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The Filipino Idea of the “Sacred” in the Context of Personalism as Man Prepares to His End

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Abstract

This study explores the deep-rooted spirituality of the Filipino people, focusing on their unique relationship with the sacred and the concept of a personal God. Drawing from a range of historical, philosophical, and contemporary sources, it investigates how early Filipino beliefs, unconscious religiousness, and practical personalism continue to shape everyday expressions of faith. Filipinos often encounter the divine in tangible ways—through objects, places, and rituals—manifesting what scholars refer to as hierophanies. To interpret these lived experiences and symbolic practices, the study employs a Philosophical-Hermeneutic Methodology, combining existential and personalist thought with interpretive analysis of cultural texts and religious traditions. This approach emphasizes reflective inquiry rather than empirical data collection, allowing for a nuanced understanding of practices such as the use of anting-anting (amulets), which reveal the enduring fusion of indigenous spirituality and Catholic influence. Ultimately, the study highlights how Filipino spirituality, grounded in both ancient traditions and contemporary practices, offers a rich lens for understanding the broader dynamics of faith, culture, and personal religiosity in the Philippines.

Keywords: Afterlife; Culture, Filipino Spirituality; Hierophany; Personalism

Suggested citation:

Rosales, R.J. (2025). The Filipino Idea of the “Sacred” in the Context of Personalism as Man Prepares to His End. *International Journal on Culture, History, and Religion*, 7(1), 38-54. <https://doi.org/10.63931/ijchr.v7i1.93>

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Introduction

Humanity has long grappled with the inescapable reality of mortality. The awareness of death—its inevitability and the prospect of its onset—is a phenomenon that, though difficult to accept, shapes much of human behavior. This realization of mortality is deeply intertwined with the belief in something beyond the self, a transcendental entity that provides a sense of purpose and direction. However, awareness of mortality does not necessarily equate to religious engagement. As Aquino (1993) asserts, “the objective manifestations of religion alone do not constitute religion” (p. 3), highlighting the complexity of religious experience beyond observable practices. For Leibniz (Cave, 2009), the belief that there must be a sufficient reason for everything marks the zenith of human rationality, suggesting that belief in a higher power is a natural consequence of human reasoning.

Within each individual lies an innate sense of indebtedness to a being beyond oneself—a being that invokes both reverence and fear. This sense of indebtedness compels individuals to prepare for an encounter with the transcendental, which is often conceptualized as a supreme entity. In this regard, the philosophical arguments of St. Thomas Aquinas, particularly his fourth proof of God’s existence—the concept of gradation—suggest that the most noble being serves as the cause of all other beings (Aquinas, 1969, p. 285). This “supreme entity,” central to the human experience, serves as both a source of existential reflection and a guiding force for moral and spiritual actions.

As individuals anticipate their eventual encounter with this divine being, they engage in practices that they believe will enable them to stand worthy before it in the afterlife. This preparation occurs in the present through acts of devotion and reverence toward representations of the divine, which may include objects, rituals, persons, and incantations. In this study, such representations are collectively referred to as the “sacred.”

In the Filipino context, belief in a supreme being is deeply ingrained, often accompanied by the fear of divine retribution for human imperfection. This fear drives a pattern of reverence in daily life, influencing both behavior and spiritual practices. This study seeks to explore the Filipino attitude toward the sacred, with particular attention to the concept of personalism, which emphasizes the affirmation of human freedom and the personal nature of religious belief. Filipino personalism, as described by Padilla (2008), underscores the importance of a personal relationship with the divine, particularly with a personal God, which is a hallmark of Filipino spirituality (p. 196). This approach to the divine highlights not only the relationship between

individuals and God but also how these beliefs are expressed in both ordinary and extraordinary ways.

