffering?

Belonging to the basic ecclesial communities does not simply occur out of need; neither does it come to be out of imposition. It must be a call and a prompting on the budhi. It is through the disturbing inciting of the budhi that people are forced to open their eyes to the suffering victims in the society. They open their hearts and feel their pains in the struggle. They open their minds and understand that this is not what life should be as it is gifted by God. They understand that, somehow, each one has been part of the cause of their suffering and that there is something that each one can do. And so, they open their hands to reach out to the victims and to take responsibility. This is the force, the energy - the spirit - that urges people to form the basic ecclesial communities. It is with one heart, one mind, one soul, one spirit that authentic life-giving communities are built and sustained.

\textsuperscript{46} Cf. B. Lovett, \textit{It’s Not Over Yet}, 2.
\textsuperscript{48} Cf. T. Eagleton, \textit{After Theory}, 155-156.
8.1.2.3 The BECs and *Diwa* (the spirit) in the level of Religious Conversion

Above, we argued that it is the nagging conscience or *budhi* that prompts us to see in truth the reality of the victims in our history. In this prompting, the whole of the human being is active, psyche and intellect together. As we have also mentioned before, as human beings there is a certain given-ness that makes us reach out to one another as if “we’ were members of one another prior to our distinctions of each from the others”\(^{49}\) such that the help given another is not yet deliberate but spontaneous. Here above all, we see that collaboration in community is, first of all, grounded in a gift that is already there before we ever give a moral connotation to it.

But when it comes to persistent evil caused by bias, resulting into what Lonergan calls ‘the longer cycle of decline,’ this spontaneity must develop into a praxis wherein the participants are originating values. It therefore calls for intellectual and existential integrity. The foundation of authentic human collaboration to the divinely originated solution to the problem of evil is in personal integrity. And, since the solution to the problem of evil is divinely originated, the foundation of personal integrity is in the love of God poured into our hearts. Evil is always there before us. It is something that we can face only with God’s love and mercy. Otherwise, we succumb to it. Personal integrity corresponds to fidelity to the integral dialectic of the subject. Psychic victimization due to our own or other’s evil accompanies and serves to perpetuate the distorted dialectics of the subject. Healing cannot happen solely at the level of personal value. It needs a movement from above in human consciousness, originating from a higher level of value than the personal.\(^{50}\)

The higher level of value in human consciousness is the knowledge born out of religious love. There is a given sense of goodness in human beings because of God’s love poured into everyone’s heart. The experience of such sheer gratuitous love engenders one’s sense of self-worth and makes for living desire for fullness. It shapes one’s desire to make a life in community and collaboration with others. It stimulates personal change and makes for the following of the direction to be found in the movement of life. It fosters the development of understanding and the exercise of responsible freedom and the flowering of affectivity. Personal value is grounded in religious value. Moral conversion is typically the fruit of religious conversion, while the fruit of moral conversion is intellectual conversion.

In this sense, collaboration (Robert Doran calls it ‘cosmopolitan collaboration\(^{51}\)’ – the making of community (in our context, the making of basic ecclesial communities) – is primarily God’s work. The first human task is

\(^{50}\) See Section 2.5.2 above on Healing and Creating.
to discern the character and the structure of what God is doing in the world. This discerning knowledge is *diwa*, the nearest word for ‘spirit’ in Philippine language. *Diwa*, according to Leonardo Mercado, refers to the inner force that lies at the core of our selves (loòb) and from which emanates all personal and social sentiments. “It holds together the different elements of existence and transforms them into one functioning whole called *buhay* or life.” Diwa moves our hearts and minds towards actions for justice, solidarity and compassion. Actions for justice, solidarity, and compassion are grounded in charity, hope, and faith and this is what makes a community called ‘church’. The ecclesiality of the basic ecclesial communities rests on this.

The diwa or the spirit of the basic ecclesial communities is the discerning knowledge that, energized and vivified by the sheer gratuitousness of divine love, assents to truths and builds upon these truths in “forging its responses to the contemporary and deadly earnest demands of humanity for an alternative way of living.” One of these truths is the recognition and realization of a solution to the problem of evil in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Human collaboration with God in the solution to the problem of evil therefore entails above all else entry into the mystery of that life and participation in its intelligibility. That intelligibility is the law of the cross, “according to which ‘the divine wisdom ordained and the divine goodness willed, not to take away the evils of the human race through an exercise of power, but to convert those evils into a certain highest good.’”

Human collaboration with God for the solution to the problem of evil, as described above, is for all people. Accordingly, the solution is to be made universally accessible. Collaboration, therefore, does not function solely within a particular community. A basic ecclesial community does not promote its own development alone. It has to extend its collaboration with all the other communities within, and also outside, the Church. Consequently, the ministry and the responsibility of the Church is in the service of a broader collaboration that “consists in making known to others the good news of the solution and its nature...in transmitting it from each generation to the next...in recasting the expression of the solution into the equivalent expressions of different places, times, classes, and cultures...in grasping and formulating the manner in which the solution is relevant and effective in each of the successive situations of individuals, classes, national groups, and of [people] generally.”

It is the action of the spirit or the diwa, in Christian terms, the *Diwang Banal* or the Holy Spirit that brings new creative force and transformation into the world. Without the Spirit, “God is far away, Christ is in the past, the gospel

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54 Quoted by R. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 695.
is a dead letter, the Church is a mere organization, authority is domination, mission is propaganda, worship is magical evocation, and Christian action is a slave morality.”

It is the Holy Spirit poured into our hearts that keeps God near and the story of Jesus to be not a thing of the past but an event that is happening in the here and now. This Spirit of the living and loving God reaches, touches, and enters the whole human being in one’s capacity for creation and life by way of the human spirit. It is the same spirit that keeps the Church going and it is the mission of the Church to keep the Spirit alive and active in the life of her members, manifested not solely in doctrinal formulations but, more so, in the liturgy and praxis of the Church. Revelation cannot happen in history unless it happens at the same time in the faith of the people of God. The faith-response of the people of God belongs to the actual content of what is the Word of God for us.

In the Philippines, it is fully evident in the option by the Church to be Church of the poor. The formation and promotion of the basic ecclesial communities has become a means for the Church’s spiritual renewal. In these communities, the liturgy, enlivened by community participation, is translated into the liturgy of life, where the Word of God is read and interpreted in the aspirations, needs and trials of the people of the grassroots through the discernment of the ‘signs of the times’. It includes as well the very elementary sensitivities of the Filipino culture which makes the celebrations of the Word of God and the Eucharist livelier than that those of the western Churches, which according to M.-D. Chenu, “suffer from the coldness of Roman objectivity”.

In the Basic Ecclesial Communities, all are summoned towards co-responsibility in the building up of the Church. This is a sign of the re-awakenings of the diwa brought about by the Spirit. Unlike certain schools of spirituality where discernment of the spirit happens in individual life, in the basic ecclesial communities, discernment is effected by the ‘charism’ amid the confusions and shocks of collective events.

Perhaps enough has been said in this excursus to indicate the congruence of our theoretical approach with actual linguistic usage in local languages and to suggest that a serious case can be made for the feasibility of articulating intentionality analysis through a creative development of already

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59 Lumen Gentium defines ‘charisms’ as “special graces by which the Spirit make people fit and ready to undertake the various tasks and functions necessary for the renewal of the Church and its building up” and that “the community of Christians is not formed solely by individual sanctifying graces, but also by charisms.” (§ 12)
existing linguistic resources in Philippine languages. We return now to our answering of the governing question of Part Three: To what extent does the Lonergan-based elucidation of fundamental spirituality critically analyze the challenges to growth and empowerment in the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines? The pattern of our answer to this question turns on showing the adequacy of the theoretical analysis to the complexity of the concrete. Lonergan had always stressed the concrete nature of the good. It follows that evil, the privation of the good, is equally concrete and needs to be identified in its precise historical manifestations. The critical differentiation that Lonergan achieves through his analogy of conversion and his analysis of fourfold bias provides an analytic framework adequate to the full complexity of evil in the historical process. For those who wish to promote growth in freedom for others, it is imperative to have a precise sense of the nature of people’s unfreedom, where they have internalized the evil of others, where they have failed to rise above the evil suffered. More importantly, the positive side of such conversion is a growing sense of what has been violated, that which makes for human flourishing, the scale of values of the integral human good. In this way the categories in question give precision to the communal challenges to growth and empowerment in communities.

8.2 AUTHENTIC FOLLOWING OF CHRIST

What has been discussed so far in this chapter refers more to what Lonergan names as general theological categories. However, if we are to see how the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines to be faithful to their roots as Christian communities, we have to take into consideration what Lonergan categorizes as special theological categories. And, this can be articulated in Lonergan’s derivation of the law of the cross, where Christ is presented as the personification of authentic self-transcendence and a revelation of God’s love. To what extent can the Filipino’s faith in the love of God revealed in the Crucified be a source of growth and empowerment to the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines? Of course, to respond to this, we have to take into consideration the general theological categories that have been discussed above. Christian communities are called to a life that is an authentic following of Christ. What does it entail to be authentically Christian? What is Christian spirituality? This has received fairly extensive elaboration already in Chapter Four. But since the present Chapter focuses on growth and empowerment in the BECs, the concern in this section will be to explore how the law of the cross might affect the life of the BECs of the Philippines towards authentic growth and human empowerment.

Several studies have emphasized the pervasive influence of religion on the lives of Filipinos. From the historical account given, especially in Chapter Six above, has, in one way or the other, revealed that the Filipino indigenous religion served as a vast reservoir of knowledge from which emanated the rationale for the Filipinos’ behavior and the inner strength they needed in times

60 “... there is such a thing as progress and its principle is liberty”, Insight, 234.
of crisis. They invoked the spirit or spirits in the conduct and pursuit of daily affairs. The incoming Christianity that was brought by the Spanish conquerors was shaped in its reception by the pre-Spanish religion of the Filipinos. So, when the Filipinos encountered Christ in Jesus, they responded in the spirit of what they already have – the *katutubo* (native) culture. One dimension of this response is damay, which we have defined already above as the compassionate solidarity in times of suffering or happiness. God’s damay evokes the Filipino’s damay. Jesus’ suffering and death on the cross is the supreme manifestation of God’s damay. The Filipino response to the history of suffering and struggle is a form of damay which develops one’s loòb. 61 This development of the loòb is the way of transcendence.

So, what is this God’s damay that Jesus manifested in the cross? Then and now, people continue to create a crucifying world because, as I understand it, we have not really gotten the point, that is, the truth in the love of God poured into people’s hearts, the real meaning of Jesus’ coming.

Robert Doran62, developing Lonergan’s derivation of the law of the cross, points out that conformity to the just and mysterious law of the cross is a living out of the vision of the suffering servant of God in our time. He also stresses that this does not represent a glorification of human suffering. He distinguishes two kinds of suffering, following John Dunne in *The Way of All the Earth* (1972): there is the hell of the night of private suffering – the suffering of isolation and victimization, and there is the night of the suffering of compassion and forgiveness. It is the latter, the experience of the night of the suffering of compassion and forgiveness, that corresponds to the participation in the law of the cross including that participation that consists in integral fidelity to the scale of values. This is redemptive suffering that brings about the bliss for Christians in their participation in resurrection life and love, hope and energy, which Lonergan identifies as “the deep-set joy and solid peace, the power and the vigor, of being in love with God.”63 What Jesus lived out to the full was the desire to pour himself out on life in love and such authenticity won for him (and for people) the victory of transforming evil by a greater good, of evil succumbing to authentic and unconditional love.

Jesus on the cross reveals what it meant to be truly poor for God’s Kingdom. It meant receiving one’s security only from the sheer gift of the Kingdom and, therefore, letting go of any other security. “It meant an end to dominative and exploitative uses of power, a radical end to injustice.”64 The authentic following of Christ entails a way of life that draws its strength and creativity from the love revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus – an offering of life for the life of the world: a work of mercy and compassion especially towards the victims in history.

We have said that in order to achieve authentic integral human development, people in the BECs need to be empowered to go beyond the culture of silence and dependence. Faith in the Crucified and Risen One has to stimulate creative imagination from people in order that they may be led into creative actions that would break the vicious cycle that the culture of silence and dependence breeds. This can happen if people start to take seriously what is going forward in history.

