An Inquiry into the Problems Concerning Filipino Values and Norms

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Abstract

This paper inquires into the problems concerning Filipino values and moral norms. Based on the interviews with the social science and philosophy scholars and the youth leaders in the Philippines, the study identifies the following problems: Filipino identity, distortion and dysfunctionalization, manifold ambivalence, dissonance, false justification and misuse, cynicism, and decline of moral courage. Analyzed based on Hans Kelsen's concept of validity and efficacy, the problems prove to be radical given that the purported Filipino values system is actually a chaotic constellation of competing and conflicting pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial normative paradigms. Distorted, ambivalent, and dysfunctionalized, Filipino values and norms fail to provide effective normative guidelines. The proposed antidote of moral and values education is bound to be futile in the face of a severely mutilated social conscience.

Keywords: Filipino, values, norms, validity, efficacy, problems

1.0 Introduction

Colonization has inflicted a lingering psychosocial harm among the Filipinos. During the Spanish period, the *illustrados* like Jose Rizal, Marcelo H. Del Pilar, and Graciano Lopez Jaena denounced the derogatory depiction of the Filipinos and their culture. More than a century later, Filipinos still struggle to recover and assert their social and cultural identity (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000).

Scholarly interest in Filipino values and culture flourished in the second half of the twentieth century. Foreign and Filipino social scientists had produced a body of work that enriched the literature on Filipino values and culture. The American anthropologist Frank Lynch's *Four Readings on Filipino Values* was a ground breaking work on Filipino values. Lynch configured a Filipino values system anchored on social acceptance as a core value. Social acceptance finds support in the intermediate values of smooth interpersonal relations (SIR) and of self-esteem (sensitivity to personal affront). Defined as the facility to acquiesce with others and to avoid conflicts, SIR is exemplified by the values of *pakikisama* (getting along with) euphemism (pleasantness), and go-between (third party mediation). *Hiya* (feeling of embarrassment) and *amor propio* (sensitivity to personal affront) are normative sanctions against behaviors that violate the value of social acceptance (Lynch & de Guzman, 1973).

Many Filipino scholars were skeptical of the

Western approach to Filipino values and culture. Among them was Virgilio Enriquez, founder of *Sikolohiyang Filipino* (Filipino Psychology), who considered Lynch's findings as partial and inadequate. Enriquez (1978, 1992) contended that the core Filipino value is *kapwa* (recognition of shared identity). He further argued that values, such as *hiya, pakikisama, utang na loob* (gratitude), *amor propio*, and *bayanihan* (solidarity), are, in reality, "surface" concepts consistent with colonialism. Enriquez insisted that *pakikipagkapwa* is paramount to the Filipinos rather than the superficial smooth interpersonal relations. The discovery of *kapwa*, as a core Filipino value, is a milestone in Filipino values research (Reyes, 2015). Consequently, many Filipino scholars examined the problematic descriptions and interpretations of Filipino values.

The aftermath of martial law and the 1986 EDSA People Power Revolution revealed a nation tottering on the cliff of moral dissipation. Echoing Jose Rizal's diagnosis of social cancer, the American journalist James Fallows minced no words in describing the "new" Philippines as a "damaged culture" (Fallows, 1987). Thus, sounded the clarion call for moral recovery. Filipino scholars responded to the challenge. Some of the most important works during this period include *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology* (Enriquez, 1992), *Values in Philippine Culture and Education* (Dy, 1994), and *Filipino Values System: A Cultural Definition* (Jocano, 1997).

The Twenty-first-century values research takes significant somewhat controversial positions, such as the rejection and abandonment of the concept of Filipino values, fresh interpretations and analyses of different Filipino value concepts; and the appropriation of Filipino value concepts

to virtue ethics (Reyes, 2015; Cleofas, 2019; Tablan, 2021). Rejecting the concept of 'values,' Reyes (2015) proposed to frame the concepts of *kapwa, loob, bahala na, kagandahang loob, utang na loob,* and *hiya* within virtue ethics. Problems involving Filipino values and norms are not limited to their conceptual and descriptive aspects. Several scholars viewed Filipino values and norms as ambivalent due to their inherent potential to be good and evil, right and wrong (Quito, 1994; Gorospe, 1994; Licuanan, 1994; Andres, 1981; Miranda, 1992; Aguas, 2016; Bulloch, 2017).