The concept of the sacred is neither foreign nor extraordinary to Filipinos. Each person holds a personal interpretation of what is sacred, often associating it with divine or magical qualities. Aquino (1993) contends that Filipino personalism involves “not a compelled perception, but a voluntary act of interpretation” (p. 32), illustrating the fluidity and subjectivity of sacred beliefs. This perspective on the divine is accompanied by an “unconscious religiousness,” which Frankl (2000) identifies as the compelling force that drives individuals to devote time and attention to sacred representations of the divine (p. 67). Whether or not the existence of a supreme entity is accepted as an absolute truth, it is the behavior toward this belief that shapes daily life and spiritual practices.

In Filipino culture, the desire to please a divine entity, seeking protection and guidance for both the present life and the afterlife, reflects a psychological need for dependency and protection (Estoque et al., 2006, p. 163). The practices that aim to appease the divine—through rituals, devotion, and reverence of sacred objects—serve as expressions of this psychological and spiritual need. These practices, including superstitions, occult rituals, and the veneration of religious artifacts, can be understood as “hierophanies,” or manifestations of the sacred in the material world. Such practices are not simply acts of devotion; they are deeply intertwined with the human quest for security and transcendence.

This study aims to trace these practices to their historical and cultural roots, examining not only the colonial influence on Filipino religious life but also the indigenous spiritual practices that continue to shape Filipino attitudes toward the sacred. To fully appreciate the depth of this religious landscape, we must look beyond the colonial past and examine the underlying beliefs and practices that persist to this day, offering valuable insight into the ways in which Filipinos understand and prepare for their ultimate encounter with the divine.

Personalism

Personalism, as a philosophical concept, refers to the quality of being characterized by individual, personal modes of expression and behavior (Pickett, 2011). It represents how a person engages with and responds to the world around them. Philosophically, personalism is understood as a system in which the person is the ontological ultimate, and personality serves as the fundamental explanatory principle (Edwards, 1967, p. 107). In this framework, God is perceived as a fully personal being, allowing believers to relate to the divine in human terms. This

perspective enables the depiction of God as a loving and caring entity, whose nature can be conveyed through images drawn from human experiences (Edwards, 1967, p. 347).

Personal idealism, a form of personalism, emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries at Boston University, primarily through the work of Borden Parker Bowne (1847–1910) and his followers, including Knudson, Flewelling, and Brightman. These scholars were pivotal in establishing personalism as a philosophical tradition (Audi, 1995). Central to this system is the belief that God, as a personal being, is intimately accessible to humanity, transcending religious traditions. The personalist viewpoint allows believers to engage with God in human terms, perceiving His presence in everyday life. Within this framework, God is understood as the transcendent person, the creator, and sustainer of all other persons, while the material world is regarded as a system of objects created for or by persons (Audi, 1995, p. 575).

Personalism can be categorized into two primary forms: realistic personalism and idealistic personalism. Realistic personalism, grounded in supernaturalism and metaphysical realism, holds that personality is the essence of being and that ultimate reality is spiritual and supernatural. In this view, while God is the source of all existence, not all creation is inherently personal or spiritual (Edwards, 1967, p. 108). Conversely, idealistic personalism aligns with metaphysical idealism, with three main subtypes: absolutistic idealism, panpsychistic idealism, and personal idealism. The latter, personal idealism, is the most representative of the personalist tradition, asserting that all of reality is personal, consisting of a society of persons, with God as the supreme person and the ultimate source of all beings (Edwards, 1967, p. 108).

Filipino Personalism

Filipino personalism is a distinct expression of religious belief in which Filipinos deeply internalize and personalize their relationship with God. This relationship is reflected in various religious practices, rituals, and the veneration of sacred objects, which serve as tangible manifestations of the divine presence. Filipinos, influenced by their cultural heritage, tend to think holistically and concretely (Mercado, 1979). This approach is evident in their strong belief in a higher being, reflecting an existential orientation where "being human always relates and points to something other than itself—better to say, something or someone" (Frankl, 2000, p. 138).