Often we are aware of our part in maintaining the status quo and how this brings about oppression, injustice, and violence to helpless women and men of our world today. Yet, more often than not, we simply take this for granted and refuse to get ourselves involved because we are afraid of what this involvement may entail from us. The suffering and the crucifixion that Jesus underwent with the cross was not a passive acceptance of what was going on with the world during his time. It was not plain pity for the suffering of the world that encouraged him to offer himself to that violent death.

Jesus spent his lifetime evoking people to see and understand, to make people really feel what was going on in the kind of society that they themselves have created. This, naturally, got him into trouble. People refused to understand since they were afraid of what it might cost them if they were to do so. So, they had to eliminate the whistle-blower. This refusal and denial, as Sebastian Moore puts it, is a very powerful one. It is a refusal and denial powered by a nameless and pervasive fear. As one is confronted with the Crucified, this refusal and denial becomes concrete and explicit.65

Jesus was rejected and put to death by a crucifying world. The overcoming of this evil by a greater good through the victory of the will happens when people start to stand against the crucifying world and its endless creation of victims. A life at the foot of the cross begins to be embodied. This new life is what the Resurrection is all about.66 It is a way towards liberation for the victims in history as many people embrace this new life. Lonergan’s work invites people to this process of self-appropriation, to come back to ourself in the face of the victims.

Faced with the crucifying world, with the collapse of societies and decline of communities, the creative way forward is to fully recognize what is there before us. This is what Lonergan means by being reasonable and this is what it means to be intellectually converted. Reasonableness enables people to respond to situations authentically and appropriately, thus, becoming responsible people who are able to offer one’s life for the life of the world.

66 In a lecture entitled “Dance of the Resurrection” in All Hallows College in Dublin, Megan McKenna stated that the Resurrection is everywhere an imperative of Christian meanings and not an option. (30 June 2003).
To be authentic followers of Christ – to be truly Christians – means to do as Jesus did, to love as Jesus loved, and this “involves a break with our fixed roots in the socially-induced unquestioning sense of ‘the way things are’.” Self-transcendence, in this sense, implies that people go beyond themselves in a way that is not flight or evasion but rather a discovery of the possibilities of transformation of the everyday world. Nobody can afford to be complacent and passively attribute to fate the violent, distorted, suffering world we are having. Neither is there a way forward in putting the blame on others and simply placing all responsibility to our various scapegoats in order to change situations.

“What is truth?” Pilate asks Jesus (Jn.18, 38). It is very dangerous to tell the truth in a society ruled by lies. Translating truth into concrete realities is even more dangerous. Oppression and exploitation are vicious and violent. They bring hunger, anger, fatigue, demoralization, and grave pain. They can dilute one’s principles in life. They kill. But we are witnesses of those whose untiring and courageous commitment to life, not only for themselves but more so for their neighbors, enables them to offer themselves to the struggle and even serve until death. This is the pure form of commitment, of solidarity, of generosity, of love. This is fidelity to and participation in the just and mysterious law of the cross. And this is the truth that can set us free.

8.2.1 The Liberating Spirituality of Jesus and Creative Struggle

We can say from the above elaboration that authentic reforms for societal transformation can be achieved by creative struggle. This, as I stressed above, necessitates the cooperation and participation of all sectors of the society. People involved in a creative struggle are ready to throw themselves into the struggle for justice grounded in love. Brendan Lovett expresses his peculiar fear that what is most distinctive about the manner of life of Jesus – the praxis of Jesus that consistently refuses to make prior repentance a condition of his befriending of people (clearest in record of those with whom he habitually ate with: sinners) and his nonviolent response in the crucifixion – will be rejected as weakening the struggle of oppressed people. If this were to

67 B. Lovett, It’s Not Over Yet, 66.

68 Perhaps, a short quotation from Akself Heltoft can help steer the life in us towards that participation and transformation that we are struggling with here: “Down here, humanity was reduced to its true size…. They looked as if they wouldn’t miss a single detail of what was happening, yet at the same time wished themselves far away…. artificial barriers disappeared, conventions were removed and [hu]mankind stood there naked, eternally good and eternally evil.” In “The Cellar: A Myth About Mankind,” Spirituality Vol. I, No. 3 (November/December 1995), Dublin: Colourbands Ltd., 131-136 at 133-134.
happen, Lovett comments that the liberating truth of the God of Jesus would no longer be consciously present in their struggles.\(^{69}\)

The Philippines joins the Asian and Latin American nations in promoting liberation theology in an attempt to find ways to a solution of the Asian problem of enforced poverty. Filipino theologians, however, prefer to name the theologizing that is effective in the situations of the Filipino people as theology of struggle. It means that Filipinos learn about and feel the presence of the divine more within creative struggles. Given consideration here is the importance of the current experience of struggle; in other words, it is the process or the operational range to attain liberation that is given emphasis. The long history of struggle may have taught the Filipinos that though freedom is first of all a gift, it is not a possession and in order to achieve it, one has to work for it and claim it. Yet, history itself testifies to attempts at achieving and claiming this freedom that are at times misdirected. One can look at the different mass actions that have taken place in the history of Philippine struggle. Once more, we see the significance of looking into the operations at work and the dynamics of the spirit within our communities, and thus, essentially to the operations and the movement of the spirit in us. People need to be critically sensitive to what is going forward in order to understand the extent to which freedom is or is not operative.

Lonergan draws attention to the distinction between essential and effective freedom: it is the difference between a dynamic structure and its operational range. Unless we understand the proper grounds of essential freedom, it may appear to be negated in the negation of full effective freedom.\(^{70}\) For example, considering external constraint as one obvious limitation on effective freedom, an imprisoned person is clearly not free to come and go as he pleases. Yet, in terms of essential freedom, the prisoner as a responsible agent may embody essential freedom at a higher level than those who imprison him. We are free essentially “inasmuch as possible courses of action are grasped by practical insight, motivated by reflection, and executed by decision.”\(^{71}\) Inherent in essential freedom is ethical responsibility.

Speaking of the conditions of effective freedom, Lonergan adds, in addition to the external circumstance that is so easily understood, three more headings: the subject as sensitive; the subject as intelligent; the subjects as antecedently willing.\(^{72}\) Under the first heading, we run up against the unavoidable effort involved in acquiring sensitive skills and habits without which we are simply not free to speak a language or play a musical instrument. Under the second heading, we run up against the needed effort of the process of learning, a necessary step toward understanding: the less the

\(^{69}\) *It’s Not Over Yet*, 26-27. See also his footnote about the difference between a willingness to struggle for love grounded in justice and a willingness to struggle for justice grounded in love (page 26).


\(^{71}\) B. Lonergan, *Insight*, 620.

development of one's practical intelligence, the less the range of possible courses of action that will occur. Finally, under the third heading, where antecedent willingness is lacking, one is effectively closed to otherwise possible courses of action. Caught unawares as it were, we may respond to the vision of an alternative future rather in a manner of Jesus’ audience in the synagogue at Nazareth. As soon as the move back to rational consciousness occurs, we settle back “into the narrow routine defined by [our] antecedent willingness.”

The relevant struggle is, then, on multiple fronts, external and interior.

An authentic spirituality of liberation for the Filipinos, therefore, is also a spirituality of struggle, a way of life evolving in the struggle that brings about a ‘change of heart’ and a ‘change of structures’. This is the spirituality that brings about growth and empowerment in struggling communities. It cannot be the kind of spirituality that exhorts the poor and the suffering to passively accept poverty and social injustices with a promise that there is a greater reward in heaven or in the next life. It is the movement of the spirit that is in touch and at work in the concrete realities of every day material living. It concerns itself, for example, with the price of oil and rice, the problem of unemployment, violation of human rights, corruption in the government, the abuse of women and children, and so on. Spirituality, encompassing as it is, is constituted by all the values outlined in the scale of values which we have elaborated above. It addresses both the external and internal challenges with which communities are faced. Thus, a theology of struggle that Filipino theologians are putting forward needs to be animated and stimulated by the spirituality that discerns the reinforcement of the praxis of full effective freedom, along side with the realization and the knowledge that if effective freedom is to be won, it is not to be won easily and so, there is the struggle. It is not easy because, as elaborated above, full effective freedom demands openness and genuine commitment to embrace the creative tension between being faced with our limitation and courageously taking the pains and the risks of going beyond it, and we do so because we know that we are capable of it and that we are essentially free to do it. Moreover, we do so because we believe and we care. It takes a lot of healing and learning and of giving up one’s self to really embrace the creative struggle that would bring about the needed social transformation. The needed healing and learning is promoted by faith in the One that is greater than our hearts, the One that can love us no matter what and whose love empowers us to achieve the potential of which we are capable. Spirituality, therefore, is the manifestation and the embodiment, the creative living of our human relationships with God and with one another. Spirituality, whose values are meant to enter into history, provides the inner strength for the task of transforming people’s collective lives. Lived spirituality is a matter of human collaboration with the divine partner in the human search for direction in the movement of life.

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As a catalyst for social transformation, the BECs of the Philippines have to encompass a spirituality for liberation, whose primary concern is the Philippine struggle itself and discerns how Filipinos can participate in that struggle as Filipino Christians, how to make available in that struggle the resources of Filipino Christian life and tradition, and how to make spirituality active and alive in that struggle. It will be a spirituality whose starting point is creation rather than the fall. It is primarily creation spirituality, that is, its focal point is the creation process – how human beings participate in the ongoing process of God’s world in the making. This involves the story of the emerging universe, continuing towards the future through the way human beings respond to situations and shine through in their struggles. It is a spirituality that moves beyond the one-dimensional redemption spirituality, whose preoccupation is the salvation of immortal souls even at the expense of mortal bodies. Such spirituality cannot animate a struggle for liberation. Creation, on the other hand, is a process that is ongoing and is concerned with the here and now.

Most Filipinos, in a predominantly Christian nation, tend to find a close relationship with Jesus of the gospels. This, observes Mercado, goes beyond a simple adaptation of Christianity to the Filipino culture. It is faith in Jesus that flows from one’s personal commitment to the life that Jesus lived and died for. Jesus lived out his own struggle for the poor and the oppressed of his time up to the point of giving up his own life for their sake. He was able to live out creatively and appropriately the dialectical tension in his particular context.

Jesus identifies with the poor and the outcast. He confronts the establishment that impoverishes and rejects them. For Jesus, the spirit of the law is love. The spirituality of Jesus originates in the profound experience of God and of humankind that leads him to freedom and love, empowering him to identify with the poor and the outcast, disturbing the powerful and unsettling the comfortable. This can be the reason why most of the Filipino poor, especially Christians, could have found a close relationship with the cross of Christ. It gives them meaning and the hope to move on and assert their proper place in society in the midst of their struggle for a dignified life. Conversion to the way Christ lived is a central element in the growth and empowerment in the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines.

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75 This is expressed even in the liturgy. The urban poor of Manila, for instance, in one of their annual Holy Week contextualized paraliturgies, saw themselves as Christ undergoing a Calvary in *Kalbaryo ng Maralitang Tagalungsod* (Calvary of the Urban Poor). See *Witness and Hope Amid Struggle. Towards a Theology and Spirituality of Struggle, Book II*, Victoria Narciso-Apuan, Mary Rosario B. Battung, and Liberato C. Bautista (editors), Manila: Socio-Pastoral Institute, 1991, 28.

8.3 BASIC ECCLESIAL COMMUNITIES OF THE PHILIPPINES AND SPIRITUAL EMPOWERMENT

8.3.1 BECs of the Philippines: A Call and a Response

The emergence and the development of Basic Ecclesial Communities in the Philippines can be understood as Church renewal in response to the society’s changing socio-cultural context – a concrete manifestation of the mystery of the Church in time and in a particular place. In the Philippine Church, the formation and building of BECs is a pastoral strategy for renewing the church at the grassroots level, coupled with the desire to make ecclesial life more meaningful and relevant to daily life. Thus, the impetus to renewal came primarily from the wider social context.