This paper inquires into the problems concerning Filipino values and norms in the context of Kelsen's (1991) concepts of validity and efficacy.

2.0 Methodology

The inquiry into the problems concerning Filipino values and norms involves interviews with renowned social science and philosophy scholars and student leaders conducted upon issuance of a research ethics clearance. The study has the experts referred as E1, E2, E3, E4, E5, E6, E7, E8, E9, and E10, while the student leader informants are referred as I1, I2 I3, I4, and I5. The interviews with experts and informants revolve around the problems involving Filipino values and norms within the paradigmatic and practical domains. The problems identified are then examined using Kelsen's (1991) concept of validity and efficacy.

In *The General Theory of Norms*, Kelsen (1991), discussed the concept of validity and efficacy of norms. The word 'norm' denotes "command" or "meaning of the act of the will" whose function is to prescribe certain behaviors to be obligatory. Norms are posited by legislators (legal) or by social custom (moral). The notion of norm entails

the *imperator* (norm-giver), the *imperative* (the norm itself), and the *imperatus* (people subject to the norm). The *imperator* wills something to be obligatory (imperative), and the *imperatus* ought to follow the command. There is no imperative without an *imperator* and there is no *imperator* without an *imperatus*. Kelsen stressed that all norms contain sanctions so that there are no norms without sanctions, just as there are no sanctions without norms.

The primary functions of norms consist of commanding, empowering, and derogating. The norm's commanding function involves prescribing certain acts, while its empowering function entails the application of rules. For instance, parents prescribe and apply rules to their children (moral) while lawmakers enact laws (legal). Norms derogate other norms. A new law may repeal definite provisions of an existing law. A new norm, "Love your enemies and pray for them," derogates the old norm, "Love your neighbors and hate your enemies." Derogation includes prohibition and permission. A new norm may prohibit or allow certain acts which are allowed or prohibited by an existing norm.

Kelsen (1991) specified two conditions for the validity of norms. Firstly, norms are valid when they exist either as a duly enacted law or part of the moral custom of society. Secondly, norms are valid if they are effective. Norms are effective when they are observed. If they are not observed, sanctions are applied. Moral norms apply sanctions of praise and blame. Whereas, legal norms apply punitive sanctions only. When existent norms ensure adherence and sanctions are applied on instances of violations, they are deemed valid.

From the viewpoint of validity, the analysis of the problems concerning Filipino values and norms focuses on the legitimacy of the *imperator* and the *imperatus*. While from the viewpoint of efficacy, the analysis centers on the problems involving normative adherence and the application of sanctions.

Filipino Values and Norms Problems

The inquiry into the problems concerning Filipino values and norms focuses on their ontological and pragmatic status. The problems are comprised of paradigmatic (problems of multiple value paradigms/imperators) and practical (problems on efficacy) questions. Given that values and norms do not exist as physical entities do, their existence is asserted based on the recognition that they are part of the normative custom of the people.

The Problem of Filipino identity. The term 'Filipino' and, by extension, 'Filipino values and norms' are a colonial and modern construct that fails to represent all peoples in the Philippines (E3, E5, E6 & E9). E6 remarks that it is problematic to speak of Filipino values and norms because the term 'Filipino' stems from a *"Western project called 'nationalism' which marginalizes precolonial thoughts, cosmologies, and traditions of plural communities in the Philippines."* The concept of 'Filipino values and moral norms' is an apparatus of control and manipulation employed by the post-colonial elite. Moreover, it is questionable whether or not the literature on Filipino values and moral norms is exhaustive and representative of the diverse ideals of life and moral norms of all groups in the Philippines. This point raises the *"question of acceptability and legitimacy"* of these values and norms to some ethnic groups (E6).