Filipino personalism encompasses both realistic and idealistic dimensions. Realistic personalism is seen in the deep religiosity of many Filipinos, who believe in a spiritual reality beyond this life. This belief is manifest in practices such as the use of

agimat (amulets), relics, and religious rituals, all of which serve to bring them closer to God and prepare them for life after death. These objects are revered not only as sacred but also as sources of protection, luck, and divine presence, which aligns with the belief that "ultimate reality is a spiritual, supreme being" (Edwards, 1967, p. 108).

On the other hand, Filipino personalism also exhibits features of idealistic personalism, particularly in the form of personal idealism. Filipinos demonstrate a sentimental attachment to objects, especially those given by loved ones, reflecting an idealistic orientation. They also place significant value on community, extended family relationships, and social belonging, indicating their pluralistic worldview. This communal and relational focus is a key component of Filipino spirituality. Their theism, expressed through deep devotion to God, often portrays God as the ultimate source of being and blessings. Even individuals who do not practice formal religion may still live in anticipation of a final judgment, recognizing a higher being who presides over their fate.

Although realistic and idealistic personalism may appear to be distinct forms of belief, both are present in Filipino religious life. Their coexistence demonstrates how belief and practice are intricately integrated into Filipino spirituality. The idealism that leads Filipinos to form deep relationships and attach profound meaning to objects and experiences also encourages them to accept spiritual realities. This integration results in a lived expression of personalism that is both idealistic in thought and realistic in practice.

To capture this unique synthesis, this study introduces the term practical personalism. This term seeks to describe how Filipino personalism blends both realistic and idealistic elements in a culturally embedded, lived experience. The term is not derived from existing literature but is coined specifically for this study to describe a distinctive cultural phenomenon. While similar terminology may exist elsewhere, this term is used to name the cultural reality observed in Filipino religious life—where beliefs are not only held but are actively manifested in everyday practices.

Methodology

This study adopts a Philosophical-Hermeneutic Methodology to examine the lived spirituality of the Filipino people, focusing on their deep relationship with the sacred and their personal experience of the divine. The philosophical dimension draws from existential and personalist thought—particularly the works of Karl Jaspers, Gabriel Marcel, and key Filipino thinkers—providing a framework to interpret how Filipinos understand their connection with a personal God, the afterlife, and the sacred as a tangible presence. Through this lens, concepts such as practical personalism,

unconscious religiousness, and hierophany are examined not merely as abstract ideas but as lived realities embedded in Filipino culture and religious life.

The hermeneutic aspect involves the interpretation of diverse sources, including historical accounts, theological reflections, cultural studies, and ethnographic literature that reveal how Filipino spirituality is practiced and embodied. Emphasis is placed on symbolic elements—such as the use of anting-anting (amulets), devotional practices, and sacred objects—which are understood as manifestations of the sacred or hierophanies. Rather than generating empirical data, the study engages in deep textual and cultural analysis to uncover the meanings behind Filipino religious expressions. This interpretive process allows for a nuanced understanding of Filipino spirituality as an integration of faith, culture, and personal relationship with the divine—a spirituality that continues to shape Filipino identity and worldview.

Findings

The findings of this study emerge from a reflective and interpretive engagement with Filipino spiritual practices, viewed through the lens of philosophical-hermeneutic inquiry. Rather than presenting empirical data in the traditional sense, the discussion unfolds by interpreting the symbolic, cultural, and religious expressions that reveal the Filipino people's unique relationship with the sacred and their personal God. Drawing from historical texts, cultural artifacts, theological writings, and philosophical insights, this section presents an integrated analysis of how concepts such as hierophany, practical personalism, and unconscious religiousness are embodied in everyday life. These findings are not isolated observations but interconnected insights that offer a deeper understanding of how faith is experienced, lived, and expressed in Filipino culture.

Filipinos and the Supreme Entity

Ancient Beliefs and Traditions

The Philippines boasts a rich cultural and religious heritage, shaped by various civilizations long before colonial rule. Indigenous Filipino traditions and superstitions were deeply ingrained in society even prior to Spanish colonization. Despite enduring foreign invasions—by the Spanish, American, and Japanese—the early Filipinos exhibited a distinct and sophisticated form of civilization. Unfortunately, much of this indigenous culture, particularly religious artifacts and practices, was destroyed by missionaries, especially friars, evangelical priests, and pastors. As Zaide (1994) observes, the destruction of these relics severely hampers our understanding of pre-colonial Filipino religious life.