The BEC’s of the Philippines have their roots in the island of Mindanao in the southern Philippines, particularly in the Diocese of Tagum. The birth of the basic Christian communities in Tagum was precipitated by the perceived need to activate the people in their faith life. Mindanao, described as the “land of promise” became the home of several migrants coming from Luzon and the Central Visayan islands, who were looking for a better life. This, as mentioned before, was the main reason why the missioners of the island decided to shift their mission from “saving souls” (the conversion of the predominantly Muslim island to the Christian faith) to evangelization. The growth of Catholic Christians in the island, especially those living in the barrios, geographically difficult to access, made it necessary to introduce new pastoral initiatives for the parishioners to have access to Christian celebration and to enable them to receive the sacraments. Inspired by the spirit of renewal pervading the whole Church springing from the Second Vatican Council, the pastoral thrust of the Catholic Church of the Philippines was placed in the formation and building of small Christian communities. Although many Filipino priests were ordained to join the missioners in this task, the numbers were still disproportionate to the growing number of Christian population. The convening of the Mindanao-Sulu Pastoral Conference, with lay participation in its permanent executive, enhanced and furthered lay leadership in many dioceses of Mindanao. Such emphasis on lay leadership was, in turn, closely related to an emphasis on the development of small Christian communities.

These communities, however, were to undergo severe pressures as the 70’s unfolded, especially shortly after the declaration of martial law. This led to the rapid theological deepening of all members and participants. Mindanao, the land of promise, became a battleground of members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines involved in a war on two fronts: against the New People’s Army (NPA) and against the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). None of these groups was tolerant of Christian communities who insisted on maintaining their own Gospel-inspired response in relation to the various conflicts. A number of priests and religious were killed, but it was the lay leaders who paid the heavier cost of fidelity to the gospel. Conscientized by their experience of genuine participation in their small communities, the
members of the communities were insistent on their right to discern, judge, and act in the light of the gospel rather than being drafted into the doctrinaire programs of these forces. The small Christian communities became the target for both sides of the armed conflict.\footnote{77}

The insurgencies in the south by MNLF and, mostly in the north, by the NPA, together with the Marcos’ dictatorial regime, aggravated the poverty that the Filipino people were already suffering. This mobilized the Philippine Church to engage herself in pastoral strategies that will contribute to the transformation of the society. But first, she had to be transformed herself. Thus, the Church of the Philippines opted to be Church of the poor. To empower the poor to take matters into their own hands in order to transform the reigning status quo of violence and oppression into one that approximates more closely the reign of God on earth, the Church must be among the poor. This became the main purpose for building basic Christian communities around the country, which were later called Basic Ecclesial Communities. From a liturgically oriented beginning, the basic ecclesial communities of the Philippines have grown into communities that work for social transformation, from being traditional churches to an openness to alternative ways of being church.

However, after almost thirty years since the beginning of the building of these communities and almost ten years after PCP II, not much has been achieved in terms of social transformation. Unfortunately, the vision of a truly renewed Church of the Philippines has remained to a great extent dormant in many areas of the Church. Structures of old, traditional ways of ministering and governing, of participating, and of evangelizing have not changed very much.\footnote{78} As we have seen, most of the communities at present have not yet moved from the traditional/liturgical orientation; enthusiasm, interest, and commitment from the members do not usually last long. True, there are success stories like those of the communities mentioned above. But these are few compared to those that we can call \textit{ningas kugon} (the flame of the cogon grass, which usually does not last long). Most of the communities in cities like Manila do not usually involve themselves in actions for social transformation.

There are many factors to consider as to the reasons behind this stagnation or retrogression. A repeated refrain whenever there is an assembly of the BECs refers to church hierarchical leadership: negative or unsupportive attitude of the clergy/bishop, dominating attitudes, lack of information, lack of

\footnote{77}{See B. Lovett, “Third-level Theological Education in the Philippines: History and Prospect,” paper presented to the Sesquicentenary Conference of the Catholic University of Korea (Seoul), May 20, 2005.}

political will to implement, reshuffling, et cetera. From the side of the clergy, the complaint focuses on the way enthusiasm and interest of the lay people tend to decline as time goes by. Frequently, there seems to be a problem of the lack of sincere commitment from both sides: clergy and lay alike.

If commitment is the problem, then there is the task of discovering the origin of sincere and authentic commitment. Alongside this is the task of uncovering of the root causes undermining or blocking such commitment. This is needed if we are to escape the labyrinth where causes and effects are so entangled that attempts at finding solutions and promoting alternative situations appear futile or naïve, if not distorted. The value of the historical approach undertaken at length in Chapter Five lies in its disclosure of what undermines capacity for commitment. But commitment to what? At this point it is a great help to have to hand a thematisation of authentic commitment. I have tried to emphasize in this work that the needed commitment to the building of authentic communities, communities whose primary purpose and common meaning, is to search for alternative situations that will transform a society into one that approximates more closely the reign of God.

One of the elements in this process is attention to what is going forward in history – in other words, effective historical consciousness: the way people, in the midst of their struggles, search for meaning and direction in the movement of life. Foundational to the whole dynamics (as we are asserting) is spirituality, the movement of the spirit in communities and in every person that comprises these communities, that is, the spirituality of lived authenticity.

Here, we see how Lonergan’ work can be of substance and value in looking into the different challenges to growth and empowerment with which the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines are faced. The progression of consciousness, in Lonergan’s intentionality analysis, through the stages of experience, understanding, judging, deciding, and loving, entails increasing commitment and the establishment of who one is as a person. Conversion from inauthenticity to authenticity is surrender to the demands of the human spirit: be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible, be in love. The normative pattern of our intentional operation is the foundational reality of all our knowing and doing and reveals the irreversible elements of the “eros of the human spirit”. A Lonergan-based elucidation of fundamental spirituality can facilitate a critical analysis of the challenges to growth of the BECs of the Philippines through its thematisation of the generative dynamics operative in historical agents and from its provision of a critically grounded, transcultural base that is adequate to the full socio-cultural complexity of human historical identity.

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See the report of the “BEC National Assembly (November 11-15, 2002)” in BECs in the Philippines, Dream or Reality: A Multi-disciplinary Reflection, 19-27.
The great cure for conceptualism is an insistence on experiential learning.\(^{80}\) This shift to experiential learning happened as well to the Philippine church experience in an effort to understand the signs of the time and, thereby, provide the necessary and appropriate response. An important intermediary of such experiential learning, more than the universities or theological institutes, is the small Christian community. The subjects of the learning process are the poor and oppressed of the society. In the development of the basic Christian communities in Mindanao, it became more and more clear that the communities were unavoidably being challenged to a theological reflection and discernment. The resources of a whole tradition and the fruits of scholarly theological research were to be made available to these communities who were increasingly recognized as subjects of the doing of theology.\(^{81}\) This involves as well an educational system that significantly promotes real Filipino values. Schools in the Philippines, particularly Catholic schools, are not to be “merely academic centers, or worse, unconcerned ghettos in the community.” Rather, they need to be structured in such a way that they become involved in formation of future community leaders committed to total human development.\(^{82}\) Catholic schools can strive to become effective agents of Christian formation.

During my short stay with some people of the BECs in Tagum, I came to know that courses concerning the significance of the BECs were already incorporated in seminary formation. Part of this program is immersion in some of these communities. Seminarians live with the people of the BECs for a certain period of time. As a consequence, seminarians not only learn from the people, increasing the possibility for them to become good pastors of these communities when they are ordained, but also, they were able to motivate young men from the BECs to become priests. There has been an increase in the number of ordained priests coming from these communities. In effect, when the time comes for them to work with the BECs, many of them are able to communicate appropriately with the people and, thus, are able to serve them better. The BEC as an ecclesial community has a prophetic dimension.\(^{83}\) People strive to learn with one another to become prophets to their communities. The life of a prophet, according to Megan McKenna, is “the


\(^{81}\) Cf. B. Lovett, “Third-level Theological Education in the Philippines: History and Prospect.” The complexity hidden in the phrase “to be made available” has been specified above in the introductory section of the present chapter.


\(^{83}\) See A. Picardal, Basic Ecclesial Communities in the Philippines, An Ecclesiological Perspective.
word of God received and taken into one’s flesh and blood and then translated into words and actions for others to respond to.”

For faith to be the source of liberation, it is not to be reduced to “doing” in the same way that it is not to be reduced to its cognitive aspect. Endeavors to move people towards social transformation are to be coupled by seeking ways to lead them into a firmer grasp of revealed truths. And these, as much possible, are to be available to all, including the poor. The capacity of the poor towards this firmer grasp of truths is not be underestimated. In Mindanao, it became clear that the skill to think through the meaning of faith in relation to the only world we are given (a radically historical world) needed to be mediated to the members of Christian communities. The people involved in the struggles are to discover for themselves the way of the spirit in order to provide the appropriate response to such struggles. As mentioned already above, the communities in Mindanao were seen to have been suffering from allegedly scientific ideologies.

The church and theology are profoundly enmeshed in a cultural crisis. In effect the education and formation of people in most of the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines remain in the formulations and the structures of a Christian faith developed within a cultural world where culture was normatively conceived. Lingering still in it are the doctrinal formulations of Christianity exactly repeated as they were brought by the colonizers. “The “white man’s burden” placed on the shoulders of the colonial church and civil authorities was carried to the hilt through the tri-cultural activities of proselytizing, politicizing and incorporating societies into the global market economy.”

It may help resolve this crisis if the shift from classical-mindedness to historical-mindedness is embraced and actuated in these small churches. Lonergan was among the first to propose that the change that took place at Vatican II was to be understood in terms of this shift. Moreover, Lonergan articulated how this shift can be achieved. As human beings, there is what we most deeply share. It is our embodiment of natural right – our natural tendency to seek understanding, to judge reasonably, to evaluate fairly, to be open to friendship. It is our personal fidelity to the demands and insistence of these dynamics of our own consciousness that determines whether the human search for truth and life will be furthered or not. Lonergan envisaged a Church whose life would be a “fully conscious process of self-

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86 Cf. B. Lovett, “Third-level Theological Education in the Philippines: History and Prospect.”
Such a Church needs a theology which is critically grounded in that which all people have in common and which "unites itself with all other relevant branches of human studies." The Church is built when "divine favour transforms and promotes conscious acts of human intentionality and intersubjectivity – feelings, experience, understanding, judging, speaking, deciding, loving, acting, believing, remembering, celebrating, hoping, and so on – and these acts are the referent in the world to which image and symbol, doctrine and theory refer whenever they speak about the Church." Thus, the spirituality that grounds the liberation of theology from conceptualism and individualism needs to promote authenticity in relation to such acts.

The Church of the Philippines, by putting its main pastoral thrust to the building and promotion of Basic Ecclesial Communities, has responded to the summoning of the spirit to engage with the actual conditions of poverty and oppression being experienced by a large fraction of the population. There is a need for the poor and the oppressed to be empowered and this involves above all an enormous and demanding task of discernment and learning. Faced with the enormity of the sufferings and problems, anger, along with the ‘playing-the-messiah’ syndrome, can easily become the dominant response, not only from the pastoral agents but also from the struggling people of the BECs. The lack of comprehensive historical grasp of what gives rise to such situations and of what might be the constructive way of responding can just as easily give rise to a resentful despair. This impedes life in people and distorts the search for direction in the movement of life itself. The way of the spirit in authentic transcendence requires deeper promotion if historical evil is to be countered creatively and healed.

CONCLUSION

Christianity has made a great impact on the life of the Filipinos, evident in almost 85% of the total population taking on the faith in a manner which has endured for nearly 500 years. Thus, we have said that the Christian Church has a huge and vital role in the promotion of social reforms. This level of influence that the Church has on the socio-cultural and religious aspects of Filipino life needs to take on flesh in a concrete locus. This has led to the formation of Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC’s). Claver points out the importance of having the encouragement of the formation and building of local Christian communities as the main pastoral thrust of the Church. He views the BECs as a possible solution to individualism, a positive and constructive

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90 B. Lovett, “Third-level Theological Education in the Philippines: History and Prospect,” 18. (My reference here is to a 21-page version of this paper: as inserted in the actual bilingual volume of the proceedings published by the University, the page numbering differs).
response to the narrowed-down sense of community in the ordinary Filipino’s psychological make-up.

