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# Understanding Love in Filipino Culture: An Examination of Indigenous Perspectives and Cultural Reflections

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## Abstract

*This study explores Filipino cultural and political contexts through the lens of Filipino Indigenous thought, focusing on the philosophical underpinnings of the concept of “loob” and its influence on the understanding of love (pag-ibig). “Loob” is examined as a route to achieving harmony with others and nature, aiming for unity with the divine. The research distinguishes between two key dimensions: the analytic (interior) and the synthetic (holistic). The analytic dimension emphasizes the inherent goodness within individuals. In contrast, the synthetic dimension offers a holistic perspective, crucial for addressing Filipinos’ multifaceted challenges in a diverse and pluralistic society. The paper highlights the importance of incorporating nonviolence into literature, the arts, and education, arguing that this integration fosters mature humanity within a rapidly evolving global consciousness. The articulation of nonviolence in these domains is presented as a crucial step toward achieving a more just and harmonious society. Furthermore, the study draws a philosophical comparison between the nonviolent efforts of Corazon Aquino and Mahatma Gandhi, examining their roles in pursuing freedom through nonviolence. Gandhi’s application of ahimsa (doing no harm) as a tool for civil protest is analyzed in the context of the dynamic processes of societal control and justice he confronted. His leadership in resisting colonial rule, leading the Indian rebellion, and challenging discriminatory policies is contrasted with Aquino’s efforts toward political and social change. The paper argues that Gandhi’s philosophical approach aligns closely with Aquino’s strategies for emancipatory political achievement and justice through nonviolence, underscoring their shared commitment to these enduring ideals.*

**Keywords:** Filipino indigenous philosophy; loob; pag-ibig; love; non-violence; virtue

## I. Introduction

The author grew up surrounded by stories of rich cultural history in the Philippines. Her ancestors often told stories about traditions and beliefs that seem far removed from today’s world. Throughout her academic career, the author realized the importance of combining this wis-

dom, which appears to be taken for granted in modern life. Societies in South-east Asia, and especially the Philippines, are rapidly developing. Schools often struggle to make meaningful connections between the past and the present. This paper promotes indigenous wisdom to prepare students better to navigate and contribute to a more harmonious, inclusive, and sustainable world. Corporations, consumerism, mass media, anonymity, and individualism dominate our public culture, casting a shadow over the civic participation and common good that once flourished in our communities.

Writings by Leonardo Mercado, Florentino Timbreza, and Rolando Gripaldo popularized the quest to articulate Filipino indigenous thoughts. At the same time, several studies focused on the Filipino concept of love. Among the latter, though, there are distinct trends observed in the Philippines over the years, such as the debate on divorce and LGBTQ marriage. Those studies seek to defend claims that are important and illuminating. They highlight some of the unique challenges Filipinos face in a pluralistic society. The studies are worthwhile, address the viability of various claims, and navigate numerous difficulties.

In this work, the author investigates Filipino indigenous beliefs that serve as a humble means to avoid the irrelevance of Filipino culture and heritage in a fast-paced world.

i. This paper discusses and appreciates Filipino indigenous thoughts and how they shape our nation's history. Further, this paper explores the meaning of love (*pag-ibig*) in a globalized world based on the Filipino's Indigenous concept of "*loob*." "*Loob*" encompassed Filipinos' humanity and daily experiences. It aspired to harmony with others and nature to be one with God, explaining the Filipinos' dualism in body-soul and emotional-rational. This work briefly discussed the two dimensions of "*loob*": analytic (interior) and synthetic (holistic). The interior "*loob*" affirmed the innate goodness of the person. The holistic model represented the world as a whole entity and the world's non-dualistic perspective on crucial topics.

ii. Secondly, it is crucial to articulate nonviolence – locally, nationally, regionally, and globally – in the face of an intensifying global consciousness. In this vein, the author draws parallels between Corazon Aquino and Mahatma Gandhi in terms of nonviolent actions and a deep yearning for national liberation.

#### a. Statement of the problem

This paper explores the concept of "*loob*" through the author's reflections and experiences rather than as a traditional research report. The aim is to

provide a commentary on Filipino cultural and philosophical perspectives, focusing on how these reflections have reshaped the interpretation of research findings. The study is structured first to introduce “*loob*,” which is inclusive, encompassing everyday experiences and humanity. She mainly explores the definition of love (*pag-ibig*) through this concept. This approach does not reduce the depth of analysis but enhances the understanding of Filipino cultural values through personal insights and reflections.