Anthropologically, Filipinos are part of the Malayan race, sharing cultural similarities with neighboring Southeast Asian civilizations. Trade relations with advanced civilizations such as India, China, and Arabia introduced not only goods but also religious ideas and spiritual practices (Madeja et al., 1991). Trade also extended to other Asian territories, including Borneo, Malaya, Siam (Thailand), Cambodia, Java, Celebes, and Sumatra. These interactions helped shape the early Filipino understanding of the divine, influencing the development of sacred objects and worship rituals.

A profound belief among ancient Filipinos was their reverence for the afterlife. Their dedication to proper burial practices illustrates this: “Because of their belief in the next world, the early Filipino took care in burying their dead” (Madeja et al., 1991, p. 41). Agoncillo (1990) further explains that ancient Filipinos believed the dead needed material possessions for a favorable reception in the afterlife, ultimately to meet Bathala, the supreme deity. This belief is symbolized by artifacts such as the Manunggul Jar, which depicts the soul’s journey to the next life.

Superstitions were also integral to Filipino spirituality, often intertwined with personalism. Zaide (1994) documented numerous supernatural beliefs and mythological creatures that influenced everyday life, such as the *asuang* (a witch capable of shape-shifting into animals to devour human flesh), the *mangkukulam* (a witch who causes illness by pricking dolls), and the *tigbalang* (a deceiver appearing as an animal or old man) (p. 70). Additionally, Filipinos believed in the power of amulets (*anting-anting*), love potions (*gayuma*), invisibility herbs (*odom*), and charms for safe river crossings (*uiga*). While some of these superstitions persist today, they illustrate how early Filipinos personalized their spirituality by seeking a connection with a divine or supernatural entity through ritual and tradition.

Unconscious Religiousness

Even before the introduction of organized religion, pre-colonial Filipinos exhibited an intrinsic orientation toward the divine. Though they worshiped gods they had conceived and feared, their belief system reflected an inherent longing for a transcendent being. Frankl (2000) described this as an “unconscious religiousness,” wherein the immanent self relates to a transcendent Thou. For Filipinos, belief in a supreme entity was a means of explaining daily life and natural phenomena. Philosopher David Hume (1993) argued that religions evolve from polytheistic origins toward monotheistic understandings, shaped by fear, reverence, and the human need for explanation. He observed that: “The first conception of gods as powerful but limited beings... gives way to a conception of deity as unity and infinity... But these

conceptions prove too remote... and demi-gods or intermediaries are introduced again” (p. 194).

This shift from polytheism to monotheism illustrates the natural human tendency to seek a deeper understanding of a transcendent being. Even without formal theology, Filipinos were guided by a moral and spiritual sense, suggesting the presence of what Frankl (2000) refers to as the “unconscious God”—a God not unconscious in Himself, but unknown to humanity. Wojtyła’s (Francisco, 1995) personalism further emphasizes that humans, endowed with intellect and will, are capable of making moral decisions and freely relating to God. This “unconscious religiousness” underscores humanity’s innate quest for truth and the establishment of a personal connection with the divine.

Religion

Although no formal religious system existed among early Filipinos, they were inherently religious and acknowledged multiple gods and goddesses. This inclination toward religion was shared by many ancient civilizations, driven by the belief that divine power governed both good and evil (Glover, 1996). These early systems were often classified as paganism, where belief in a being took precedence over belief that a being existed (Thompson, 2010).

Religion can be broadly defined as “the belief in and reverence for a supernatural power or powers, regarded as creating and governing the universe” (Pickett, 2000). In Catholicism, it is understood as a relationship between God and humanity, involving specific teachings and practices that unite people with God (Bennet, 2011). The personalization of religion often occurs as individuals conceptualize their deity based on personal faith and experience (Casas, 2011).