The BEC is also the home of the poor. In the BEC, the poor are the main participants. It is the poor who comprise these grassroots communities of faith. This provides another positive element in building up a church of the people whose broader concern is the common good. The poor have the greater possibility of being in direct contact with the vital questions and can think of Gospel-inspired solutions to the problems. When properly formed and organized into Basic Ecclesial Communities, they could do missionary activity at the local level that could achieve a more effective and enduring evangelization. Thus, Lambino can suggest that the poor are the principal agents of inculturation.92

The Christian faith, the sense of community manifesting concern for the common good, and culture are key elements that make up the Filipino-Christian spirituality, elements that are to be given due attention in the development and empowerment in the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines. An authentic and liberating Filipino Christianity is one that is consonant with the primal Filipino spirituality – the way of life of the indigenous peoples, the way they relate with one another, and the way they relate and make contact with the divine. Nevertheless, it is also a Christianity that respects the process of the emerging universe and the ongoing human search for meaning and direction in the movement of life. Failing to recognize the wisdom of the ancients can lead to a disruption and a distortion of the integrity of the emerging universe. A fruitful and liberating Filipino Christianity involves creative fidelity to tradition, respecting, acknowledging, exploring, and creatively appropriating the heritage that has been handed down by those who have gone before us. This builds a Filipino culture in a process of transformation: “Christianized, yes; but with giving an authentic native accent to Philippine Christianity: the accent that previously, we despised as merely folk Catholicism but which we are now discovering as the basic culture of the land…”93 Filipino Christianity that constitutes a spirituality that is faithful to the following of Christ ensures people their right to cultural integrity. In this way, Christianity will not be oppressive. People can find their deepest meaning in it, meaning that can help them to be themselves and to live their life to the full, as true Filipino Christians, doing what Jesus did, loving as Jesus loved in an authentic Filipino way. This is empowerment.

It was in their struggles that Filipinos learned to assimilate their experiences as a people, establishing the Filipino identity, while

communicating values deeply imbedded in their tradition. Jesus on the cross, as a human being and as a revelation of God’s love, realized the needed self-transcendence, the authenticity that human beings, particularly the poor, can appeal to in order to participate and collaborate in the ongoing creation of God’s world. The Christian communities participate in creation under way to a new creation in Christ. All these elements contribute to the development of authentic Christian communities in the BEC’s.

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94 See Kees Waaijman, “Challenges of Spirituality in Contemporary Times,” Lecture Series 3: Context and Expressions of Filipino Spirituality, 92-113
CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSIONS

The situation to be addressed by a contemporary critical reflection on spirituality, especially on fundamental spirituality, must certainly be cross-cultural, even global. To be effective in any particular culture, a truly transformational and liberating reflection on spirituality needs to be transcultural, that is, it must be critically grounded in the transcultural to be adequate to the culturally plural world. However, at the same time, attention and concern for the specificity of local human experience is necessary if the insights relevant to the complexity of global experience are to be creatively appropriated. Our present project in its entirety seeks to take into consideration the experience and the context of the Filipino Basic Ecclesial Communities in developing a foundational discipline of spirituality that will be adequate to the particularity of the local representative and will illustrate the movement of the spirit through our having thematised the presence or absence of authenticity.

This book concludes by focusing on the value of Lonergan’s philosophical-theological contribution for a study of fundamental spirituality. The value is ascertained by elaborating on the relationship of such theological contribution to lived spirituality. The argument of this project in fundamental spirituality is an attempt to validate the value and role of spirituality in facing the problems with which the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines are presently confronted. We have pointed out the significance of the Philippine Church’s having put its pastoral thrust into the building and promotion of these grassroots communities of faith and have elaborated on how they can serve as a local response to the worldwide crisis of societal deformation. The Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines, as a locus of social transformation towards a Philippine society that approximates more closely the reign of God on earth, enables people – rich and poor alike, lettered or unlettered – as a community, to live the creative tension between limitation and self-transcendence. This implies an authentic living out of the fullness of humanity with all its vulnerabilities in responding to the demands of the spirit which, consequently, leads to creative and dignified human living.

9.1 Lonergan’s Contribution

Developments in the Philippines have remarkable parallels with other ecclesial contexts especially those of the Latin American context. The violence, poverty, and other forms of historical sin that plague these countries and churches have urged them to articulate a theological response. Juan Luis Segundo had made it clear that the real issue that has to be engaged in is the
liberation of theology from a conceptualism that had become habitual. The formulation of the Christian faith that we received was articulated within a cultural world where culture was normatively conceived. People of such mindset conceive of their own culture as the norm for all. They see themselves as conferring the double benefit of both the true religion and the true culture. Within such a world of classical-mindedness, “the basic distinction between preaching the gospel and preaching the gospel as it has been developed within one’s own culture” is simply not made. This has, inevitably, caused some elements of the Christian faith as communicated to be inimical, even hostile, to morality and authentic progress. The deep issue is the obsession with ritual and form at the expense of interiority and substance. However, within the pluralistic world of which we have become more aware at present, coupled with the understanding of the centrality of constitutive meaning for the human, the only way forward is to embrace an empirical notion of human culture as “the set of meanings and values that informs a way of life.”

Lonergan gives great weight to the experience of conversion – an experience which is not only religious (the decision to love the Highest Good above all else), but also intellectual (when one overcomes the prejudice that truth is “out there” rather than being discovered through a dynamic process of understanding and verification), and moral (when the good is chosen for itself instead of being good only for ourselves). He insists that in broadening one’s horizon in a field that includes the human (such as theology and philosophy), there has to be a revolution within the subject herself just as there is a revolution on the side of conceptualization. In other words, there has to be a conversion within the subject. “Without that conversion in the subject running concomitantly with the broadening of the horizon, the new ideas not only are inoperative in one’s own living – it is clear that the conversion is needed for them to be operative in one’s living – but also they are insignificant to oneself. They have no effective meaning to one; they have no vital expansiveness even in the domain of the objects.”

Authenticity is achieved through self-transcendence. The crux of self-transcendence is love. Lonergan, as a philosopher and theologian, gave primacy to the experience of God. He expressed it as “falling in love with God” and saw everything as deriving from this fundamental experience. Here, I think, is where the contribution that Lonergan makes to the field of

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96 B. Lonergan, Method in Theology, 362.
97 B. Lonergan, Method in Theology, xi. See also Insight, 354: “a notion arises only insofar as understanding discerns future function in present structure.”
fundamental spirituality is most centrally situated. Based on this, we can say that the understanding of spirituality that can be derived from Lonergan’s work is that of the spirituality of authentic loving. Spirituality as lived authenticity is embodied by those who are “ready to deliberate and judge and decide and act with the easy freedom of those that do all good because they are in love.” The spirit of love must move and impel us to be attentive to the needs and the struggles of the victims of history, to understand more the root causes and effects of such needs and struggles, and to relate creatively and appropriately to our radically historical world through reasonable judgments and responsible decisions, the fruits of which are deeds of justice, solidarity, kindness and compassion. And this is possible only if our acts of knowing and feeling are translated into doing, where our knowledge of facts is sublated towards the knowledge of values and we, then, enact those values. Spirituality as lived authenticity is grounded in authentic loving. This is what is at work in the spirituality of authentic discipleship and the spirituality for social transformation that the Church of the Philippines is putting forward through the formation and promotion of Basic Ecclesial Communities. But, first and foremost, the people involved in such pastoral strategy are encouraged to become aware of their common and normative God-given capacity to experience, to understand, to judge, to decide, and to love. The point of departure for every pastoral project is not an analysis of the sociological facts but an intuition of those movements of the Spirit which gives rise to a community of joy and peace, and a willingness to serve. Lonergan would argue that “for the one who has the eyes of faith and of love the world appears as that place where the presence of God is manifested in inviting us creatures to freely rescue good out of evil and therefore to express something of the divine within the obscure happenings of history.”

Lonergan sees authentic meanings and values as emerging in the context of a community. However, he is also critically aware that communities can be seriously inauthentic in certain respects. As individual members of a community appropriate these meanings and values, they also form their subjectivity, which, thereby, conditions their intersubjectivity.

In his work on values, Lonergan puts emphasis on the role accorded to feelings. Potential values are apprehended in intentional feelings, that is, in those feelings that respond to an apprehended object or course of action. The process of deliberation that follows is one in which a person ascertains whether the possible value thus apprehended is truly good or only apparently good. The truly good, while it may also be immediately satisfying, is not discerned on the basis of that criterion, for what is satisfying may also not be a genuine value. The truly good, rather, is discerned through compatibility with a sustainable good of order in the actually existing universe; it carries us to transcend ourselves, and on the basis of the degree of such self-

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102 Especially in “Natural Right and Historical Mindedness”.
transcendence Lonergan proceeds to derive a normative scale of values. This is very vital in the life of the people in the BECs of the Philippines. On one hand, a creative and appropriate response to certain problems of the society cannot be made in an individualistic and imperialistic approach. It can only work in “the collaborative and communicative process of open and honest conversation about what is most significant for human living, which is itself a cultural value, perhaps the central cultural value.”

This is the value of Lonergan’s breakthrough to functional specialization in method in theology. The reality of one working in a particular field or specialty must be within one’s own horizon and, this regards one’s knowledge of one’s intelligence, one’s own freedom, one’s own responsibility. Insofar as the subject does not know herself, then there is the problem of incommunicability. Social institutions such as the Church shape this value of a collaborative and communicative process of open and honest conversation in a way that either encourages its prevalence or distorts it. The fruitful working of all institutions is dependent on the authenticity of those who operate them and so on the extent and steadfastness of conversion they have undergone. Once this central cultural value is in effect, it changes these persons both in their capacity as originating personal value and as shapers of the social institutions that constitute part of the infrastructural base. This means that the effectiveness of the role of any institution in contributing to human and social development has its root in promoting the authenticity of those who are engaged in it. As we said before, their sincerity and commitment is deepened by faith and by love orienting one’s basic, all-inclusive approach to personal and social life. The BECs of the Philippines, being small basic faith communities, composed largely of the poor and having their faith in Jesus Christ as moving force or spirit for the transformation of an oppressive status quo, can extract creative and liberating strength from the very people that comprise them and from the spirit that binds them as a community. The transformation of the society depends on the transformation of the individual and this transformation of the individual is never a strictly solitary venture. Lonergan talks about the dramatic flow of consciousness that is very fundamental in human life. We respond to the presence of others, doing our little act in their presence – person in the presence of other persons. But this has to be complemented by the


104 R. M. Doran, “Foreword: Common Ground,” Communication and Lonergan: Common Ground for Forging the New Age, xiii. This “central cultural value” still resonates in Lonergan’s later breakthrough to functional specialization as the method in theology: one can only function in a particular cooperative specialty through striving to appropriate the workings of one’s own intelligence, freedom and responsibility.

105 Cf. B. Lonergan, “Subject and Horizon,” Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan. Phenomenology and Logic: The Boston College Lectures on Mathematical Logic and Existentialism, 282. Not to know oneself is synonymous with being what Lonergan calls a drifter. (For a description of what a drifter is, see pages 17-18 above.)

intellectual pattern of experience; for if one does not succeed in dealing with others and is misunderstood, one can withdraw into oneself and go into fantasies and dreams that can be harmful or violent not only to oneself but to others as well.

