

THE FILIPINO TRANSFORMING TOWARDS A DIGNIFIED PERSON: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract: Human dignity is the central plank of modern moral & political philosophy. However, it's always invoked & contested as right or value that imposes overarching obligation on public authority. Catholic Church said it originated from God & is of God. But, it's sad that Filipinos aren't good in valuing their dignity. A survey 5 years ago on corruption showed that "lack of human dignity" is 1st in rank which represents about 85% of respondents.

This study determines if Filipinos are still capable of living in dignity amidst temptations.

It aims to answer the following:

1. What is the philosophical idea of dignity of a person;
2. What Filipino experiences relate to human dignity;
3. What are the reflective arguments on human person;
4. How can reflective analysis on dignity be based on Filipino's experiences; &
5. How can Filipinos be dignified persons?

It showed that respondents believe that if call to human dignity will be taken seriously, people will realize that clean living is still possible despite many temptations. Poverty isn't a hindrance to live decently & peacefully.

Keywords: Corruption, Human Dignity, Poverty, Public Authority, Reflective Analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

Dignity is the most important human right from which among all other fundamental rights is derived. The idea of human dignity is the central plank of modern moral and political philosophy. However, living in a world with the idea of human dignity is always invoked and contested as a right or value that imposes an overarching obligation on all public authority, as the underlying basis for constitutional amendments that may lawfully be enacted, and as a standard against the limitations of the constitutional practices, these are among the only significance of human dignity which cannot be overstated.

The great German philosopher Immanuel Kant thought that human beings occupy a special place among God's creation. Of course, He was not alone in saying this, it is an old idea from ancient times, humans have considered themselves to be quite fabulous. Kant said in his point of view that human beings have an intrinsic worth of dignity which makes him valuable above all others (Rawls, 1980). Other animals, by contrast, have value insofar as they serve human purposes. As defined, human dignity is viewed as a reaction against the politics of the past, but in essence, a reflection inherent to every human being, inalienable and independent of the taste.

In a discussion by Hawthorne (2013), he stressed out that human dignity is within the meaning of equality which does not relate to the status or position of an individual in the society per se but rather concerns the manner in which a person legitimately feels when confronted with a particular law. Does the law treat him or her unfairly, taking no account all of the circumstances regarding the individuals affected & excluded by law. Furthermore, it is defined as the individuals and groups which are marginalized, ignored or devalued, or is enhanced when laws are recognized in its fullest potential for all the individuals and groups within the society (Rosen).

From the point of view of the Roman Catholic Church, Human Dignity originates from God and is of God "because we are made in God's own image and likeness". Human life is sacred because the human person is the most central and clearest reflection of God among us. They have transcendental value and worth from God, this dignity is not based on any human quality, legal mandate or individual merit and accomplishment. It is inalienable- it means that it is an essential part of every human being and is an intrinsic quality which can never be separated from the other essential aspects of the human person. The belief in the dignity of the human person is the foundation of morality. The principle of Human Dignity is the foundation of all the Catholic Social Teaching principles" (Feely, SND, 2016).

A holistically dignified person is a person of transcendental value, he realizes his worth from all points of view and from all aspects and because of this, he also thinks the same for his fellow person- equally living and striving hard, doing all his best, and making the most out of what is just available.

Over the years, the Catholic Church has always focused on expounding the meaning of Human Dignity along with certain contexts that take place as time fastly passes by and as technology develops. The Encyclical of the different Popes always have to say something about the evolution of Human Dignity as a principle. Here are some of the most noteworthy definitions of Human Dignity through the years: (From: The Human Dignity Journal)