E3 claims that the term "Filipino" *"is a politically constructed entity. It gained its validity from the need*

to fight for independence against the colonial rule. It has subsequently adopted the norms and values of modern nation-state-making and replicated the same dynamics of racialization, dispossession, oppression, and marginalization of its indigenous populations." E5 points to the fact that colonial worldviews have been superimposed on precolonial lifeworld resulting to a severe tension between radically conflicting worldviews. However, E5 explains that the "*experience of colonialization, urbanization, and modernization*" has not entirely deleted the "*indigenous foundations of the nationalized Filipino*" given that certain values, like "*kapwa* (other person), *kagandahang-loob* (good will), *pakiramdam* (empathy),*" remain tangible underneath the colonially superimposed matrix.

E9 questions the term "Filipino" in reference to nationhood, arguing that the collective conscience of the people has stagnated at the "*familistic level which is both clannish and barganic.*" At the familistic level, life is characterized by extreme family-centeredness, so authority rests on the patron. This reality plays out visibly in the political landscape dominated by patronage politics. The country's elite wields broad control over the political, economic, and social resources and functions. The pervasive familistic orientation has to be overcome, for it is antithetical to genuine nation-building.

The term "Filipino," E8 stresses, must represent "*more than 170 groups in the Philippines in the context of indigeneity and ethnicity*" because the Philippines is a "*multicultural and multi-nationed society.*" The indigenous and ethnic values and moral norms and their corresponding native meanings should be recovered from the ruins wrought about by colonization, politics, social media, and the showbiz industry.

Colonial distortion and dysfunctionalization of Filipino values and norms. Distortion is materialized in the imposition of colonial ways of life and the marginalization of indigenous values and norms. The imposition of colonial normative and cultural standards resulted in a profound and persistent identity crisis (social and cultural) that Filipinos continue to grapple with (E5). The interaction between the colonial and precolonial normative paradigms is characterized by conflict so that the indigenous value of *pakiramdam* (empathy) is colonially judged as being "onion-skinned." At the same time, modern norms that support freedom of expression and speech are perceived as "*masamang asal at walang galang*" (bad conduct and disrespectful).

Citing Jocano (1992), E9 explains that the indigenous values of gift-giving were viewed as bribery, kinship as nepotism, friends as cronies, *asa* (hope) as dependency, and *utang na loob* as an occasion of corruption. Similarly, the indigenous ways of relating to the divine were frowned as superstitions or devil-worship. Local products were deemed inferior. The expression "*Bisaya-a*" (too *Bisayan*) exemplifies the contempt for the *Bisayan* language and ways. E9 further notes that the colonial way of life has been ingrained in the Filipino collective consciousness, while the precolonial sense has been relegated to the collective subconscious. Colonial consciousness regards anything ethnic, indigenous, and traditional with disdain. The "*dominant colonial collective conscious suppresses the precolonial collective subconscious,*" resulting in the latter's marginalized status which engenders a collective sense of inferiority and helplessness (E6).

E3 asserts that the problem of distortion indicates conflicting normative standards and

meanings. E9 suggests that these problems be tackled by philosophy and social science, particularly psychology and hermeneutics. To understand ourselves as Filipino, we must gain insight into the Filipino psyche and interpret it accordingly.

The dysfunctionalization of Filipino values and norms is precipitated by colonial and domestic acts of abrogation (E3, E5, E6, E7, E8, and E9). The colonial experience explains most of the social pathologies that plague the nation. Nevertheless, Filipinos who replace the colonizers perpetrated the same colonial evils. E3 narrates how the Spanish and American colonizers imposed their religious, educational, political, and economic institutions as leverage of control. "*They ripped and took away our native mind (unawa), heart (damdamin), spirit (diwa), our physical beauty and taste, and imposed theirs upon us.*" Forced to view themselves through the colonial prism, the people suffered irreparable harm on their dignity and identity. Ultimately, they saw their native ways and heritage as ugly and absurd. E3 concludes that the Filipinos learned to despise their physical and social attributes and developed a generalized contempt for anything indigenous, local, and traditional.