## b. Methodology

The Philippine Archipelago is one of the richest, and its tropical destinations are often voted the most beautiful on earth. As of 2022, there are over 7,641 islands in the archipelago, around 2,000 of which are inhabited. This study undertakes the need to re-interrogate the ethics of Filipinos to fully understand the cultural and political contexts.

Colonization has had a long-standing impact on Philippine culture and traditions. This impact goes far beyond language, food, and the many superstitions locals hold dear. With an Animist, pre-colonial past (with likely Hindu-Buddhist influences), followed by a successful conversion to Christianity, the Philippines claims ownership of a fascinating, eclectic set of beliefs.

The Augustinians preached the Gospel in Cebu, Panay, and other Visayan islands, while the Franciscans evangelized Manila and Bicol provinces. Conversely, the Recollects evangelized in Bataan, Mindoro, and other parishes on the Pacific coast of Luzon. In the 1500s, most churches, schools, asylums, and hospitals were erected; they existed after earthquakes and typhoons. These constructions are built in Manila, other towns, and provinces. In roughly three hundred years, 12,000 missionaries evangelized the Philippines. Some died as martyrs in the Philippines, China, Japan, and other Eastern countries.<sup>1</sup>

There are folk sayings in this work that need to be clarified. Some of the quotes in this study are grounded in regional beliefs. If the author mentions *Boholanos* in this paper, the term refers to those living in Bohol's island province. They are part of the wider Bisaya ethnolinguistic group. Four of their churches have been declared National Cultural Treasures for cultural, historical, and architectural importance.

While those living in Cebu are *Cebuanos*, the term *Cebuano* refers to the permanent residents on Cebu Island regardless of ethnicity. Magellan's priests' first recorded conversion occurred on this island.

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<sup>1</sup> Anchi Hoh, *Catholicism in the Philippines During the Spanish Colonial Period 1521-1898*, July 10, 2024, <https://blogs.loc.gov/international-collections/2018/07/catholicism-in-the-philippines-during-the-spanish-colonial-period-1521-1898/>.



Figure 1. Magellan's Cross, 1521, Cebu

On the other hand, *Ilocanos* primarily reside within the Ilocos Region in the northwestern seaboard of Luzon. They speak Iloko or Iloco language. Ilocos attracts devotional tours for the faithful to basilicas such as St. Nicholas of Tolentino Parish Church, which existed for almost 440 years. On the other hand, *Ilonggos* refers to the people living in Iloilo province. Iloilo was also one of the most prominent episcopal during the Spanish colonial period.

Tagalogs are the largest cultural-linguistic group in the Philippines. They form the dominant population in the city of Manila. Finally, the *Kapampangans* live in the provinces of Pampanga.<sup>2</sup> Most were religious, though some of their shared beliefs survive today, such as spirits who reside in mounds (*nunu*) or nocturnal giants (*kapre*).

## II. Moral, religious, and relational dimensions of “*loob*”

The condition of philosophy in the Philippines is divided into two stages. First, it is restricted in the academic setting of university classes. Second, it is in the process of formalization and mass adoption. There are two types of “*loob*”: analytical concepts and synthetic concepts.

The analytical concept addresses morality, whereas the synthetic focuses on wholeness or the process of integration. Similar to other Eastern outlooks, Filipinos’ “*loob*” is non-dualistic. There is emotional-rational and body-soul harmony, which aspires to unity with God. For example, the Indian doctrine

<sup>2</sup> Rosita Munoz-Mendoza, *The Kapampangan*, March 11, 2022, <https://ncca.gov.ph/about-ncca-3/subcommissions/subcommission-on-cultural-communities-and-traditional-arts-sccta/northern-cultural-communities/the-kapampangan/>.

of *Anatta*, which denies the inner self or the Atman, is intended to be in union with the Absolute.<sup>3</sup> Conversely, harmony between humanity, nature, and God is the essence of “*loob*.”

“*Loob*” stresses being with others and sensitivity to their needs, inhibiting one’s own personal and individual fulfillment.<sup>4</sup> “*Loob*” is connected to emotions.

Personalism and a high regard for smooth interpersonal relationships (SIR) are some of the stereotypical images of Filipinos. Personalism features the Filipino’s emphasis on personalities and personal factors. For instance, politicians invite movie personalities to support their candidacy during election campaigns. Thus, meanings are not in words but in people.