1. " Rerum Novarum" (The Condition of Labor) Pope Leo XIII- 1891- " Human Dignity became the standard by which the political, social, and economic structures were to be judged. The human person should never be seen or judged as a means to an end"
2. " Quadregesimo Anno" (The Reconstruction of Social Order) Pope Pius XI- 1931- " An awareness of the common good, the need for appropriate structures in the government, a sense of social justice are only some of the important things that could sustain and protect Human Dignity amidst structural changes"
3. " Mater et Magistra" (Christianity & Social Progress) Pope John XXIII- 1961- "The power to participate in political processes was seen as essential to the preservation and the development of Human Dignity"
4. " Pacem in Terris" (Peace on Earth) Pope John XXIII- 1963- " Asserted the need for social and economic rights, not just for political and legal rights. Life in the community is the context in which Human Dignity can be protected and expanded".
5. " Gaudium et. Spes"- (The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World) - 1965- " Human Dignity can be recognized only if we recognize that institutions and human persons are not static, but develop and change in history. Human Dignity is presented positively as the right to share in the decisions that structure political, social, and economic life".
6. " Populorum ProGRESSIO" (The Development of Peoples) Pope Paul VI- 1967- " The concept of integral development was presented as a notion that Human Dignity is only protected by promoting the development of the whole human being in every area of life- political, social and economic.
7. " Octogesima Adreniens" (A Call to Action) Pope Paul VI- 1971- " A more theological vision of Human Dignity is presented. Christian faith was in a unique position to reconcile the claims of the absolute truth and subjective claims in the quest for practical means of promoting Human Dignity".
8. " Laborem Exercens" (On Human Work) - Pope John Paul II- 1981 "Reasserted the priority of labor over capital. Human Dignity is further enhanced by work, human being is the subject of work therefore, the person must always be respected".
9. " Sollicitudo Rei Socialis" (On Social Concerns) Pope John Paul II- 1987- " The significant reflection to the Human Dignity lies in the development of the concept of solidarity".
10. " Cantessimus Annus" (One Hundred Years) Pope John Paul II- 1991- " A rise of violence, atheism and instability pose clear threats to Human Dignity. The call is renewed to take seriously the transcendent and social nature of the human person in order to protect Human Dignity".

In the Philippines, it is sad that a lot of Filipinos are not educated enough to learn how to value their dignity. A huge number of Filipinos may not observe this, but the Filipinos who do not have a sense of dignity and self- respect can hinder the social and economic prosperity. Undignified Filipinos often do something without any regard of respect to the people

around them. It is easy for these individuals to exchange their dignity in replacement of a sum of money. They do not feel any shame when they take considerable amounts of money for a service or anything to commence the money paid or given to them.

In a survey conducted by a local commissioned company almost five years ago (2014) in Metro Manila which involved nearly two thousand (2000) respondents, in the question: " What makes up a corrupt official?", the variable which states that " Dishonesty at work, lack of human dignity and self- valuing" ranked first as a response with around one thousand seven hundred (1,700) respondents which is approximately about eighty- five percent (85%) of the total number of respondents. This barely shows that dishonesty is a clear manifestation of lack of human dignity which has become a major problem not just in the Philippine political setup but in other aspects as well like in education, business and law-enforcement.

Also in a study conducted by Velches (2013) on the " Degradation of Values Formation Among the Government Employees in Metro Manila", it showed that poverty is the main cause why dignity is sacrificed in exchange of favors like accepting " lagay" or certain favors or "tokens of appreciation" which could range from hundreds of thousands to even millions, a situation that is rampant and frequently happening in the government. It may not be surprising to say that if this is done in the Imperial Manila, then it might also be possible that it can be done in the farthest places of the country, a very valid reason why development and progress is far from reality in the remote places of the Philippines.

To make the situation worse, many undignified persons have found a way to work in the government office. Many of the government officials are using their position of assigning unqualified people to delicate important positions which could greatly affect function. It seems that a lot of these officials are so narrow- minded that they could not possibly think of bigger perspective and could not well understand the effect of their actions which add many problems in the society. Appointing, recommending or taking part in helping to put an unqualified or an undignified person in any of the government offices leads to much irreversible damage to the country.