E7 observes that after the Philippines had gained its independence, the Filipino elite assumed the role of oppressors of their people. E7 believes that the "*elite harness the power of social media to distort the people's moral sense and blur the boundaries between right and wrong.*" The elite, whose principal orientation is familistic (E9), took advantage of their positions by enriching their families and friends. E6 claims that the political and economic elite manipulated the odd and dissonant combination of indigenous and exogenous values and moral norms to maintain their dominance in society.

E5 states that values and norms are dysfunctionalized through the effective use of the media. The Filipino values and norms of *paggalang* (respect), *pakikisama* (getting along with others), and close family ties are exploited for commercial and political ends by political and economic actors whose standard of success is radically opposed to these very values and norms. Moreover, politicians use the media to create a public image that is consistent with the values of *dangal* (honor), *pagkabahala* (concern), *katapatan* (loyalty), *malasakit* (empathic concern), and among others. Moral sanctions are used as weapons for partisan political ends. Invoking Filipino values and norms, political actors engage in a morally dense discourse to denounce *katiwalian* (corrupt and anomalous practices) in government that they themselves commit. Political actors use values and norms to attack adversaries.

E4 and E8 express their dismay over the appropriation of Filipino values and norms for propaganda. Filipino values and norms are weaponized against political opponents and critics or used as shield against demands for moral responsibility. E7, E6, and E8 blame the covert interests of political and economic actors as the grand saboteur of the Filipino values and moral norms. E3 explains that the distortion of values and norms leads to their abrogation and dysfunctionalization in the public sphere. The purpose of dysfunctionalization is to revoke moral accountability. In E7's view, the ideal forms of these values and norms are used to conceal moral decay. The project of dysfunctionalization is concomitant with the desire to maintain power.

Manifold ambivalence of Filipino values and norms. The most common notion of ambivalence considers Filipino values and norms as potentially good or evil. The ambivalence of Filipino values

and norms is recognized by E1, E2, E4, E5, E7, E8, and E10. They all agree on the reality of Filipino values and norms within distinct contexts without disputing the problem of Filipino identity. They likewise concur that Filipino values and moral norms are foundational to Philippine society.

E1 acknowledges the harmful effects of colonization on the Filipino people but underscores the benefits of "*colonial values and norms that can enhance the precolonial Filipino values and norms*." For instance, the ideals of freedom, liberty, Christianity, and liberal education are essential to the process of genuine nation-building. The challenge is to find a way to harmonize the colonial and precolonial standards to overcome this ambivalence.

E2 agrees with Licuanan (1994), Quito (1994), and Gorospe (1994) on the ambivalence of Filipino values and character traits. Framing the act of valuing within Max Scheler's axiology, E2 explains that '*damdamin*' (sentiment) plays a central role in the Filipino's acting on values and precepts of behavior. The native moral sentiment was strained by "*colonization, modernization, and technology that have secularized, and therefore distorted our understanding of Filipino values*." Consequently, these values have become ambivalent such that in practice, the values of *bayanihan* (solidarity), *pakikisama* (getting along with others), and *utang na loob* (gratitude) can serve beneficial or harmful ends.