Hume (1993) posited that polytheism was likely the first form of religion, given the widespread evidence of early polytheistic belief systems and the improbability that primitive societies initially embraced monotheism, only to abandon it later. Regardless of the form, all human societies are naturally inclined toward religion as a recognition of human dependence on a higher being (Bennet, 2011). Even outside formal religious structures, people are compelled to seek truth and purpose through spiritual inquiry (Casas, 2011). Glenn (1930) emphasized that religion should not be treated merely as a utility but as a moral duty rooted in human rational nature.

Ancient Religious Practices of the Filipinos

Before colonization, the dominant belief systems in the Philippines were animistic and polytheistic, with localized deities and rituals. Although Catholicism

and Islam became the predominant religions in the region, elements of pre-colonial paganism, occultism, and newer spiritual practices persist. Filipinos traditionally worshiped individually or communally, often guided by a *presbys* (elder or priest), and performed rituals in designated spaces (Bauzon, 2011). According to Spanish missionaries, Filipinos already believed in a supreme being before the arrival of Christianity. Fernandez (1979) noted that “before the arrival of the missionaries, Filipinos already believed in a supreme being, which the Tagalogs called Bathala Maykapal, the Visayans Laon, and the Ilocanos Cebunian. Bathala was the creator and judge but was perceived as distant and unconcerned with daily affairs” (p. 1). To meet their immediate needs, Filipinos turned to secondary deities—gods associated with rivers, mountains, trees, and villages, resembling the Greco-Roman pantheon (Fernandez, 1979). Additionally, Filipinos practiced animism, attributing spirits to natural elements such as the sun, moon, and animals. Crows were called *Maylupa* (lords of the land), crocodiles were revered as *Nono* (grandfather), and bamboo was considered sacred (Fernandez, 1979). Religious spaces were simple, such as lean-tos called *simbahan* or designated rooms in wealthier homes, which housed images of gods or *anitos*. Worship also occurred in groves and forests (Fernandez, 1979). Despite their lack of knowledge of the Christian God, early Filipinos' religious instincts reveal a rational acknowledgment of divine power, aligning with characteristics of the God later revealed through Christianity.

The Sacred

Hierophanies

In religious studies, the concept of the sacred refers to material objects or events that, while not divine in themselves, serve as representations or manifestations of the divine. These objects or occurrences are considered sacred because they are believed to make the divine present in the world. The divine or supreme entity is transcendent and not a material object; however, certain objects or events can facilitate encounters with the divine. This process is known as hierophany, derived from the Greek terms *hieros* (sacred) and *phania* (manifestation). Hierophanies thus refer to the revelation of the sacred in the ordinary, or the manifestation of the divine in the mundane.

Related to hierophanies is the concept of the hierophant, which originates from ancient Greek religious practices. The hierophant was a priest who interpreted and revealed sacred mysteries, particularly in the Eleusinian rites. In modern terms, a hierophany refers to any material or event that evokes the sacred, such as sacred texts, statues, or natural phenomena. These manifestations of the sacred are central to the religious life of people, helping them experience a connection to the divine.

Hierophanies are present in all religions, serving as conduits to the divine. Examples of such hierophanic objects include sacred stones, idols like the avatars of Vishnu, statues of deities such as Jupiter, the theophany at Mt. Sinai, and the incarnation of the Logos in the figure of Jesus Christ. Aquino (1993) categorizes these hierophanies into three broad types:

1. Nature-based hierophanies: These involve natural elements like rivers, mountains, or trees as mediators of the divine.
2. Historical hierophanies: These are events or narratives, particularly national or salvation history, where divine presence is believed to have been revealed (e.g., the Exodus of the Israelites or the life of saints).
3. Personal hierophanies: These are instances where a specific person embodies the divine presence, as in the cases of Christ or Krishna.