It seems that somewhere down the line, we have lost the essence of achieving a life of dignity and honor. It is the measure of the level of standard of dignity not by the things that we do but by the material gains we attain out of our immoral actions. There is something disturbingly wrong with the way in guiding and in raising out the youth and on how to live without a strong sense of dignity. All of the mentioned disgraceful actions continue to harbor bad image to the country. This image is supposed to be taken care of and protected. If it persists continuously, it would lead to degradation and total damage to the Filipino culture as a whole. Furthermore, this is because of the slow and unwilling perspective to change the system resulting into moral decline of our values and principles which affects our reputation before the international community.

Some people say that the poorer the country is the more depreciated the values and morals are of the people who live in it. No matter how poor the country is, the people should strive to become dignified ones. It is to believe that with dignity, good possibilities and opportunities will come. If the Filipinos will put much value in dignity, we will surely attain the best job that we can ever have. In the same manner, we can carefully choose the type of job or career we can have and never indulge ourselves into jobs that contribute more problems to the country like manufacturing of illegal drugs, illegal mining, gambling, prostitution, and many others. In doing so, the country will be a better place to do business with and as a result, more investors will come to our place. In the process, more jobs will be available and many Filipinos will be able to afford a better lifestyle, with good educational system, better communities and a far better place to live in.

How will it be possible for us Filipinos to have some dignity? It seems so impossible, but it really is possible with the blessings of God. It is like saying "moving heaven and earth" for us to be able to do so. But one thing is clear though- it is not impossible to achieve. The Filipinos can still have a better, dignified life.

2. METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

Utilizing the mixed methods of research in conducting a study involves collecting, analyzing and integrating survey questionnaires and qualitative studies especially interviews with key informant or some experts of the area of research that needs to be conducted. The emergence of mixed methods as a third methodological procedure in social and behavioral sciences began when the methods became a " movement" in the 1980s (Creswell, J. W. & Plano, Clark, V. L. 2011). By mixing both quantitative and qualitative research and data, the researcher gains breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration, while offsetting the weaknesses inherent to using each approach by itself. One of the most advantageous

characteristics of conducting mixed methods of research is the possibility of triangulation, i.e., the use of several means (methods, data sources and researchers) to examine the same phenomenon. Triangulation allows one to identify aspects of a phenomenon more accurately by approaching it from different vantage points using different methods and techniques. Successful triangulation requires careful analysis of the type of information provided by each method, including its strengths and weaknesses.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Human dignity in the theory of human rights is the idea that Human Dignity is ubiquitous to the contemporary discourse of human rights. It occupies a prominent place at the beginning of the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration (1948) that human rights is derived from the inherent dignity of the human person. Although the framework for modern rights relies on the proposed value of philosophical view rather than the foundations of right believing that cannot be understood in the special importance of the value of human dignity, it is easy to be suspicious of the idea that human dignity can be useful in thinking about the nature the notion that the Filipino people could be transformed into dignified persons.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

The study aimed at determining why Filipinos are being transformed into dignified person. It sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the philosophical idea of the dignity of a human person;
2. What are the Filipino experiences related to human dignity;
3. What are the reflective arguments on the human person;
4. How can the reflective analysis on Human Dignity be based on Filipino's experiences;
5. How can Filipinos be transformed into a dignified person?

PARADIGM OF THE STUDY:

The paradigm shows that human nature is superior to animal while human dignity is interdependent to one another. As humans, it is the nature of one to be superior to animals for it has the ability to think, to reason out and to rationalize. Likewise, the idea of being superior to animals gives us certain dignity because it makes us think that we are more of value than those of the others. Being interdependent and rational as we are, our actions must be above the superiority of human beings, though it is for the actions that understand the idea of human dignity, it should take responsibility for the actions and understand the idea of punishment which sometimes neutralizes the human nature.