Most Filipino voters prioritize the political theater and pomp associated with the candidate over their political agenda. The SIR manifests in reciprocity and “*Pakikisama*,” or relationships.<sup>5</sup>

In times of need, Filipinos seek the support of relatives. Wealthier family members distribute their riches to neighbors and relatives out of “*pakikisama*.” However, the giver is likely to predetermine what form should be of more excellent value than the original debt and should be repaid.<sup>6</sup>

Timbreza suggests that the authoritarian tradition that permeates our strong family system may be the reason for fully integrating the individual into the group.<sup>7</sup> The individual is advised what to do and follows the elders’ advice. In short, the Filipino is group-oriented.<sup>8</sup>

“*Loob*” encompasses Filipinos’ humanity, personality, theological perspective, and daily experiences. “*Loob*” aspires to harmony with others and nature to be in union with God. Thus, the interpersonalistic characteristics of “*loob*” explain the non-dualism in body-soul and emotional-rational of the Filipinos.<sup>9</sup>

In Philippine history, several Catholic orders strongly affected the notion of “*loob*,” notably the Augustinians, Recollects, Franciscans, and Dominicans, who played critical roles in the archipelago’s Christianization. These missionaries came to the Philippines not as colonists, as the region provided little money or spices. Nevertheless, Filipinos underwent substantial adaptation during this time, including acquiring new knowledge, languages, cultural

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<sup>3</sup> Leonardo Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy* (Divine Word Publications, 1974), 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>5</sup> Florentino Timbreza, *Mga Hugis ng Kaisipiang Pilipino* (Tomas Press, 1989), 167.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Church, *Filipino Personality: A Review of Research and Writings* (DLSU Press, 1986), 38.

<sup>7</sup> Timbreza, 23.

<sup>8</sup> Emerita Quito, *Three Women Philosophers* (Diamond Jubilee Publications, 1986), 13.

<sup>9</sup> Mercado, 5.

practices, and belief system shifts. This historical context sheds light on the faith-based activities that influence these tremendous changes.

### III. Reconceiving love: A philosophical inquiry into the Filipino indigenous concept of “*loob*”

In this section, the author will feature one of the central issues of the ethical views of Filipinos – the virtue of love. Broadly, love is divided into two types: authentic and inauthentic. Genuine love gives meaning to life. According to the Ilocanos, “Love is the comfort of life.” (*Aliw sa buhay ang pag-ibig.*) Similarly, the Ilonggos believe that love is the salt of life (*Ang pag-ibig ay siyang asin ng buhay.*) Like a dish that needs to be seasoned, our lives need love to make it more fun and exciting. At this point, despite humanity’s hardship and sorrow, there is happiness amid one’s toil and suffering because of love.

Francisco Balagtas (1788-1862), the William Shakespeare of the Philippines, poetizes about the power of love in these words:

Oh, love is so powerful...  
...once you get in the heart of anyone,  
everything will be defied  
if only you give in to your wishes.<sup>10</sup>

The saying of Balagtas was based on his circumstances.<sup>11</sup> Those lines symbolize love’s magnitude, which is overwhelming. The same sentiment is shared by Ilocanos, who believe that one endures to one who genuinely loves. (*Kung tunay kang umibig, tiisin mo ang hirap.*) A true lover ignores failure for the beloved’s sake. Alfred Tennyson said, “It is better to fall in love and fail than never fall in love.”

True love is sweet; it is fun and exciting. The Tagalogs say, “If love is real, it will be sweet until the end.” (*Kung tunay rin lang ang pag-ibig, hanggang katapusa’y matamis.*) Filipinos also believe that not in word alone but in deed, can true love be assured. Further, Ilocanos say, “If love is genuine, there would be no gossip” (*Kung talagang tunay ang pag-ibig, wala ng marami pang satsat.*)

Filipinos also have the concept of dishonest and inauthentic love. Hypocritical love will not last. The Kapampangans say, “Superficial and hypocritical love is like smoke” (*Ang pahapyaw at mapagkunwaring pag-ibig ay parang usok na maglalaho*). Phony love is unwilling to suffer; it is exploitative

<sup>10</sup> Originally: *O pagsintang labis ang kapangyarihan / Sampung mag-aama’y iyon nasasaklaw; / pag ikaw ay nasok sa puso ninuman, / hahamakin lahat masunod ka lamang.*

<sup>11</sup> Francisco Balagtas, *Florante at Laura* (Jiahu Books, 2016), 80.



and deceitful. It quickly disappears during hardship and deprivation. Fake love is false; it has evil intent and masquerades.