These various forms of hierophany help explain why certain objects hold profound significance for believers. It is not that the objects themselves are deified, but rather that they are seen as tangible signs or channels through which the divine may be encountered. While scientific or philosophical explanations may not always suffice, faith—defined as "an act of intellect based on rational motives of credibility"—offers a lens through which these experiences can be understood.

In Filipino religious culture, hierophanies take on a deep and personal meaning. Sacred objects serve not only as symbols but as real, tangible connections to the divine. For Filipinos, the desire for physical representations or symbols that can be held, seen, or touched reflects their need to make the divine more immediately accessible. These physical manifestations of the sacred, whether in the form of images, statues, relics, or sacred rituals, are key to Filipino spirituality.

Catholicism

Catholicism, the predominant religion in the Philippines, significantly shapes the religious landscape. Filipinos are widely recognized for their deep religiosity, and the Philippines is often described as a "Catholic country." However, as Fr. Jose Francisco C. Syquia (2012) notes, despite the nation's Catholic identity, the persistence of superstitions and folk beliefs can sometimes dilute the depth of Catholic devotion, preventing it from being a fully transformative source of holiness and protection.

Filipino Catholic devotion is expressed through practices such as praying novenas, celebrating feasts like the Feast of the Black Nazarene, and maintaining home altars adorned with images of the Sto. Niño and the Blessed Virgin Mary. There is also a unique, affectionate devotion to the Virgin Mary, often referred to as "Mama Mary" or "Ina" (Llasos, 2013). This relationship is central to Filipino spirituality, and the

reverence of sacred objects, such as images and relics, plays an important role in daily life.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994) emphasizes that “the religious sense of the Christian people has always found expression in various forms of piety, including the veneration of relics” (#1674). Relics—whether first-class (parts of a saint’s body), second-class (items used by the saint), or third-class (objects touched to a first-class relic)—are treated with great reverence in Filipino culture. The Philippines boasts one of the largest numbers of lay relic custodians, indicating the widespread devotion to these sacred objects (De Leon, 2011).

The veneration of relics is not merely an act of historical preservation but is deeply theological. The Acts of the Apostles recounts how items touched by the Apostle Paul—such as handkerchiefs and aprons—were used to heal the sick (Acts 19:11–12, NAB, 2004). The veneration of relics reflects two theological principles: (1) the resurrection of the saints and (2) their continued intercession on behalf of the living faithful (Komonchak et al., 1991, p. 862). For Filipinos, relics are not simply historical remnants but living connections to God through the intercession of saints, which fosters a deeper bond with the divine and aids in the preparation for eternal life.

New Age Movement

The New Age Movement (NAM) represents a diverse collection of mystical and esoteric practices, many of which are incompatible with Catholic doctrine. The movement often promotes pantheistic ideas of God that conflict with the Catholic understanding of the divine, and it encompasses a variety of spiritual systems, self-help practices, and occult traditions (Clowes, 2001, p. 37). Though difficult to define, NAM includes beliefs in reincarnation, astrology, and alternative healing methods (Pickett, 2000).

In the Filipino context, many individuals, often unknowingly, incorporate New Age practices into their Catholic worldview. These practices include the use of anting-anting (amulets), astrology, animism, and seeking guidance from traditional healers such as *albularyo*, *mangkukulam*, and *espiritista* (Fr. Syquia, 2012, pp. 222–223). Shamanistic practices, in particular, remain prevalent in Filipino culture, where individuals seek healing or guidance from shamans, who are seen as mediators between the human and spiritual realms (Mercado, 2000).

The persistence of these practices is part of a larger trend in Filipino religious life, where ancient beliefs continue to coexist with Catholic teachings. The use of amulets, in particular, reflects the blending of personalism and the sacred in Filipino spirituality. These objects—whether necklaces, stones, or written prayers—are imbued

with spiritual significance, offering protection and empowerment. Despite the modernity of Catholicism, these practices serve as a reminder of the continuity of Filipino spirituality, where the sacred is sought in both the tangible and the intangible.