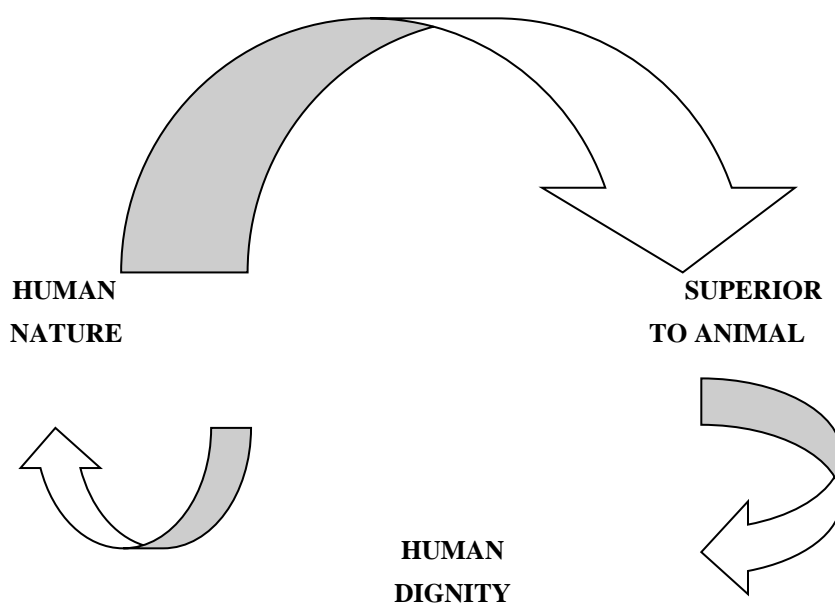


Figure 1: Paradigm of the Study

Maintaining the dignity seems to be hard at times, but we must remember that it is one of the blessings that God has given us. Human dignity is almost always affected by the human nature which sometimes brings us to faulty decisions or actions. Being a rational person that is superior to animals is one of the privileges that humans continue to enjoy over animals. Human Nature, Superiority to Animals and Human Dignity is interdependent and is merely related to one after another.

4. DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY

According to Immanuel Kant, the value of human beings is above all price. This serves as an objective judgment about the place of human beings in the schema of things. There are two important facts about people that in his view, supports his judgment. First, having desires and goals, other things will always have value in relation to their projects. Mere things which includes human animals that philosophers considered unable to have self-conscious desires and goals have value only as means to ends. For example, if a person wants to become a better chess player, a book on chess instruction will have a great value; but apart from such ends, the book has no value at all, or if human person wants to travel, a car can be of value or of importance, otherwise, apart from this desire, the car would not have any value at all.

Second, even more important humans have an intrinsic worth and dignity because they are rational agents and free agents who are capable of making their own decisions, setting their own the goals, and guiding their conduct by reason. Because of the moral law of reason, rational beings are the embodiment of the moral law. The only way that moral goodness can exist at all in the world is for rational creatures to apprehend what they should do and acting from a sense of duty. This is the only thing that has a moral worth.

Thus, if there were no rational beings, the moral dimension of the world would simply disappear. It makes no sense, therefore, in regard of rational beings merely as one kind of valuable thing among others. They are the beings for whom mere things have value and they are beings whose conscientious actions have moral worth (Feinberg, 1980). Therefore, Kant recognizes that their value must be absolute and not comparable to the value of anything else.

Through reflective analysis of the situation, if the value of humans is beyond all price, it follows that rational beings must also be treated always as an end, and never only as means. This means that having a strict duty of beneficence towards other persons must strive to promote welfare, rights must be respected, avoid causing harm, and generally strive to be good and to do good to others. But, Kant's idea has a somewhat deeper implication. He believed that if the idea of human dignity can be taken seriously, the situation can be more understandable.