On the other hand, spirituality is constituted by the values that motivate one to act. The root cause of most of the problems of our world today is the extent to which we have unquestioningly accepted the mis-definition of the humanly desirable foisted on us by globalized market forces, allowing this to define for us the good and, as a consequence, to give the meaning to what is going forward and to dictate how we respond to it. Recalling what was said above about moral conversion, we note the extent to which market goods are presented to us by an appeal to satisfaction. There is no advertence to the difference between such appeal and true value, no room for a gospel discourse – admittedly paradoxical – about a pearl of great price or the futility of gaining the whole world at the expense of the authentic life within us. Spiritual discernment in the BECs calls for a long-sustained exercise of attentiveness to what is going on and this can be strengthened by the regular sharing of life of the people involved in them. In this way, people can learn from one another, developing their intelligence by the way they look at things and, thereby, grasp how things can be better. Openness to change is what reasonableness is all about and being responsible is a matter of fidelity to the integral scale of values, where one becomes motivated primarily not by satisfactions but by true values. Contrary-wise, the lack of courage to take the risk of thinking things out for themselves, the lack of resoluteness that decides and of the fidelity that stands by its decisions, is the mark of the mass of unauthentic humanity.\(^\text{107}\)

In order to understand society and the historical process, it is imperative to understand the relations that hold between the various levels of values that Lonergan presented. The integral scale of values is a static presentation. It needs to be supplemented by a dynamic understanding of the historical process which is constituted by the ceaseless interaction of personal, social and cultural dynamics. The triple interrelated dialectics mentioned above provide the heuristics of such dynamic understanding. The dialectic of the subject is located at the fourth level of the scale of values, that of personal value. In the scale as presented by Lonergan, personal value is intrinsically defined in relation to the divine source of personal integrity on the one hand, and to the cultural matrix and the social structures which that matrix informs with meaning and value, on the other.\(^\text{108}\) Personal value, therefore, can be understood only in terms of its complex relatedness with religious, cultural, and social values. In this way, the scale of values challenges us to consider the integrity of the dialectic of the subject in a context that is at once religious, cultural, and social. Integrity so understood is synonymous with the authentic


subject, an authenticity that makes one a source of kindness and compassion and an agent of genuine collaboration and true love in the world mediated by meaning that gives rise to motivating value.

9.1.1 Meaning of ‘Fundamental’ as qualifying the Present Work

I mentioned in the beginning that my appeal to Lonergan was more to his work as a methodologist rather than as a theologian. He explicitly states in his introduction to Method in Theology that he was concerned “not with the objects that theologians expound but with the operations that theologians perform.” Method in Theology was intended to facilitate a community’s ongoing objectification of authenticity. Given the earlier Insight clarification that objectivity was always the fruit of authentic subjectivity, it comes as no great surprise that Lonergan identifies what is foundational in the doing of theology as the converted subjectivity of the theologian herself. Equally unsurprising, then, is the pivotal role assigned to Foundations in the clarification of the complex eightfold reach which Lonergan uncovered as how the movement from data to results is effected in the doing of theology.

Foundations, he tells us, emerge inasmuch as conversion itself is made thematic and explicitly objectified. We are concerned here with a study of fundamental spirituality. As a reflective discipline, fundamental spirituality involves a method. The method governing our study is that elaborated by Lonergan to meet the challenges of contemporary adequate reflection on faith. This method was chosen as capable of elucidating how a study of spirituality, precisely as fundamental, can contribute transformatively in relation to social and cultural reality. Fundamental spirituality as critical reflection on the foundational reality of any particular faith tradition could without distortion be termed foundational spirituality. Given the anti-foundationalist Foundations that Lonergan has elaborated, such a naming would not come under postmodern critiques of foundationalism.

9.2 THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY

A transformation of the social order necessitates a transformation of the loob and vice versa. Sebastian Moore, in his foreword to Vernon Gregson’s Lonergan, Spirituality, and the Meeting of Religions, points out that we have to acknowledge that one’s “inner processes are source of the modern world and are also headed to transcendence, to the same transcendence as are religious traditions profoundly different from my own”. My inner processes shape my spirituality. In Lonergan’s explanatory perspective on spirit, spirit refers to one of the two interacting poles that constitute the dialectic of the subject – the pole of transcendence. Authentic human performance consists in

109 Page xiii.
110 Cf. B. Lovett, A Dragon Not for the Killing, 119.
111 Cf. Method in Theology, 131.
112 Page x.
organism/sensitive consciousness finding its significance through self-transcending spirit. This movement is spirituality itself, formed by inner processes of our conscious intentionality. Spirituality, so understood, can be a clear meeting point for the many faith traditions of the world in providing an obvious base for dialogue. The mutual connection resides in human subjectivity.

Lonergan understands religion and theology as grounded in religious conversion. Vernon Gregson does not hesitate to call religious conversion spirituality. He asserts that there is a religious interiority which is preverbal and non-propositional. This, according to him, is the experiential foundation which grounds the Christian affirmation that Jesus is the Christ. Christian tradition refers this experiential foundation to the gift of Christ’s Spirit. It is divine grace. Prior to its being named is its reality as a state and Lonergan calls it religious experience.

Religious conversion would ground theology not in reflection on doctrines but in reflection on spirituality. We have defined religious conversion in Chapter Two as the experience of being grasped by ultimate concern, a total surrender without conditions; in other words, falling in love with God. It is a radical change of heart that goes beyond possessive desire to desire for generosity. That experience of total surrender is being in love with God and this love impels us to desire for generosity. A theology that is grounded in this experience of conversion is a theology that is founded in the converted person’s experience, that is, religious experience. Theological self-understanding is based in a reflection on the transformed praxis which is that of a converted subjectivity. In the case of the poor who comprise the BECs of the Philippines, for example, to start on doctrines for their formation and empowerment will be a futile endeavor. Filipinos, being very sensate people, relate more with what they can see, feel, and experience. In other words, to talk to them about God in doctrines, which are alien to them, would only render these doctrines more abstract: what is needed is to relate them to their actual day-to-day life. The best and only adequate ground for their faith reflection is, therefore, spirituality, for spirituality is constitutive, first and foremost, of their common humanity and life in its entirety. Spirituality is the more adequate foundation that creates a climate for the sharing of believers of different walks of life, of different religious traditions, and of different races and cultures, established at a level which is considered basic by all. The foundation of theology is the converted person’s experience. The theologian has first of all her or his own experience as a religious person to draw on. By his focus on conversion, Lonergan calls for the Christian theologian and the Christian community’s self-transcendence to be reflected on as foundational.

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115 See section 2.5.1.3 on religious conversion above.
Religious experience is something exceedingly rich and enriching. The one who would study it must undergo spiritual development that will enable one to enter into the experience of others “for our perceiving is through our loving.”\textsuperscript{116} From the subject one moves to subjects in togetherness in community, service, and witness, a participation in the history of salvation that is rooted in a being-in-love and in the function of this history in promoting the reign of God among people.\textsuperscript{117}

9.3 Tracks to New Research

The interdisciplinary character of the study of spirituality, especially when one works on the fundamentals, renders it open and seminal of multiple new tracks of research. One of the more gratifying aspects of this current endeavor in fundamental spirituality has been the discovery of how categories and definitions that initially appear alienating and foreign, especially because of the way they are formulated, can, when understood, still serve as life-giving insights for possible creative personal and social transformation. Sometimes, what is foreign, that which is different, can offer a more potent encouragement to understand our own situation, enabling us to see with a different perspective what has become customary to us. In one way or the other, we also come to discover that we, though different in so many aspects, have something to share in common. This has been the nature of Lonergan’s contribution as we have elaborated on his work in the context of the BEC’s of the Philippines.

Literally ranges of complementary research are called for if concretely possible and probable options for the economic advancement of the communities are to be furthered. Lonergan’s challenge to the academy to promote economics towards truly explanatory status has not been taken up. Present economic globalization appears to stand massively against the search for alternatives by the wretched of the earth.

A recent survey\textsuperscript{118} considers the Philippines the most religious country in Asia. The same survey reports that the Philippines, with 83 percent of its population Catholic, has 90 percent of its 85 million souls professing religiosity. Yet we cannot help but ask why this religiosity is not translated into concrete actions of compassion and justice, of love of neighbor that is the primary Christian teaching. The Philippines, based on the same survey, is also one of the most immoral countries and is now the second most corrupt country in Asia. Many people attribute the poverty that the nation suffers to corruption. What kind of spirituality does this manifest? It seems that the impoverishment

\textsuperscript{116} B. Lonergan, \textit{Method in Theology}, 290.
\textsuperscript{117} Cf. B. Lonergan, \textit{Method in Theology}, 290-291.
\textsuperscript{118} Survey of GALLUP International as Conrado de Quiros reported in his article, “Goodness gracious” in \textit{There’s The Rub, Philippine Daily Inquirer}, November 23, 2005, A14.
of bodies has not been made up for by the enrichment of souls.\(^{119}\) From this, Conrado de Quiros can only conclude that what Filipinos have is a religion that has little to do with spirituality. Have Filipinos focused more on religion and have forgotten all about getting in touch with their spirituality, the thrust that moves them to do what they do and not do what they avoid doing?

It has been the aim of this book to present the vital role of the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines as offering a counteraction and an alternative to the kind of situation mentioned above. To do this, we had to go back to the experiences of the people themselves who comprise these communities, to the lived faith of the people of the Basic Ecclesial Communities, meaning to say, the spirituality they embody. This book has been putting forward the conviction that authentic spirituality is the most adequate ground for all efforts on liberation and transformation. What can sustain the BEC practice and what eventually will sustain the people in their BEC’s is the wellspring which we refer to as spirituality, and this needs to be specified as lay spirituality.\(^{120}\) Further intensive research has to be done in order to deepen our understanding of the phenomenon of lay spirituality. This is a challenge primarily to the Church and also to the academy. There is an acute need to understand the impact that one’s doing of theology has on the lives of ordinary people when the practical intent which should be govern all doing of theology is not accepted by theologians.

Spirituality is at the root of creating a culture of sustainability for the BEC’s. It is impossible to talk about spirituality without talking about its cultural dimensions. For the BEC’s of the Philippines, the relationship between BEC’s and culture necessitates bringing to the fore the complex realities of Christ and culture. A huge challenge lies in communicating Christ’s mystery to Filipinos in such a way that it will nourish a spirituality both vitally deep and doctrinally sound. The Christianity that Filipinos share today is an interfacing of the elements of the indigenous belief systems of the early Filipinos and those of Hispanic Catholicism. This challenge of inculturation, a theme of the present work, needs to be pursued in even greater detail.

A closely related challenge concerns worship as a key expression of spirituality. In line with inculturation, there have been efforts to use local dialects in religious celebrations. But this is not without difficulties for some of the vernaculars are not stable in the sense that they vary from region to region. A term accepted in one language area may be unknown or have another meaning in another area. Clearly, a centralized, foreign-based Curial bureaucracy has no competence in resolving issues such as this. Thus, Rivera recommends seeking real experts who specialize in this endeavor.\(^{121}\)


\(^{120}\) Cf. Lecture of Karl Gaspar in the BEC National Assembly 2005.

Rivera observes that the most profound values of Filipino culture, especially those expressed in folklore, seem as yet to escape the language and ritual of the liturgy as celebrated in the Philippines. Yet, it may be just a matter of time and diligent research before Filipino Christians can come up with a more deeply inculturated liturgy.

Another area of consideration in the study of fundamental spirituality is morality and ethical responsibility. There are very few published Filipino studies in the area of moral theology compared to those of dogmatics. Perhaps this is because, as Terry Eagleton puts it, cultural theorists avoided the question of morality as something of an embarrassment. Cultural theorists, he suggests, feel uneasy with moral questions because they see such questions as by-passing the political for the personal. As in any culture, Filipinos have their own peculiar set and hierarchy of moral values. Through this hierarchy or scale of values that identify thought-categories and values most familiar and significant for Filipinos, researchers can judge which values are susceptible of authentic Christian usage. How is this hierarchy affected and influenced by a confrontation with the Christian faith or the Revelation of Christ? Does their original hierarchy hold? We have been reiterating in this book that the value system reveals the deep-seated desires and the principle behavior dominant in a particular group of people. Filipino values are, however, ambivalent. We have pointed out earlier that these values can have negative or positive results depending on the way they are understood, handled, and lived. Can Christian faith heal cultural shortcomings at the same time detect positive elements of enriching moral teaching? Authors believe that it is feasible to develop a “Theology of Filipino Values”.

The renewal of Filipino values that constitute what can be considered Filipino spirituality depends on collaboration from different fields. It depends on the revitalization of Catholic philosophy and theology and on the progress of the social sciences. “When empirical findings are coupled with the perennial lights of the Gospel it becomes easier to see how Christ’s moral teachings can be embodied ‘from within’ Philippine culture. Filipinos exercising a selective and creative responsibility, rejecting what is of disvalue and developing what is of value, can shape a national identity that is distinctively Philippine and Christian.”