To rectify the problem of ambivalence, E2 recommends moral education at all levels of learning. E4 highlights the notion of moral expectations people generally attach to individuals, particularly those who are in positions of power and influence. This expectation establishes that values and norms exist and people regard them as

necessary. However, there is a "*default attitude in which people do not fully understand these values and norms*." This *"default attitude"* betrays the credulous ways people pursue what they believe to be desirable and good. The same attitude also explains the ambivalence of values and moral precepts. Without proper understanding and reflection, people misappropriate values and norms. E5 cites Fallows' (1987) characterization of the Philippines as a "damaged culture". This explains the cultural identity crisis that afflicts Filipinos due to centuries of colonization. While acquiescing to the legitimacy of the term Filipino, E5 notes the "*jumble of primitive and colonial values and moral norms,*" which raises questions about how they are to be correctly understood. Citing the Catechism for Filipino Catholics, E5 still believes in the Filipino way because of the "*creative configuration of the universal Catholic faith to the essential Filipino traits*." Despite this, E5 sees a "dissonance between the Filipino ways of thinking and acting" and acknowledges Bulatao's (1992) diagnosis of Filipino "split-level Christianity" as a persistent social pathology. The presence of split and dissonance generates ambivalence. E5 maintains that only a moral revolution can save the country from falling into complete moral decay.

Even though the country is still an infantile democracy, E7 affirms that Filipino values and moral norms are the foundation of a robust Philippine republic. The nation's values and norms are differentiated at various levels of society. They are "*understood and embodied in curiously differentiated, and at times, conflicting ways, in the national, regional, communal, and familial levels*." This differentiation phenomenon accounts for the ambivalence of Filipino values and moral norms. E7 further recognizes the broad disconnect between

the ideal (publicly professed) and the real (actual practice) values and norms.

E10 regards the religious fervor of the Filipinos a testament to the dynamism of Filipino values and moral norms in people's lives. Religious activities are still a principal part of general social interactions. Huge crowds still flock to churches, pilgrimage sites, and other places of worship during days of worship and solemn feasts. The divine presence is alive among the people. This manifests the beauty of being a Filipino. However, E10 laments the negative characterization of the Filipino traits and ways as though the "*Filipino people are good for nothing*." The nation suffers from a malaise of extremely low self-esteem. "*We blame ourselves too much for our misfortunes and faults, unmindful of our wonderful traits and heritage that we can take great pride in ourselves and the world*." The people should cast away the demons of self-flagellation to ward off the pessimism lurking in their consciousness. It is disheartening to know that most of these negative perceptions come from the Filipinos themselves. Indulging in self-defeating attitude and behavior breeds cynicism which could easily lead to nihilism. E10 adds that something is radically wrong in the way Filipinos appraise themselves. The Filipino must acknowledge that they are created in the likeness of a good and compassionate God. At the center of this brokenness is a dark and painful colonial past. It is even made worse poverty and ignorance perpetrated by the politics of discord and corruption that undermines the dignity of the people and alienates them from their values and moral heritage.

Dissonance between Filipino values and norms. All experts recognize the gap between the pursuit of the desirable (values) and the precepts (norms) that must govern behavior. The disjunction between values and norms explains the many absurdities that mark judgement and choices. Bereft of its proper ends (values) and decoupled from norms, life becomes meaningless and regresses into chaos. E10 uses the Cebuano word "*yabag*" to illustrate the dissonance between values and norms. Filipinos are "*yabag*" because they say one thing but do another thing. Red-tagging, planting of evidence, and senseless killings are "*yabag*." When politicians and government officials take pride in being called civil servants but behave on the contrary, they are "*yabag*". The dissonance between values and norms discloses itself as a generalized inability to discern absurdities.

E2 interprets the dissociation of values and norms as the "*individual's inability to harmonize what one values (affection) and what one understands (cognition)*." The failure to reflect upon this meaningful relationship leads to a life without a purpose or a life of purpose without comprehension. E2 and E3 attribute this defect to the Filipino experience of colonization and modernization. E3 contends that the imposition of the colonial forms of life and the uncritical accommodation of the ideas of modernization, nation-building, and resistance have crippled the people's ability to give meaning to their lives as individuals and as members of society.