Love plays a part in Filipinos' values, the emotional aspect sometimes running more deeply than the intellectual dimension. Since Filipinos are passionate, a significant element of daily life is affected. Choices usually revolve around what a person likes or dislikes.

However, in Filipino culture, love involves friends, siblings, and parents. As Cebuanos says, "it is easier to block flood than love" (*Mas madaling pigilin ang alon (o baha) kaysa pag-ibig*). For instance, if one's circle of friends does not approve of the suitor, the suitor will not be treated well or might be belittled.

On the other hand, Filipinos can fall in love with the help of acquaintances or a circle of friends. For example, if a man likes a woman, he usually finds more information from her best friend or relatives (e.g., her favorite food and hobbies). Traditionally, a suitor's friend accompanies him as he woos the woman.

Further, love is usually about helping people in Filipino life, based on the synthetic concept of "loob." Love transforms. For instance, those who do not want to study will struggle out of love. Those who do not groom themselves will be inspired, too. Those who used to have many unpleasant habits will pray or attend mass.

Too often, too much love becomes harmful: it can be highly toxic. We read in headlines about people being killed out of jealousy. Whether fair or not, love strongly motivates a person to do good or bad. According to the Kapampangans, "Whoever is most loved, sacrifices most" (*Kung sino ang pinakamamahal ay siyang pinahirapan*). Could the intense emotions involved in love lead to such extremes? Though not accepted by the woman's circle of friends, the suitor shows his loyalty by persevering.

However, the disapproval of the woman's friends might sway her to reject the suitor even though she may like him. Therefore, the relational dimension of "loob" becomes evident in this instance, e.g., camaraderie and shame. In this case, friendship influenced her decision rather than her personal feelings. Although she may have genuine affection for the suitor, the social pressure exerted on her decision is essential.

"Double standard" is also rampant among Filipinos. The father might admonish his son against adultery while committing it himself. The law of Christianity forbids adultery, but it is committed by the "poor and uneducated" and by the wealthy. The media's attention will be drawn, for instance, to a government official having liaisons and children out of wedlock. Perhaps the "double standard" can be based on a historical perspective.

Before the arrival of the Spaniards, it was recorded that our Filipino ancestors had many wives. However, the advent of Christianity in our country



introduced that having only one wife was pleasing to God and man, significantly altering the moral framework around marriage. However, in the author's observation, the media promotes adultery. For example, some films or shows portray a married police officer as having another woman. He is not necessarily despised by society. Instead, his masculinity ("machismo") is enhanced.

Further, love for Filipinos can be based on socio-economic standing. It is not a secret that the rich marry their kind, or actors marry fellow actors. Business or political beliefs bind them. If a rich man marries a woman of a lower class, he is sometimes frowned upon. Love then is measured by social class or outward appearance. Although ideal love is unparalleled, it is marketable, distinguished by wealth, power, or age.

Although Filipinos are staying married together, the new generation is becoming aware of the readily available transient love. However, such love for the Boholanos is *love that lies and quickly fades* (*Ang sinungaling na pag-ibig ay madaling kukupas*).

For the author, love's true meaning is that it directs our lives. If there is no love, there will be no civilization. We will surely perish if we do not love and understand. We learned to turn our energies to pursue other endeavors such as music, philosophy, and mathematics because of emotions, e.g., pity and joy. It becomes clear that love plays a critical role in shaping our pursuits and achievements.

At this stage, the author observes commonalities between the Filipino concept of love and Greek interpretations. Filipino love often embodies a blend of passion and community, similar to Greek *eros* (romantic love) and *philia* (friendship), where emotional intensity and social circles play crucial roles. However, Filipino love also reflects aspects of *agape* (selfless, unconditional love) through its emphasis on personal transformation and helping others. It shows how love permeates individual and communal dimensions in ways akin to the Greek ideal of loving one's neighbor selflessly.