Lastly, there is a field touched on in significant ways in the present work but not developed, a field of huge consequence for the future peace of our world. It is the field of a wider ecumenism, the dialogue between faith

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123 Among the prolific authors are Bulatao, Gorospe, and Miranda. See D. R. M. Tesoro and J. A. Jose, The Rise of Filipino Theology, 245.

124 Cf. After Theory, 140-141.


traditions. Filipino believers, living in a religiously plural society, need to seek a balance between moving people to a deeper spirituality and involvement in social change, and, at the same time, assume the responsibility of seriously exploring the assertions of the Christian religion in its relationship with other religions. The principles of plurality and fidelity need to be combined. Our native capacity for relating with other cultures as shown in Filipinos’ past centuries of contact with western and eastern cultures, must be brought to the fore. It is more enriching to treasure such historical forms in our memory as believers, and to share our stories with one another. There is also a challenge for Filipinos to put these stories into writing. In my own research process, I discovered that very few of the documents on the BEC’s reflect the deep feelings and experiences of the ordinary people of these communities. It is time to start taking seriously the feelings and aspirations of the ordinary people who comprise the church of the poor. There are very few written materials on the spirituality of the BEC. Through writing, chronicling life’s events and learning, the stories are brought to a wider audience, not only of the present but, more importantly, of the future generations. By it, people can be helped to learn from their mistakes and so not repeat them, and to devise new strategies for the flourishing of life in communities.

Even this limited listing of areas of future research indicates the enormous work to be done. The Philippines has not moved very far along the path of a Church renewal that will bring about genuine transformation of the society. Our hope rests in an appeal to spirituality that is a matter of lived authenticity, where authenticity means being able to go beyond our individual, possessive desire to desire for generosity, for compassion and justice, even to being able to lay down one’s life for one’s friends – one’s life for the life of the world. This makes possible a way of community life that will approximate more closely the reign of God on earth.

In one boring seminar on BEC in a barrio in the Philippines, when people were asked what they thought spirituality might be, an old woman raised her hand and responded very sure of herself, “Ang tulak at kabig ng kalooblooban.” (The push and pull of the innermost being.\textsuperscript{127}) “Tulak at kabig – isang galaw, isang lakas na galing sa loob, papalabas (tulak) at galing labas, papaloob (kabig).”\textsuperscript{128} This is the dance of spirituality: push and pull – one movement, one force coming from within moving out (push) and one from outside, moving in (pull). It is the bond between what is within to what is outside, where one’s meaning of life is tested by one’s experiences and social changes and how these experiences and social changes fortify that

\textsuperscript{127} My own translation.
When this dance is performed in authenticity, one spark together with other sparks forms a beacon of light that cuts through the darkness and the shadows of evil and lies in a society corrupted by biases and the refusal to take people’s meanings seriously. In this way the light of Christ is revealed in the world.

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ENGLISH SUMMARY

The movement of life in the world is marked by tension, that is, it is under pressure from within. On the other hand, there is a mysterious and obstinate tendency in human beings to be ‘raw’ and ‘literal’ in responding to their world. This results in the conflicting positions with which we find ourselves confronted in the course of our lives. But in the midst of this, there is also the innate desire for harmony and order within human beings. We are endowed with what David Tracy calls a “blessed rage for order”\(^1\). There is the yearning in us that wants to understand the whole spectrum of our experience. Faced with life’s challenges, we aspire to come out as a community with our souls intact and able to negotiate willingly the movement of life in us without ever being exhausted.\(^2\) This desire amid life’s challenges enables us to go beyond ourselves. But it takes much courage, authentic commitment, and sheer wisdom to restrain ourselves from our raw passions and literalism. The world in need of healing needs attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible people. The world crying for rebirth calls for people who love life enough to be willing to let go of their own comfortable and secured life for the sake of the life of their wider world.

Like most underdeveloped and developing countries today, the Philippines is faced with overwhelming odds: poverty, oppression, and injustice. In response to this situation, the Catholic Church of the Philippines has placed her main pastoral thrust in the building and promoting of Basic Christian Communities, to be later called Basic Ecclesial Communities or BECs. The BECs are to be the locus of societal transformation through the empowerment of the poor and the oppressed. The majority of the Filipino people are poor. If this majority is empowered to work authentically for the transformation of the society, hope for a brighter future becomes greater and its realization becomes more possible.

The current Philippine situation, however, shows that the dream of a renewed society through a renewed Church is still very far from becoming a reality. There is not enough authentic commitment from all sides. Poverty and oppression continue to aggravate. Most of the poor remain at the mercy of the rich and the elite. Most of the middle-class has chosen to be silent and uninvolved. Most of the rich continue to condone the distorted systemic

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structure in their unwillingness to let go of their secured and comfortable status. Corruption is rampant in almost all the sectors of society.

The almost 400 years of foreign colonization has left the Filipino people with a culture of silence and dependence which has crept into the Filipino psyche, corrupted and truncated their life of desire including their valuing system and, thereby, has affected gravely their way of life. In what way then can this be counteracted? What could be the source or the wellspring from which creativity can flourish and enable the people to transform their society? The thesis emphasizes that the resolution of the crises in society lies in the people who create and comprise the system. Julio Labayen puts it rightly: “The heart of authentic and lasting renewal is the authentic and lasting renewal of the heart.” The main arena of salvation, the locus of God’s redemptive activity, is the sphere of historical action, the sphere of human response to the thrust of the spirit; it is in the extent to which faith is lived, in a spirituality that is capable of healing what is distorted and self-isolating in the human condition. Thus, we are concerned here with an understanding of fundamental spirituality.

The governing thesis is that a critically grounded fundamental spirituality, adequate to the integral range of human experience, can systematically elucidate the challenges to growth and empowerment in the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines. The first crucial task was to effectively thematise a fundamental spirituality that is adequate to the Basic Ecclesial Communities. To unravel this, my proposal was to identify and elaborate the explanatory elements – the general theological categories – derived by Bernard Lonergan in his approach to the doing of theology. His work on intentionality analysis, which eventually led him to the breakthrough discovery of seeing how the unity of the movement from data to results in theology as a matter of an eightfold reach, has provided the crucial role of enabling people to thematise wherein the authenticity of their performance consists. This thematisation of authenticity is the dominant concern in the first part of the present book. Lonergan asserts that human authenticity is achieved in self-transcendence. The path towards self-transcendence involves an arduous self-correcting process. The dynamics within this self-correcting process encompass the thrust of the spirit in negotiating the movement of life in people. Throughout the book, I understand spirituality to be this thrust of the spirit. The work is promoting a spirituality that is a matter of lived authenticity.

Lonergan never used the term ‘spirituality’. However, he was able to gain an explanatory perspective on spirit, uncovering the normative unfolding of a dynamic process of search for the direction to be found in the movement of life. This makes possible a clarification of human authenticity and has obvious relevance for critical reflection on spirituality. For Lonergan, authenticity is invariably a matter of creatively living out the tension between limitation and transcendence. Equally invariably, all instances of moral evil in our world involve a collapse of the creative tension into a dialectic of contradictories. ‘Limitation’ as a polarity of the creative tension is not to be conceived as a
stumbling block but rather as a source of creativity for going beyond and achieving the truly good. It is a going beyond that is a process of discovery of the possibilities of transformation of the everyday world. Limitation can condition people towards a creative response. As an individual’s experience is not isolated from the rest of the human community, a collapse of the creative tension of the subject can lead to a collapse of the creative tension of community (a tension between spontaneous intersubjectivity and practical intelligence) and, thereby, of the creative tension of culture (between cosmological constitutive meaning and anthropological constitutive meaning). A collapse of the creative tension of community and of culture gives rise to what Lonergan identifies as general bias, with its accompanying long cycle of decline. ‘General’ bias, as opposed to ‘group’ bias, is questioned by nobody: it is the ‘taken for granted’, what everybody knows to be true, part of everybody’s common sense. But a common sense incorrigibly convinced of its own omniscience results in diseased cultural process, where the judgments of what is true and the choices of the good produce the greatest evil and horror. Depending on the presence or absence of authenticity, lived spirituality can be the ground of empowerment and growth, or the source of oppression and decline.

As a key set of general theological categories derived by Lonergan on the basis of intentionality analysis, the first part of the book also highlights the normative scale of values of the integral human good. As Robert Doran asserts, the normative scale of values is what specifies for us the requisite self-transcendence involved in achieving authenticity: authenticity is fidelity to the scale of values. The general categories provide us with explanatory perspective on authenticity. However, where faith commitments are being taken seriously, authenticity can and must also be understood through special theological categories, that is, those peculiar to a particular faith tradition. In the Christian tradition, we speak of fidelity to the just and mysterious law of the cross. Elaboration on the law of the cross is done in Chapter Four. While stressing their complementarity, I have connected fidelity to the normative scale of values to the focus of a creation-centered spirituality and fidelity to the law of the cross to that of an incarnational spirituality.

Systemic evil in our society consists in the breakdown of the integral scale of values at the level of social value. The language of grace, transposed to intentionality analysis, refers to the enabling transformation in human consciousness which makes possible the self-transcendence required for undoing the damage done at the level of social value. In the Filipino context, this systemic evil that continues to inflict suffering and violence on a large portion of the population is seen to be generated and being maintained by the above-mentioned culture of silence and dependence. The second major section of the book reviews Philippine social and religious history. It explores the great and complex impact that Christianity has made on the lives of most Filipinos, right up to the present instantiation of BECs.
The book continues as an exploration of the enabling conditions that made for the success of those BECs which can rightly be considered liberational and socially transformative. One reason that surfaces is that, in the case of many, a shared experience of life-empowering healing has not been mediated at sufficient depth to displace the internalized assumptions and disvalues of the wider oppressive society. A-historical Christian celebrations, encounter with a privatized understanding of the Gospel message will continue to prevent many of the poor from realizing their full potential as agents of change and as origins of true value for their social world. But the witness of the very few who were enabled to go beyond dehumanization in poverty provides us with the possibility of undoing the cycle of decline. I have been a witness of the way faith in a God who loves the poor and the suffering and in the goodness of creation became the source of strength for people to continue searching and working for possibilities to transform miserable situations. Some of them were even willing to lay down their life for the sake of such transformation. This is a clear expression of the love of God poured out into people’s hearts effecting the needed self-transcendence. Then again, the effectiveness of such grace in people’s lives depends to a large extent on the way people attend to it in their religious experience.

Meeting the evil with which a society is faced demands communitarian effort and commitment. This cooperation and communion is not limited to the local milieu but needs to be global in character. A global network requires the generation of transcultural meanings and values. This would entail that the arduous process of self-appropriation is embraced and undergone for the sake of the psychic and spiritual development that will enable human subjects to achieve fidelity to the integral scale of values. Such fidelity involves profound sensitivity to what is going on, especially to the cries of the victims in history, and may demand the letting go of one’s cherished, secured and comfortable life. This is what it means for us to collaborate with God in creating a just and compassionate world. Embarking on such a task is what conformity to the just and mysterious law of the cross means – a revelation of God’s love, which in Christianity became incarnate in Christ Jesus. Authentic Christian spirituality is faith lived in the Spirit of Jesus, where spirituality is a matter of lived authenticity in fidelity to what Jesus lived and died for.

In this sense, authentic Christian life is living life at the foot of the cross of Christ that is on the way to resurrection. It is an appeal to the conscience, to people’s life of desire. Thus, Sebastian Moore can express it as the transformation of desire through the grace of redemption. It is a spirituality grounded in interiority, where people begin to question their judgment of value and work for justice grounded in love. The revelation of love in the cross of Christ impels people to acknowledge what humanity is capable of – authentic loving. This is the healing that gives way to a creative transformation, to a conversion that makes for the healing of a broken world. The healing begins to take effect when people start to help one another towards a better world: a spirituality that is within the dynamics of God’s one world in the making.
Personal authenticity is achieved in affective integrity which is at the heart of the human task: to discover the cosmic order within the social order. In the language of conversion, it is intellectual and moral conversion as the fruit of religious conversion. Religious experience, the ground of authentic spirituality, is, as I would see it now, a matter of contemplating the world. *Contemplata et contemplare aliis tradere* : the greatest fruit of contemplation that human beings can share to one another and to the rest of creation is a personal conversion that makes for a transformed world. It is a radical response to the Giver of life, a reciprocal charity in love: accepting life as a gift and living it as a gift no matter what the consequences may be, allowing the universe to move forward in one’s life. Being religious is being concerned with the world. This, I believe, is also the reason behind Lonergan’s insistence on historical consciousness, allowing that which is moving forward to speak to you, identifying where things go wrong and the processes that have caused this.