Discussion

The findings from the review of related literature provide valuable insights into the complexity of Filipino spirituality, particularly their relationship with the sacred and their personal engagement with the supreme entity. These findings underscore the deeply ingrained spiritual practices, beliefs, and ideologies that define Filipino religiosity. By examining key themes such as hierophanies, Catholicism, and the influence of the New Age Movement (NAM), this study sheds light on how Filipino spirituality is shaped by both indigenous and foreign religious traditions, as well as how these practices continue to evolve in modern contexts.

Hierophanies and the Sacred

The concept of hierophanies—the manifestation of the sacred in the profane—emerges as a central theme in understanding Filipino spirituality. Filipinos, like many other religious groups, do not only see the divine in abstract terms but in tangible objects, places, and events. The sacred is embodied in hierophanies, such as statues, relics, and amulets, which hold profound significance for believers. This connection between the divine and the material world reflects a holistic view of spirituality, where the sacred is accessible and can be encountered through physical objects that serve as conduits to the divine. As highlighted in the literature, the veneration of relics in the Philippines is a notable example of this practice. Filipinos' deep reverence for relics—whether first, second, or third-class—serves not only as a historical connection to the saints but also as a means to experience divine grace and intercession. This aligns with the theological notion of sacred history, where the faithful see the divine presence not only in the past but in ongoing sacred acts. The connection between Filipino spirituality and hierophanies is a testament to their lived faith, where sacred objects and events serve as markers of divine presence.

Catholicism and Filipino Devotion

Filipino Catholicism, while rooted in the teachings of the Church, has developed distinct practices and expressions of faith that are uniquely Filipino. The devotion to the Virgin Mary, the celebration of the Feast of the Black Nazarene, and the common practice of maintaining home altars are just a few examples of how Filipino Catholics manifest their faith. These practices, which often involve physical

expressions of devotion such as bowing, kissing relics, or lighting candles, highlight the Filipino tendency to externalize their faith in tangible ways. The Filipino belief in a personal God also contributes to this devotional culture, where faith is experienced through direct, intimate encounters with the divine. However, as noted in the literature, the evolution of Filipino Catholicism is not without its complexities. Fr. Jose Francisco C. Syquia (2012) observes that while the country remains predominantly Catholic, certain superstitious practices and beliefs, such as the use of anting-anting (amulets) or engagement with spirit mediums, have permeated Catholic devotion. These practices, often viewed through a syncretic lens, reveal the ongoing influence of pre-colonial religious beliefs and indigenous spirituality on contemporary Filipino religiosity. This fusion of Catholicism with local traditions demonstrates the adaptability and resilience of Filipino spirituality, as it merges diverse elements into a unique cultural expression of faith.

The New Age Movement and Filipino Spirituality

The review of related literature also highlights the influence of the New Age Movement on Filipino religiosity, especially among those who unknowingly engage in its practices while identifying as Catholic. Fr. Syquia (2012) discusses how practices like astrology, shamanism, and traditional healing are increasingly integrated into Filipino spiritual lives. These elements, drawn from indigenous and esoteric traditions, coexist with Catholic beliefs, creating a complex and multifaceted approach to spirituality. The rise of the New Age Movement in the Philippines reflects a broader global trend but is uniquely shaped by local traditions. For instance, shamanism, with its emphasis on spiritual healing and communication with spirits, remains a significant part of Filipino spiritual practice. Similarly, the anting-anting—amulets thought to provide protection or healing—echoes the influence of pre-colonial animistic beliefs, which continue to play a role in Filipino cultural and religious life. This blend of indigenous practices and foreign spiritual movements speaks to the fluidity of Filipino religiosity, where old and new practices can coexist and inform each other.