## VI. Filipinos' worldview on nonviolence: Rethinking liberty and greatness

The concept of love is not limited to romantic relationships. It also refers to relationships with family, friends, and God. For example, in a family with close siblings, a brother may exercise excessive protection, constricting his sister's suitor or boyfriend. Extreme love can contribute to why siblings may have conflicts. Therefore, the saying of the Ilocanos is true, "Too much tenderness makes the heart cry" (*Ang labis na lambing ay siyang nagpapaiyak sa puso*). Indeed, love should be moderated. Aristotle, the Buddhists, and Taoists say that any excess is wrong in fundamental relationships where balance is crucial.

Love is mighty. According to the Bible, love is the greatest, combined with faith and hope (John 3:16). True love lasts and understands. If there

are unclear things, love dispels them. Love makes us happy. Whether there are shortcomings or weaknesses, love conquers them. Indeed, love boosts a person's perspective and self-confidence. Love has continued to mark the path of human experience, guiding us through life's challenges and triumphs.

For Filipinos, the virtue of love is expressed through deeds. The Tagalogs say, "Love is in deeds, not words." Unlike Westerners, who are very vocal in expressing their thoughts, and for the cynical, the word "love" might be belittled. Indeed, love is like a spark or perfume that spreads fragrance to others. As "Pass it on" imparts:

It only takes a spark  
to get the fire going  
and soon, all those around  
can warm up in its glowing.

Only in love can there be change – not in force or revolution. The seemingly serious problems are eased because of love. The person who knows how to love achieves what he wants because of sincerity or authenticity.

At this juncture, President Corazon Aquino is one of the most remarkable people in the Philippines' history because of her dedication to restoring the country's democratic status from President Ferdinand Marcos's dictatorship.<sup>12</sup> Aquino became an agent of reform by making a mark on society that will remain a legacy for future generations. Her efforts to promulgate nonviolence to combat all the odds inspired many. The power towards resolution is in the people's hands, who voice their rights and opinions to their oppressors. Because of her sacrifices to make a difference, she got more people to trust, love, and believe in her.

Aquino, the Philippines' first female president, vowed to the Filipinos that she would not fight fire with fire. On the contrary, she urged them towards a nonviolent revolution, popularly known as the EDSA People Power. She believes real power is not in the government's tanks, artilleries, or weapons. Instead, power belongs to the people, and they can defeat tyranny without the need for violence. The saying "Flowers defeat guns" (*Daig ng bulaklak ang baril*) during this dark period becomes apparent.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, this sentiment guided Aquino's approach and inspired the nonviolent movement that defined her presidency.

Her desire to end the Marcos regime is rooted in the assassination of her husband, Senator Benigno 'Ninoy' Aquino Jr. It had been a very controversial

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<sup>12</sup> Marcelo Ordóñez, *People Power: A Demonstration of Emerging Filipino Identity* (Sampaguita Printing Press, 1986), 17.

<sup>13</sup> Christine Carmela Ramos, *Introduction to Philosophy* (Rex Bookstore Inc., 2019), 156.

occurrence in our history. Initially, Aquino showed no interest in entering politics, but the people supported her candidacy for the opposition. She envisioned becoming the agent of change, to liberate the Philippines from dictatorship. The country had a malicious ‘Snap Elections’ in which the results were manipulated and subjected to significant election fraud.

The Filipinos’ collective effort mirrors the analytical and synthetic concepts of “loob.” Unity will serve as people’s power to overwhelm the odds and successfully win the battle. In February 1986, Filipinos marched along EDSA with church advocates and others who yearn for Philippine democracy. They held hands, prayed, and initiated civil rights movements.<sup>14</sup>

At this point, the author compares the similarities between Aquino and Mahatma Gandhi – their participation in nonviolent movements and a strong desire to attain freedom for their nation. Both supported peace despite challenging times, though in different circumstances. Notably, both figures are discriminated against in their passive resistance undertakings: Aquino for her gender and Gandhi for his race and religion. These prejudiced treatments did nothing but strengthen their will to advocate for rights. Further, due to their humane movements, many consider them role models for peace.

During Gandhi’s thirty years as the leader of India’s freedom struggle, he spent significantly more time educating the practice of nonviolence. He adopted the Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain religious ideal of *ahimsa* (doing no harm) as a nonviolent weapon for civil protest. He utilized it to oppose control over the region and societal issues like racial prejudice and injustices. Gandhi started massive protests against the colonial administration, coordinated Indian rebellion, and challenged anti-Indian policies in the judiciary. He became a prominent social figure and spread *Satyagraha*, a concept of nonviolent non-cooperation. Although Aquino was not imprisoned, she successfully led the People Power Revolution, ousting former President Marcos’ two-decade dictatorship.