Part Two of the book sought to answer the question: what are the historical, contextual, and ecclesial backgrounds of the internal and external problems with which the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines are confronted? Although there was a concern to study the events, the situations, and other elements that contributed to the development and proliferation of the so-called culture of silence and dependence among Filipinos, the real focus of this second part was to draw the spiritual strength – the movement of the spirit among people in Philippine history – that could, in one way or the other, help in thematising authenticity as manifested in different situations.

Aside from this, an historical background is a necessary part of this particular project as attested by the functional specialties that Lonergan developed in his method in theology. What we are dealing with here is a study of fundamental spirituality as a critical reflection on the foundational reality of any particular faith tradition. The functional specialty of Foundations is primarily concerned with thematizing conversion. As the first step in our creating a healthy future, it requires a critical appropriation of the past.

The present writing hopes to provide a possible contribution to the flourishing of the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines as a locus of the empowerment of the poor. That many of these communities have yet to achieve their intended goal is evidenced by the continuous aggravation of the condition of poverty in the Philippines today. In the study of the BEC documents available for this research, it appeared that the reason behind this failure is that much attention was being given to the external factors while the internal ones were being neglected. There has been minimal documentation on the lived faith of the people, in other words, on spirituality. But to respond appropriately to the external challenges, one has to attend to the internal ones. Spirituality, constitutive of both the internal and external factors, is therefore at the heart, at the foundation of all community building and transformative praxis.
Upon elaborating on the explanatory elements from Lonergan’s work in Part One, and then, the historical, contextual, and ecclesial backgrounds of the internal and external problems that the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines face in Part Two, Part Three concludes the book by presenting the extent to which the Lonergan-based elucidation of fundamental spirituality, proposed in this book, can help analyze and meet the challenges to growth and empowerment in the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines. All the general categories mentioned in Part One are linked with one another, constituting a web of interrelated meanings. The last part employs the mediation of the categories of conversion to show the fundamentality of Lonergan’s contribution. As fundamental, it can speak to any context, culture, or any human community. Conversion in the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines is manifested in the stages of growth that refer to the transformation of the communities from a spirituality that focuses on individualistic piety and personal holiness to a spirituality that integrates worship and actions for justice and communion towards a genuine liberation for all. An excursus in the form of a linguistic analysis was included in this part in order to suggest a way by which our heavily theoretical argument can be mediated to the Philippine context(s). At the level of the categories special to the Christian tradition, authentic conversion translates into the authentic following of Christ.

The concluding section included a clarification of the relationship between theology and spirituality which was necessary to explain further the viability of Lonergan’s work to this project. He worked on method in theology. By being fundamental, the method in theology that he developed can facilitate an adequate theological study and understanding of spirituality. And, precisely as fundamental, it invites further research and development in related areas.

In Gethsemane, the disciples slept for sorrow. They could not cope with the pain. But the only prayer that came out of the victim at that moment was for them to remain there with him and keep awake. This is, perhaps, also what is being called for from each one of us in our communities: a loving attention to the victims of our society’s distorted system and a critical concern and commitment to the transformation of this system. It is keeping awake no matter what it might entail, not wavering from one’s emptiness but standing firm and actively participating in creation with the Lord of history. This stand will guide and stimulate future works of research in spirituality.
De beweging van het leven in de wereld wordt gmarkeerd door spanning, door druk van binnenuit. Maar er is ook een mysterieuze en eigenzinnige tendens in mensen om “rauw” en “direct” te zijn in hun respons op hun wereld. Dit resulteert in de conflicten waarmee we ons geconfronteerd zien in de loop van ons leven. Temidden hiervan is er het ingeboren verlangen verlangen naar harmonie en orde in mensen. We zijn begiftigd met wat David Tracy noemt een “gezegende passie voor orde”. In ons leeft een verlangen het gehele spectrum van onze ervaring te begrijpen. Geconfronteerd met de uitdagingen van het leven, hebben we de behoefte voort te leven als een gemeenschap wier ziel ongeschonden is en in staat bereidwillig de levensgang in onszelf te volgen zonder ooit uitgeput te raken. Dit verlangen temidden van de uitdagingen van het leven stelt ons in staat boven onszelf uit te stijgen. Het vereist echter veel moed, authentieke betrokkenheid en je reinste wijsheid om onszelf te bevrijden van onze blinde hartstochten en letterknechterij. Er zijn aandachtige, intelligente, redelijke en verantwoordelijke mensen nodig om de wereld te helen,. De wereld die er om vraagt herboren te worden, roept om mensen die bereid zijn afstand te doen van hun comfortabele en veilige leven omwille van het leven van de wijdere wereld.

Zoals de meeste onderontwikkelde landen vandaag de dag, worden de Filippijnen geconfronteerd met overweldigende problemen: armoede, onderdrukking en onrechtvaardigheid. In reactie op deze situatie heeft de Katholieke Kerk in de Filippijnen haar herderlijk vertrouwen gesteld in het opbouwen en bevorderen van Kerkelijke Basis Gemeenschappen, verder genoemd BEC’s. De BEC’s beogen sociale transformatie door het versterken van armen en onderdrukten. De meerderheid van de Filippinos is arm. Als deze meerderheid erin wordt versterkt op een authentieke wijze te werken voor de transformatie van de maatschappij, neemt de hoop op een betere toekomst toe op en komt de realisering daarvan naderbij.

De huidige Filippijnse situatie laat echter zien dat de droom van een door een vernieuwde Kerk vernieuwde samenleving nog ver te zoeken is. Van geen enkele kant is er voldoende sprake van authentieke inzet. Armoede en onderdrukking blijven toenemen. De meeste armen zijn afhankelijk van een rijke elite. De meeste mensen in de middenklasse hebben verkozen te zwijgen en niet betrokken te raken. De meeste rijken blijven het verwrongen systeem steunen en zijn niet bereid hun veilige en comfortabele status op te geven. Corruptie is wijdverbreid in bijna alle sectoren van de samenleving.

Een geschiedenis van bijna 400 jaar van buitenlandse overheersing heeft aan het Filippijnse volk een cultuur van zwijgzaamheid en afhankelijkheid
nagelaten die in de Filippijnse ziel is gaan zitten, de verlangens van Filippinos heeft gecorrumpereerd en beknot en hun systeem van waarden en daardoor hun levenswijze ernstig heeft beïnvloed. Op welke wijze kan dit worden tegengegaan? Waarin kan de bron liggen waaruit de creativiteit voortkomt die de mensen in staat stelt hun samenleving te veranderen? Dit proefschrift benadrukt dat het oplossen van crises in de samenleving berust bij mensen die het systeem scheppen. Julio Labayen heeft terecht gezegd: “Het hart van authentieke en duurzame vernieuwing is de authentieke en duurzame vernieuwing van het hart”. De voornaamste arena van redening, de locus van God’s verlossende activiteit, is de sfeer van historische actie, de sfeer van menselijke antwoorden op de aandrift van de geest. Ze is aanwezig in de mate waarin geloof wordt doorleefd, in een spiritualiteit die in staat is om in de menselijke bestaanswijze te helen wat verstoord is en wat zichzelf isoleert. Op deze wijze houden we ons hier bezig met het begrijpen van fundamentele spiritualiteit.

De voornaamste stelling is dat een kritisch gefundeerde fundamentele spiritualiteit, passend bij het gehele spectrum van de menselijke ervaring, systematisch de uitdagingen kan verhelderen waarmee de BEC’s in de Filippijnen worden geconfronteerd. Cruciaal voor deze verheldering is het om een fundamentele spiritualiteit te thematiseren die effectief is en past bij de BEC’s. Om dit te analyseren was mijn onderzoeksvoorstel er op gericht de verklarende elementen (de algemene theologische categorieën) te identificeren en uit te werken, die door Bernard Lonergan zijn ontwikkeld in zijn benadering van de beoefening van de theologie. Zijn werk over de intentionele analyse, dat hem uiteindelijk bracht tot de grensverleggende ontdekking van de acht dimensies in de eenheid van de beweging van data naar theologische inzichten, heeft een cruciale rol gespeeld bij het thematiseren van de menselijke authenticiteit. Deze thematisering van de authenticiteit is de dominante focus in het eerste deel van dit boek. Lonergan bevestigt dat de authenticiteit van mensen bereikt wordt in zelftranscendentie. Het pad naar zelftranscendentie is een moeizaam en zichzelf corrigerend proces. De dynamiek van dit zichzelf corrigerende proces vormt de ruimte voor de aandrift van de geest die de levensbeweging in mensen stuurt. In het hele boek vat ik spiritualiteit op als deze aandrift van de geest. Het werk is gericht op het bevorderen van een spiritualiteit waarin de geleefde authenticiteit centraal staat.

Lonergan heeft nooit de term spiritualiteit gebruikt. Echter, hij was in staat een perspectief te vinden dat ons denken over de geest verheldert en legde daarbij bloot dat in de beweging van het leven een dynamisch proces aanwezig is dat zoekt naar een normatieve richting. Dit maakt een verheldering mogelijk van de menselijke authenticiteit en is relevant voor een kritische reflectie op spiritualiteit. Voor Lonergan betekent authenticiteit onveranderlijk het op creatieve wijze uitleven van de spanning tussen beperktheid en transcendentie. Even onveranderlijk zijn alle voorbeelden van moreel kwaad in onze wereld voorbeelden ervan dat deze creatieve spanning verwordt tot een dialectiek van tegenstrijdigheden. “Beperktheid” als een van
de polen in de creatieve spanning dient namelijk niet opgevat te worden als een struikelblok, maar eerder als een bron van creativiteit in een beweging van transcendentie waarin men het waarachtig goede tracht te bereiken. Het is een proces waarin men de mogelijkheden ontdekt tot transformatie van de dagelijkse wereld. Beperktheid kan mensen conditioneren tot een creatieve reactie. Omdat echter de ervaring van een individu niet geïsoleerd is van de rest van de gemeenschap van mensen, kan de ineenstorting van de creatieve spanning op persoonlijk niveau leiden tot de ineenstorting van de creatieve spanning op het niveau van de gemeenschap (want daar is ze een spanning tussen spontane intersubjectiviteit en praktische intelligentie) en daardoor leiden tot de teloorgang van de creatieve spanning op het niveau van de cultuur (want daar is ze een spanning tussen de antropologische en de kosmologische dimensie ervan). De ineenstorting van de creatieve spanning op het niveau van de gemeenschap en op die van de cultuur duidt Lonergan aan als een ‘general bias’ die wordt gekenmerkt door een lange cyclus van neergang. Het begrip ‘general bias’ is onderscheiden van ‘group bias’ en duidt op een stand van zaken die door niemand in twijfel wordt getrokken, ‘als vanzelfsprekend’ wordt opgevat, door iedereen vanuit het gezonde verstand als ‘waar’ wordt aangenomen. Maar een gezond verstand dat onwrikbaar overtuigd is van zijn eigen voortreffelijkheid, resulteert in een verziekte cultuur waarin de oordelen over wat waar is en de keuzes voor het goede slechts kwaad en verschrikking voortbrengen. Al naar gelang de aanwezigheid of afwezigheid van authenticiteit, kan geleefde spiritualiteit de grond zijn van versterking en groei, of de bron zijn van onderdrukking en neergang.