The beings talked about are rational beings, and treating them as ends-in-themselves means respecting their rationality. Thus, never manipulate people, or use people to achieve specific purposes no matter how good they may be. Rational beings must always be given treatment and at the same time ends, for example, only as rational beings must be able to contain in themselves the end of the very same action. Kant believed that if we are taking seriously the idea of Human Dignity, it will be able to understand the practice of criminal punishment in a revealing way. In the face of it, it seems unlikely that we could describe it as punishing someone as respecting them as person or treating them as an end-in-themselves. How could we be taking away one's freedom, by sending him in prison or by a way of respecting? Yet, that is exactly what the brilliant philosopher suggests. Even more paradoxically, it implies that execution of someone may also be a way of treating them as an end.

In this empirical, reflective analysis, I therefore conclude that the presence of Human Dignity in the Philippines is not yet felt or is not yet that evident because most of the government officials still have no dignity and respect to the people who voted for them especially to the country to whom they serve as public servants. Most of the Filipinos forget the value of their dignity because of their own desires and benefits. Human Dignity is being sacrificed in order to have something to eat with the family, in order that children may be able to go to school, and in order that the family may still be able to enjoy certain pleasurable moments or instances. Corruption and violence is rampant due to a lot of people who chose to rather live by doing evil acts such as killing, stealing and getting others fooled rather than remembering that we humans are still entitled to our own dignity.

5. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Filipinos are people who looks at every individual with dignity and respect. Immanuel Kant's philosophy is very much relevant because for Filipinos, "Humanity is a special entity because of its Christian orientation and perspective".

Kant believed that if the idea of Human Dignity will be seriously valued, we will be able to understand and to know the practice of criminal punishment in a revealing way. In the face of it, it seems unlikely that one could not describe punishing someone as respecting him as a person or as treating them as "ends" (Feinberg, 1980). How could it have been when taking away one's freedom by sending one in prison be a way of showing respect? Yet, it is exactly what brilliant philosophers suggest. In understanding the idea of human dignity, we should take responsibility for our actions and understand the idea of punishment which sometimes neutralizes the human nature. Most of the Filipinos forget the value of their dignity because of their own desires.

In the current situation in the Philippines, cases of extra- judicial killings is so rampant that the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) has expressed tantamount indignation to human rights violation against a human person. The dominant religious groups in the country also expressed its opposition through a pastoral letter which strongly says that " Human person has his worth as an image of God that is governed by reason because of his or her spiritual composition".

6. CONCLUSION

Can the Filipino society strongly uphold a sense of dignity? The answer is a clear YES! In spite of the numerous negative impressions about the people here and in other countries abroad, there is always a bright future that awaits us. What is only needed is to continue to reinvent oneself, go with the flow, and broaden one's horizons in order to re- align thoughts into more positive ones.

The family should and must always be at the center since it is the basic unit of the society. It epitomizes the valuing process of an individual who was raised in this kind of family set- up. The role of education should follow through because whatever learning has the child acquired from his first school which is the home, is introduced to a wider community of people with varying values, thoughts and perspectives. As a grown- up, a Filipino should always maintain dignity so that it can portray a dignified man and see himself as a reflection of what is expected by others.

As humans, we may have shortcomings and failures. We may have one of the most corrupt governments in the world. We may have the most opportunistic race but, surely, a Filipino can recover from all those horrible situations. What is more important is the fact that a growing number of Filipinos have made names from their respective fields, as an offshoot towards gaining human dignity, from Manny Pacquiao to Michael Santos, to Lea Salonga, to Efren " Bata" Reyes, all of them have been all over the world, bringing dignity to our race and to the whole country as well. If these people were able to contribute something for our country, it is not impossible that many will still follow their footsteps. The Philippines can still and after all be a great nation of dignified people.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

This research paper is attuned with current social issues. The philosophical and religious representation in the study emphasized that people can still live a dignified life, it is just a matter of living righteously and religiously, within the bounds and norms of what is morally correct. However, for purposes of utmost comprehension, this study can still be enhanced, and/ or reconstructed in order that it may carry more thoughts and ideal reflections.

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