E5 sees dissonance in the Filipino manner of feeling, thinking, and acting. The phenomenon of split-level Christianity is a dissonance between faith and practice. The same applies to corrupt and abusive politicians and their supporters. E8 sees this disjunction in Filipinos who idolize and support showbiz personalities, celebrities, and politicians but neglect their true welfare. E9 likens the opposition between family welfare and the common good to the dissonance between values

and norms. E7 locates the discord between values and norms within the institutional, national, regional, communal, and familial contexts. The values are not only disjointed from the norms and vice versa, but also their meanings and the norms are modified to align them with the competing interests of various sectors of society.

False justification and misuse of values and norms. Filipino values are not only blamed for but also invoked to justify wrongdoings. E8, E2, and E5 remark that some values and norms are pursued incorrectly. For instance, *bahala na* is practiced to justify *katamaran* (indolence) or *hiya* becomes a pretext for moral failings (E8 & E2). E5 claims that corrupt government officials justify their misdeeds asserting that they are actually helping their constituents or "*tumatanaw lang ng utang na loob*" (repaying a debt of gratitude). E9 underscores how an unethical behavior is committed in the name of family welfare or is tolerated due to peer pressure "*nakisama lang*" (just getting along).

E7 considers the incidents of hazing as a misuse of the values of *pagkakaisa* (unity) and *kapatiran* (brotherhood/sisterhood). Hazing causes severe physical and psychological injuries or even death among members of fraternities and sororities. "*How can we practice solidarity and fraternity when membership requires useless pain, torture, or death?*" In the name of *kapatiran* and *pagkakaisa*, fraternity/sorority leaders, some of whom lawyers, government officials, and prominent citizens, cover up fatal incidents of hazing. Since, the first movement of valuing is desiring (affective), E2 emphasizes that understanding (cognitive) must govern the valuing process so that values are acted out properly (practice).

Cynicism among youth student leaders. Values and norms are essential in the lives of the young people, particularly the youth leaders (I1, I2, I3, I4, & I5). However, skepticism emerges out of the contradictions between values and norms taught and caught (witnessed). This inconsistency, they admit, casts so much doubt on their ability to be faithful to their ideals. I1 details the inconsistency in the practice of *pakikisama, kaikog* (shame), *kapit* (connection/patronage), conformity, and *utang na loob* in the village and the academic community. I2 decries the lack of moral ascendancy among leaders in society. The adults' preaching about the values of self-discipline, obedience, respect, industry, sacrifice, patience, honor, *kagandahang-loob* (good will), frugality, modesty, and honesty are hardly exemplified in their own lives.

I5 shares about the absurdity of the village politics: "*As a Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) leader, I feel the pressure to get along well with others (makisama) and to conform to the ways and wishes of the ruling party for the sake of utang na loob (gratitude), because they (village political leaders) insist that, without the mayor's support and endorsement, it is impossible to win an election.*" As student leaders in their respective universities, I3, I4, and I5 endure enormous pressures from their peers, constituents, school administrators, and professors. I5 and I2 reveal that some school administrators and professors went as far as asking them to do things against their good judgement and beyond their responsibilities as student leaders.

All informants acknowledge the growing cynicism among the young people. They lament that it is "*difficult to distinguish right from wrong, for the words and actions of those who are supposed to be greater than us*," are not only inconsistent, but the interpretations of the values and norms keep on changing as well. It is difficult to understand what *pakikisama* (getting along with others), obedience,

or *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude) exactly means (I3 & I5). As the young people struggle to reconcile the values and norms with what is happening around them, they are lulled into confusion. I1 and I2 are frustrated by the reluctance of the faculty and the school administration to listen to their sentiments. The school's conservative stance clashes with the student's liberal views on issues that the students consider important. The young leaders feel that the school administration and the professors are all too passionate in their speeches about the type of education they represent; however, in reality, they fail to recognize the uniqueness and differences among students.

All of them regret how some administrators and professors practically refute the ideals of student-centered education, excellence, integrity, and knowledge as enshrined in their schools' mission, vision, and goals. There is an expectation of uniformity without genuine concern for individual differences and without effort to understand the studentry within their time and situation.