Figure 2. “Ode to the Flag,” BenCab Museum, Philippines

<sup>14</sup> Dionisio Miranda, *Loob: The Filipino Within* (Divine Word Publication, 1989), 65.

The Filipinos' perseverance reinstated the lost democracy and the collapse of Marcos's regime.<sup>15</sup> Despite the success of her movement, Aquino is aware that applying the concept of nonviolence itself has limitations. Though the Marcos regime disintegrated, Marcos's loyalists censured the new Aquino government. These loyalists will spark threats to the peacefulness of the country. Aquino issued measures to regulate when to pull the trigger in using weapons in case of insurgence from the opposition. The Filipinos' trust in the nonviolent actions of the Aquino government has not been well established from the outset. Rebels and the opposition might pose a severe threat to peace and order. Aquino knows this fact, so she has set regulations and strictly monitored the overall condition of the country. After all, Aquino envisions a unified democratic government in which people have the means to live safe and sound in a 'nonviolent' society, which likewise purports to ensure the nation's stability and harmony. Accordingly, this vision argues for balancing nonviolent ideals with practical measures, making it relevant to this issue and guiding her actions throughout her presidency.

#### V. Conclusion: Bridging gaps of indigenous wisdom and global understanding

The memories of Aquino and Gandhi remain. Not how much they have given allows them to have more in return. Instead, it is about how they lived by sharing their resources, knowledge, and efforts to make a difference. They earned respect from the people who gave their trust to them. No matter how hard it is to succeed, remaining faithful to the principles, values, and viewpoints that inspired them to set their goals becomes essential. Additionally, they highlight non-violence, global understanding, cooperation, and core values in supporting social accountability.

Having virtue guides us to a better life.<sup>16</sup> Aristotle's concept of a virtuous existence is related to human connections cultivating mutual respect and a collective dedication to ethical principles. These connections are essential for an individual's ethical development and well-being. He envisions as the ultimate expression of human success what is beyond primal urges: profound ties of friendship and affection. In this way, love becomes a moral power.

It is a powerful virtue to choose and do good. It binds us to those who are close to us. Love makes us human. Since we can love, we are separated from the category of animals. In Filipino culture, love is influenced by oth-

<sup>15</sup> Leonardo N. Mercado, *The Filipino Mind – Philippine Philosophical Studies II* (The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1994), 19.

<sup>16</sup> Purissima Emelda Egbekpalu, "Aristotelian Concept of Happiness (Eudaimonia) and its Co-native Role in Human Existence: A Critical Evaluation," *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 6, no. 2 (2021): 78.

er values, such as shame, camaraderie, “double standard,” and “machismo.” These values are closely related to how love is expressed in Filipino culture. However, excessive or unbalanced love can stray from the ideal, highlighting the need to moderate it.<sup>17</sup>

The Greek concepts of love – *eros* (romantic passion), *philia* (deep friendship), and *agape* (selfless love) – also illustrate the importance of balance in love.<sup>18</sup> Kobow suggests that erotic love acts as a channel for examining the profound aspects of human experience, providing a route to self-discovery and individual development. She recognizes the intrinsic contradiction in this pursuit: although *eros* propels us toward the eternal, it also confronts our mortality and the transience of existence. The intricate nature of our desires and ambitions mirrors both our fleeting nature and an expression of our inherent desire for lasting significance.

*Eros* and *philia* resonate with Filipino expressions of love, where emotional depth and social connections are paramount. Meanwhile, *agape* reflects the transformative and altruistic aspects of love seen in Filipino values of personal growth and social responsibility. These relationships strengthen ethical integrity and act as vital elements of human flourishing. The contradiction between the fleeting essence of desire and the human quest for permanence is how love links impermanence and meaning.

Which virtue truly matters? Would you live in a world without freedom and greatness for security and comfort? Human life is not just made for comfort. Liberty and excellence could not be achieved by being comfortable lest we seek less development. In the face of severe disagreements, love must be upheld. It lets us act morally.

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<sup>17</sup> Ramos, 203.

<sup>18</sup> Beatrice Sasha Kobow, “The Erotic and the Eternal: Striving for the Permanence of Meaning,” *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 6, no. 2 (2021): 216.

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