Practical personalism and Filipino Spirituality

The concept of practical personalism emerges as a key framework for understanding how Filipinos integrate their faith into daily life. This approach to spirituality emphasizes the personal and practical dimensions of belief, where religious practices are not abstract or theoretical but are deeply embedded in everyday actions. Filipinos express their faith through concrete practices, such as prayer, the use of sacred objects, and acts of devotion, that reflect their ongoing relationship with the

divine. This personalism is not confined to ritualistic practices but extends to how Filipinos live their faith in their daily routines, interactions, and decisions. As the literature suggests, this practical personalism is closely linked to Filipino attitudes toward the afterlife. The belief in an afterlife is not just a theoretical concept but a motivating force that influences how Filipinos live their lives and practice their faith. The dependence on God for guidance, protection, and salvation reflects the Filipino commitment to personal holiness and spiritual growth, as well as the desire to secure a place in the afterlife.

Hence, the research underscores the deeply embedded nature of Filipino spirituality, characterized by a rich interplay of Catholic devotion, indigenous beliefs, and modern spiritual practices. The findings highlight the importance of hierophanies, Catholic devotion, and the influence of the New Age Movement in shaping the religious landscape of the Philippines. Moreover, the notion of practical personalism offers a valuable lens through which to understand how Filipinos integrate their faith into daily life, grounding their spirituality in both the sacred and the everyday. This holistic approach to spirituality reflects the unique ways in which Filipinos engage with their personal God and navigate their spiritual journeys, both in this life and the afterlife.

Conclusions

Filipinos' deep connection to the sacred is central to their spirituality, flourishing especially in moments of solitude, where they reflect not only on their relationships with one another but, more significantly, with their personal God. For Filipinos, the sacred is not a theoretical abstraction; rather, it is experienced as a tangible manifestation of God's presence in daily life. As Jaspers (2006) affirms, "man's self-realization is a fact of man's relatedness to the Deity, the Divine" (p. 62). This relationship shapes Filipino attitudes toward the afterlife, often perceived as a loving compensation offered by God beyond death (Thompson, 2010, p. 177).

Endowed with both an inquisitive mind and a searching soul (Casas, 2011, p. 25), Filipinos naturally seek a profound and personal connection with the divine. Their inherent curiosity and longing for spiritual meaning give rise to a form of religiosity expressed through practical personalism—where faith is not confined to abstract thought but is integrated into daily actions. Filipino spirituality, therefore, is not merely believed; it is lived. The Filipino approach to the sacred offers a compelling model of practical personalism. Through unconscious religiousness, Filipinos encounter divine wisdom in everyday moments. This experience permeates their lives and influences their behaviors, rituals, and interactions. Such devotion is not easily dissected from the outside; it is uniquely personal—understood and lived in ways only the individual and their God can fully comprehend. Hierophanies—manifestations of

the sacred in objects, events, and places—further reflect the Filipino way of relating to the divine. These symbols are not venerated for their own sake but are revered for the divine relationship they enable. In this way, Filipinos encounter the sacred in statues, relics, or significant experiences that facilitate communion with the divine.

Historically, Filipino religiosity has developed from the intimate setting of the home, where religious practices are first nurtured, and then extended into the community (Jose, 1992, p. 13). Objects such as anting-anting (amulets), believed to be blessed by divine power, illustrate the enduring fusion of indigenous beliefs with Catholic traditions. This integration maintains the authenticity and continuity of Filipino spiritual heritage. Despite external interpretations, Filipinos express great pride in their devotion. Their reverence for the sacred is deeply ingrained and instinctive, manifesting as honor for any person, place, or object associated with the divine. As they live in preparation for the afterlife, Filipinos preserve an unwavering spiritual bond with God. While Filipino personalism may elude complete understanding by outsiders, it remains a powerful and embodied expression of faith, deeply intertwined with culture (Aquino, 1993).

Through a philosophical-hermeneutic lens, this study has illuminated how Filipino spirituality—rooted in practical personalism and expressed through everyday hierophanies—provides a distinct and meaningful way of experiencing the divine. This embodied faith, shaped by ancient traditions and evolving contemporary practices, continues to inform Filipino identity and their understanding of the sacred in both this life and the next.

Conflicts of Interests

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest related to this research.

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