The decline of moral courage. The dissipation of moral courage leads to moral decadence in society (E1, E4, E5, E7, E8, E9, and E10). The people's inability to consistently demonstrate moral outrage against blatant wrongs betrays the paucity of moral courage (E9). E8 stresses the importance of moral sanctions inherent in Filipino values and norms. Members of society must constantly approve what is right and disapprove what is wrong. The values and norms of *pagkabahala* (concern), *hiya* (shame), *bayanihan* (solidarity), *pakikiramay* (sympathy), *dangal* (honor), and *kalayaan* (freedom) are chief sources of moral courage and sanction. Regrettably, these principles are overshadowed by the growing culture of moral indifference.

E1 blames the paucity of moral courage for the breakdown of responsibility and the perceived inability to impose moral sanctions. The Filipino's "*non-confrontational orientation explains why they seem unconcerned and unbothered*" by moral violations. The Filipino is generally "*timid and euphemistic.*" Witnessing a wrongdoing, Filipinos tend to observe and wait for a similar reaction from others (*pakiramdam*) before they express disapproval. They surreptitiously share information (*tsismis*) about a misdeed until it becomes common knowledge, before they muster the courage to speak out, confident that the majority (*kakampi*) is on their side. E1 adds that indirectness, inhibitedness, tolerance, long wait, and communality characterize the Filipino ways of sanctioning. For the Filipino, "*the imposition of moral sanction is a communal rather than an individual act.*" It typically Filipino to take time "*hindi padalos-dalos* (not rash), *makiramdam, pulsohan* (to discern the sentiments of many) and speak out as a group (*pagkakaisa*).

E10 and E9 trace the phenomenon of moral indifference to the Filipino's traumatic, colonial, and domestic political experiences. At the clannish and familistic levels, Filipinos inhibit from exercising moral sanctions in public since it is assigned to the leader who is responsible for the maintenance of communal order (E9). E10 treats the decline of moral courage as a symptom of the paralysis of social conscience. E5 maintains that fear of reprisal and the feeling of unworthiness due to the lack of moral ascendancy force people to keep quiet in the face of moral evils. Some of the most brilliant, patriotic, and eloquent Filipinos struggle to speak up against wrongdoings, as their moral ineptitude forces them into silence. EI5 adds that when "*good men and women fall from grace,*" they fail to be the people's champion due to their own moral failings.

3.0 Discussion

The problems concerning Filipino values and norms include the question of Filipino identity, colonial distortion and dysfunctionalization, manifold ambivalence, dissonance, false justification and misuse, cynicism, and decline of moral courage. These problems are analyzed within the framework of validity and efficacy (Kelsen, 1991). Values and norms are valid if they are effective part of the moral custom. They are effective when they are generally observed and when not observed, sanctions are applied.

The question of identity is posed on the premise that the term 'Filipino' and by extension "Filipino values and norms," are a problematic colonial and modern construct, which mainly represents the lowland Filipinos. Therefore, it fails to include all groups in the Philippines. Mulder (2013) argues that the problem of Filipino identity is largely due to the absence of or the failure to articulate the foundational moral order on which collective consciousness can be grounded. Measured against Kelsen's (1991) concept of validity, these values and norms are *imperatives* that do not universally apply to all *imperatus* (Filipinos). In the context of other groups and subcultures, these values and norms are illegitimate; hence they are invalid for they do not emanate from their respective customs.

The superimposition of the colonial ways of life on the precolonial society and culture instantiates the problem of distortion. Applying Kelsen's (1991) concept of derogation, tension marks the interface between the colonial and precolonial ways of life. The competing precolonial and colonial *imperators* (norm-givers) account for conflicting values and norms. The colonial imperator acts as the derogator of the precolonial *imperatives*. The resultant hybrid norms and values are mired in distortions and therefore fall short of the requisite for validity.