Het eerste deel van het boek belicht de normatieve waarden – schaal (het integraal menselijke goede) die Lonergan afleidt uit zijn analyse van intentionaaliteit en laat zien hoe hij daarmee een systeem van algemene theologische categorieën opstelt. Zoals Robert Doran uiteen zet, is de normatieve waarden-schaal datgene wat kenmerkend is voor de zelf-transcendentie waardoor authenticiteit wordt bereikt. Authenticiteit is getrouwheid aan deze waarden-schaal. Echter, authenticiteit kan en moet ook begrepen worden met hulp van specifieke theologische categorieën, categorieën die specifiek zijn voor een bepaalde geloofstraditie, wanneer men de betrokkenheid van authenticiteit op het geloof serieus neemt. In de Christelijke traditie spreken we van trouw aan de ‘rechtvaardige en mysterieuze wet van het kruis’. Hoofdstuk 4 geeft daarvan een uitwerking. Het boek benadrukt de complementariteit van de algemene theologische categorieën en de specifieke theologische categorieën. Trouw aan de normatieve waarden-schaal in verbinding met een op creativiteit gerichte spiritualiteit, wordt gekoppeld aan trouw aan de ‘wet van het kruis’ in verbinding met een incarnatorische spiritualiteit.

Kwaad in de systemen van onze samenleving bestaat in het ineenstorten van de waarden-schaal op het niveau van sociale waarden. De taal van de genade heeft, omgezet in een analyse van de intentionaaliteit, betrekking op de mogelijkheid tot transformatie van het menselijke bestaan, een transformatie die door zelf-transcendentie de schade aan de sociale waarden ongedaan kan
maken. In de Filippijnse context wordt dit kwaad in de systemen van de samenleving, dat voortgaat met het toebrengen van lijden en geweld aan een groot deel van de bevolking, gezien als iets dat wordt gegenereerd en instand gehouden door de hierboven besproken cultuur van stilzwijgen en afhankelijkheid.

Het tweede deel van het boek geeft een overzicht van de Filippijnse sociale en religieuze geschiedenis. Het onderzoekt de grote en complexe invloed die het christendom heeft gehad op de levens van de meeste Filippinos, tot en met de oprichting van de BEC’s in deze tijd.

Het boek onderzoekt welke condities mogelijk maken dat BEC’s terecht kunnen worden beschouwd als bevrijdend en in sociaal perspectief transformerend. Duidelijk wordt dat een van de grote kwesties daarin bestaat dat in veel gevallen de bemiddeling van een gedeelde ervaring van levensbevestigende heling niet diep genoeg is gegaan om de context van voorstellingen en negatieve waarden in de onderdrukkende samenleving te ontkrachten. A-historische christelijke vieringen en een geprivatiseerde uitleg van de boodschap van het Evangelie blijven de armen belemmeren in het verwezenlijken van hun volledige potentiëel als gangmakers van verandering en als bronnen van werkelijke waarde voor hun sociale wereld.

Niettemin verschafft het getuigenis van de zeer weinigen die in staat waren de ontmenselijking van de armoede te overstijgen ons de mogelijkheid de cyclus van neergang te doorbreken. Ik ben getuige geweest van de manier waarop geloof in een God die de armen liefheeft in hun lijden en het geloof in de goedheid van de schepping, bronnen van kracht worden voor mensen die door gingen met zoeken naar en werken aan mogelijkheden om hun ellendige situaties te overstijgen. Dit is een duidelijke uitdrukking van de liefde van God die is uitgestort in de harten van de mensen en de broodnodige zelfoverstijging heeft bewerkstelligd. Maar de werkelijke kracht van een dergelijke genade in het leven van mensen hangt in grote mate af van de wijze waarop zij aandacht besteden aan hun religieuze ervaring.

Wanneer men het kwaad wil bestrijden waarmee een samenleving geconfronteerd wordt, is de inspanning en betrokkenheid van een gemeenschap vereist. Deze samenwerking en uitwisseling kunnen niet worden beperkt tot de lokale situatie, maar dienen mondiaal van aard te zijn. Een mondiaal netwerk vereist dat er transculturele betekenis geconfigureerd wordt, en daarmee in staat gesteld is om betrokkenheid in aanzienlijke mate te voorzien. Dit brengt met zich mee dat een taai proces in gang moet worden gezet van zelf-toeëigening, een proces dat men ondergaat én dat omwille van de psychische en spirituele ontwikkeling die mensen in staat stelt trouw te worden aan de integrale waarden-schaal. Een dergelijke trouw omvat een diepe gevoeligheid voor wat er gaande is, in het bijzonder voor de slachtoffers van de slachtoffers. Dit kan gepaard gaan met het opgeven van het veilige en gemakkelijke leven dat men zelf koestert. Dit is voor ons de betekenis van het samenwerken met God in het scheppen van een rechtvaardige en meelevende wereld. Door zich in te zetten voor een
In deze betekenis komt het authentieke christelijke leven er op neer dat men leeft aan de voet van het kruis van Christus, dat wil zeggen op de weg naar de verrijzenis. Het is een beroep op het bewustzijn, op het verlangen in het leven van mensen. Daarom kan Sebastian Moore het formuleren als de transformatie van het verlangen door de genade van de verlossing. Het is een spiritualiteit die is gegrondvest in de innerlijkheid van mensen, daar waar ze beginnen zich af te vragen of hun oordeel over waarden en hun werk voor rechtvaardigheid gebaseerd is op liefde. De openbaring van liefde in het kruis van Christus brengt mensen ertoe om te erkennen dat menselijkheid in staat stelt authentiek lief te hebben. Dit is de heling die ruimte geeft aan een creatieve transformatie, aan een bekering die een gebroken wereld heel maakt. De heling begint wanneer mensen beginnen elkaar te helpen op weg naar een betere wereld. Dit is een spiritualiteit die deelt in de dynamiek van God’s ene, wordende wereld.

Persoonlijke authenticiteit wordt bereikt in affectieve integriteit die de kern vormt van de taak van mensen: de kosmische orde ontdekken binnen de sociale orde. In de taal van de bekering uitgedrukt, is het een intellectuele en morele bekering als de vrucht van religieuze bekering. Religieuze ervaring, de grond van authentieke spiritualiteit, is, zoals ik het nu zie, een kwestie van nadenken over de wereld. Contemplata et contemplare aliis tradere: de grootste vrucht van contemplatie, die mensen met elkaar en met de rest van de schepping kunnen delen, is een persoonlijke bekering die uitzicht geeft op een getransformeerde wereld. Het is een radicaal antwoord op de Schenker van het leven, een wederkerig weldoen in liefde: het leven accepteren als een geschenk en het te leven als een geschenk, ongeacht wat de gevolgen kunnen zijn, en daarmee het universum in staat te stellen voorwaarts te gaan in ons eigen leven. Religieus zijn zijn er betrokken zijn bij de wereld. Dit is, naar mijn mening, ook de reden achter Lonergan’s nadruk op het historische bewustzijn. Daardoor wordt datgene wat voorwaarts gaat, in staat gesteld te spreken tot jou, en wordt duidelijk waar de dingen verkeerd gaan en wat de processen zijn die dit veroorzaakt hebben.

In deel twee van het boek wordt een antwoord gezocht op de vraag welke de historische, contextuele en kerkelijke achtergronden zijn van de interne en externe problemen waarmee de BEC’s in de Filippijnen worden geconfronteerd. Hoewel er aandacht gegeven wordt aan de gebeurtenissen, de situaties en andere zaken die hebben bijgedragen aan de ontwikkeling en verbreiding van de zogenaamde cultuur van het stilzwijgen en aan de afhankelijkheid onder Filippinos, legt het tweede deel vooral de nadruk op de spirituele kracht (“de beweging van de geest onder de mensen in de
Filippijnse geschiedenis") die op de een of andere manier kan helpen bij het thematiseren van de authenticiteit in verschillende situaties.

Zulke een historische analyse van de achtergrond is een noodzakelijk onderdeel van – wat Lonergan in zijn methodologie noemt – de analyse van de specifieke functies van theologie. Het gaat in dit boek immers om een studie van de fundamentele spiritualiteit, opgezet als een kritische reflectie op de grondslagen van een concrete geloofstraditie. In het licht van de specifieke functies kan de funderende rol van bekering in deze geloofstraditie worden geanalyseerd. Dat draagt bij aan een kritische verwerking van het verleden en is de eerste stap in het scheppen van een gezonde toekomst.

Het onderhavige boek hoopt een bijdrage te leveren aan de bloei van de BEC’s in de Filippijnen als een plaats waar de armen in staat worden gesteld hun leven te versterken. Veel van deze gemeenschappen moeten dat doel nog bereiken. Dat kunnen we aflezen aan het feit dat de toestand van de armen in de Filippijnen nog steeds verslechtert. In de studie van de BEC documenten die beschikbaar waren voor dit onderzoek, blijkt de reden achter deze mislukking te zijn, dat veel aandacht werd besteed aan de externe factoren terwijl de interne worden verwaarloosd. Er is slechts een minimale documentatie over het geleefde geloof van de mensen, met andere woorden: over hun spiritualiteit. Maar om op de juiste wijze te reageren op de externe uitdagingen, moet men aandacht besteden aan de interne. Een spiritualiteit die zowel interne als externe factoren betreft, vormt daarom de kern of het fundament van elke gemeenschap die werkt aan een transformatieve praxis.

Het derde deel van het boek bevat een bespreking van de wijze waarop de op Lonergan gebaseerde verheldering van de fundamentele spiritualiteit kan helpen bij de analyse van en het beantwoorden van de uitdagingen aan de groei en de ontwikkeling van de BEC’s in de Filippijnen. De verklarende elementen van Lonergan’s werk in deel één en de historische, contextuele en kerkelijke achtergronden van de interne en externe problemen van de BEC’s in deel twee worden nu met elkaar verbonden en vormen een web van onderling gerelateerde betekenis. Dit laatste deel gebruikt de categorieën van de bekering om te laten zien dat Lonergan’s bijdrage van fundamenteel belang is. Omdat Lonergan een kader biedt voor analyse op het niveau van de fundamentele spiritualiteit, kan dit kader gebruikt worden in elke context, cultuur en elke menselijke gemeenschap. Maar in de context van de BEC’s in de Filippijnen komt tot uitdrukking dat bekering betrekking heeft op alle stadia van transformatie van deze gemeenschappen waarin ze groeien van een spiritualiteit die gericht op individualistische vroomheid en persoonlijke heiligheid naar een spiritualiteit die - in de richting van een werkelijke bevrijding voor allen - een integratie bewerkstelligt tussen gebed en actie voor rechtvaardigheid en gemeenschap. In dit deel is een excursus opgenomen met een taalkundige analyse. Deze excursus schetst hoe het sterk theoretische betoog kan worden toegepast in de Filippijnse context. Op het niveau van de specifiek christelijke categorieën wordt op deze wijze authentieke bekering vertaald als het authentieke volgen van Christus.
Het afsluitende gedeelte bevat een uiteenzetting over de relatie tussen theologie en spiritualiteit. Dit toont de bruikbaarheid aan van Lonergan’s werk voor dit project. Hij heeft gewerkt aan de methodologie van de theologie. Door zich met de fundamenten bezig te houden, maakt de methodologie die hij ontwikkelde, een theologische bestudering en het begrijpen van spiritualiteit mogelijk. En op even fundamentele wijze nodigt zijn methode uit tot verder onderzoek en ontwikkeling van aanverwante terreinen.

In Gethsemane vielen de leerlingen van verdriet in slaap. De pijn was hen te veel. Maar het enige verzoek dat kwam uit de mond van het slachtoffer op dat moment, was om bij hem te blijven en wakker te blijven. Dat is misschien ook wat wordt gevraagd van ieder van ons in onze gemeenschappen: een liefdevolle aandacht voor de slachtoffers van het verwormen systeem van onze samenleving en een kritische bezorgdheid voor en betrokkenheid bij de transformatie van dit systeem. Dit dient ons wakker te houden, ongeacht wat het moge eisen, zonder terug te deinzen voor de leegte maar standhoudend en actief in het scheppingsproces van de Heer van de geschiedenis. Dit zal ons leiden en zal toekomstig onderzoek naar spiritualiteit stimuleren.

(Vertaling.: T. van den Hoogen, Ingrid Diaz-Wolters)
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This book, *Filipino Basic Ecclesial Community between Limitation and Self-transcendence*, represents the completion of the requirements for the doctoral degree in Intercultural Theology from Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen. A. van den Hoogen, K. Waaijman, and B. Lovett supervised the research and writing. F. Maas, W. Derkse, and M. Plattig comprised the committee that examined it.