The problem of dysfunctionalization consists of colonial and domestic acts of abrogation of the functions of Filipino values and norms. Colonial abrogation coincides with the displacement and marginalization of precolonial normative standards. In contrast, domestic abrogation corresponds to the political manipulation of values and norms. The project of distortion and dysfunctionalization is an efficacy problem which, in Kelsen's (1991) view, results in a situation in which values and norms are not generally observed and sanctions are not generally applied. Distorted and dysfunctionalized, these values and norms become ineffective and therefore invalid.

The problem of ambivalence is twofold: a) Filipino values and norms retain their inherent potential to be good and evil, right and wrong; and b) Filipino values and norms are a bizarre constellation of precolonial, colonial, and post-colonial elements. The first sense of ambivalence involves the practical problems of efficacy, in which Filipino values and norms are decoupled from their inherent sanctions. The second sense has to do with the question of ontological legitimacy. From the viewpoint of validity, these values and norms disclose conflicting norm-givers and posit ambivalent (conflicting) *imperatives*. Extraneous to the diverse moral customs of their putative *imperatus* (people), the colonial features of these values and norms loses their prescriptive power.

The problem of dissonance discloses a bifurcation of values (desirable) and norms (standard of behavior) as signified by the word "*yabag*." In its practical manifestation, *yabag* exemplifies the contradictions in desires, beliefs, attitudes, and behavior. In Kelsen's (1991) understanding, dissonance is an efficacy problem whereby the normative are separated from the desirable. The detachment of the sanctioning power renders the norms ineffective.

The problem of false justification and misuse is exemplified in a situation in which Filipino values and norms are blamed for and are used to justify wrongdoings. This problem involves a rejection of the normative legitimacy of values and norms, thus depriving them of their prescriptive power. The *imperatus* (people) subverts the *imperative* (values and norms) so that the latter lose their validity and efficacy.

The problem of cynicism shows the disjunction between values and norms that are taught and those that are caught. While these values and norms retain their prescriptive power, the failure of those whom society expects to walk their talk makes them ineffective. If the cynicism of the young leaders is taken as a form of disapproval (sanction), then values and norm are still effective. However, if the same cynicism is interpreted as a sign of distrust in the *imperators* (norm-giver) and the *imperative* (norms), these values and norms are rendered invalid.

The problem involving the decline of moral courage is symptomatic of the moral paralysis obtaining in society. It is indicated by the general inability to impose sanctions at the instance of moral transgressions. According to Kelsen (1991), the principle of efficacy requires that norms are generally observed, and when not observed, sanctions are applied. The decline of moral courage as a consequence of the weakening of moral sanctions leads to the inefficacy of values and norms.

Ultimately, the problems concerning Filipino values and norms that the respondents have identified are problems of normative validity and efficacy. These problems mainly involve conflicts among diverse and competing *imperatives* (norms and values), *imperators* (norm-giver, i.e.,

precolonial, colonial, and post-colonial customs), and the *imperatus* (people).

4.0 Conclusion

All societies are built upon a normative foundation. Filipino values and norms are part of these ordering elements of Philippine society. They serve as a general reference for the being and becoming of the Filipinos. However, the chaotic constellation of conflicting indigenous, colonial, and modern normative paradigms is indicative of severe validity and efficacy problems. These problems transcend the typical problematization of some interpretations and functions of specific Filipino values and norms that are commonly found in the literature of Filipino culture and society. The problem of ambivalence lies not in the values and norms themselves but in the greater scheme of conflicting values paradigms.

Taken together, the problems are radical and paradigmatic because the purported Filipino values system is admittedly disfigured, distorted, and pluralized by colonialism and dysfunctionalized by domestic abuse almost beyond repair and recovery. The problem of distorted identity cripples the Filipinos' discursive and deliberative abilities. The proposed antidote of moral and values education is bound to be futile in the face of a severely mutilated social conscience. The ambitious idea of moral revolution begs the more difficult question of which morality and whose revolution.

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