

On Melanesian philosophy*

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Is there a Melanesian philosophy? Before the question can be answered, there is another question: Is there a Melanesian identity? The word Melanesia applies to Irian Jaya, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, and Fiji. Melanesia is different from Micronesia and Polynesia. In Papua New Guinea alone the three million inhabitants have over 750 languages¹ and even their physical features vary, such as skin pigment which ranges from light brown to charcoal black and hair from kinky to straight. Furthermore, the contacts of Melanesia with Western technology and ways have brought about culture change. Is there then a Melanesian identity? Bernard Narokobi's² series of newspaper articles entitled 'The Melanesian Way' caused a controversy.³ Letters from readers affirmed his contention of the Melanesian Way, while others denied it.

As an example, all the members of a family look different, yet they may also have physical or moral features which are common.

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In short, they have a ‘family resemblance’ (an expression which Ludwig Wittgenstein popularised in philosophy). Although the Melanesian countries may vary in many ways, they have a family resemblance. Just as the countries of Europe vary from each other, there is such a thing as the so-called European way, European culture, or European thought. So, there is a Melanesian identity just as there is an African identity.

Melanesian identity may be compared to the uniqueness of Melanesian Pidgin. Although it has borrowed many words from English and German, it is not broken English. It has developed its Melanesian-flavoured speech patterns and syntax over a century.⁴

If there is a Melanesian identity, there is also a Melanesian philosophy. Philosophy is taken here not in the scholastic or existential meaning but in the anthropological sense such as Filipino philosophy.⁵ Man has been the focus of modern philosophy. While human nature is partly universal, it also has particular aspects such as those affected by culture. If philosophy is to be anthropocentric, it must join the ranks of the social sciences, but if philosophy is a social science then its findings are approximate, unlike the findings of the rigorous physical sciences. Melanesian philosophy is then an approximate interpretation of the Melanesian mind.

Since there are various Melanesian cultures, can one speak of a Melanesian philosophy? Assuming the average Melanesian is five feet and seven inches tall, there are shorter and taller ones and they all may be illustrated in a bell-shaped curve. Likewise there are totally traditional Melanesians who may not have seen a white man at all while there are also Melanesians in cities who are over-exposed to Western ways. In spite of this variety, there are typical Melanesians and Melanesian philosophy is their worldview. How the typical Melanesian is attained will be explained in the following section on methodology.

I. The methodology

As mentioned earlier, Narokobi’s articles (which eventually were compiled in book form) caused a controversy after publication. The main weakness of his work is its lack of strict methodology. As a

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poet-journalist-lawyer he uses a more intuitive approach in reaching his conclusions. The editor of the compiled volume suggests that the confusion caused by the controversy calls for ‘a debate that requires a systematic, reflective and intellectual rigour.’⁶ The methodology used in studying Filipino philosophy can also be employed in attaining Melanesian philosophy;⁷ put briefly, this analyses language and behaviour. Since the methodology has been explained in the book mentioned above, there is no need to elaborate it again. Instead, we shall analyse Melanesian Pidgin because it reflects the thinking of the people who speak it. It is true that Pidgin is spoken less in the Papuan side and that there are variations of Melanesian Pidgin. While Pidgin has been developed as a business language, there has been some degree of creolisation by which it is spoken as a first language.

Together with Pidgin we shall analyse Melpa, a dominant language in the highlands of Papua New Guinea. In the process of language analysis, we noticed a strong correlation of the findings from both Pidgin and Melpa. A similar trend was found in two other local languages. We suspect the same will be true of the other Melanesian languages and recommend that research be made in that direction.

A phenomenology of Melanesian behaviour can reveal its corresponding philosophy. In other words, where a pattern of behaviour is established, an explanatory rationale can be deduced.

Almost all the examples to be cited come from Papua New Guinea, the findings would seem to apply also to the rest of Melanesia. The whole of philosophy may be grouped into three areas: man, world, and God. Here we shall look for a Melanesian philosophy of man, world, and God. This will be in sketch form as must every pioneering venture.

II. Philosophy of man

This section will discuss the Melanesian as individual, as thinker, and as social being.

The Melanesian as individual

The word *bel* illustrates how language is a window of the mind. The usages are indicated in the tables. What do the tables reveal? Firstly, while there is no one-to-one ratio between Pidgin and Melpa, they have much in common. The tables show how Pidgin somehow reflects the thinking of Melanesian languages.

Secondly, there are gaps in the Melpa counterpart because Melpa uses other interchangeables. Thus in Table 10⁸ *tingting long bel* is translated as *numan pili napila* (to reflect, think, meditate). Likewise in Table 11 *bel klin* may equally be translated as *kitim kai* or as *numan kai* (sincere). But *wanbel* is *numan tenta* (unity, agreement) and not *kitim tenta*. Likewise *tanim bel* is *numan robotro* (to be converted).

What can be gathered from the above? They indicate that the Melanesian does not compartmentalise his faculties, much unlike some people who separate their emotions from their thinking. The Melanesian thinks holistically. The same can be seen in the word *leva* which is not only physiological (liver, heart, spleen, innards), but also intellectual (mind) and volitional (desire, seat of emotions).

The Melanesian as thinker

How the Melanesian thinks can be deduced again from his language and behaviour. Since Pidgin is a concrete language, abstract English words, for example, have to be translated in a roundabout way. If the language is concrete, how do people reason out? Their usual way is to use metaphors and allegories *tokbokis*.⁹ For instance, ‘you cannot catch two pigs at the same time’ can have varied applications. A man who wanted to prove that having two wives is all right said, ‘I do not steal if I dig sweet potatoes from my own garden.’

While the Westerner thinks in either/or terms, the Melanesian counterpart is both/and.¹⁰ For example, a Westerner may judge things as either dead or alive, but for the Melanesian a particular rock may both be dead and alive.¹¹

Elsewhere we have explained the two approaches to truth: deductive and inductive.¹² Deduction proceeds from abstract premises

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and arrives at concrete conclusions through cold logic; this approach suits the abstract Western mind. The other logical way is to proceed from the concrete and infer the abstract through intuition; the Melanesian thinks in this way.

The Melanesian as social being

The language reveals much of the social philosophy. Whereas the pronoun ‘we’ has only one form in English and other European languages, Pidgin has two forms: *yumi* (inclusive form) and *mipela* (exclusive form). Whereas the Western languages stress gender (such as he, she, it in English; *der, die, das* in German; the masculine, feminine and neuter nouns in romance languages), Pidgin has no concern for gender. He, she, and it are rendered as *em* (although *en* can only be for neuter). The language of greetings can also be revealing. Whereas a simple ‘Good afternoon’ in English will suffice, Pidgin will specify the addressee (that is, if they be two, three, or four): *apinun tupela/ tripela/ fopela*.

The social concern is also reflected in Melpa. ‘Hello’ in Melpa (which literally means ‘you are coming’) is *wuyo* for one person, *wilo* for two persons, and *wuyo* for three or more persons encountered on the way. Likewise, ‘goodbye’ (which literally again is ‘you are going’) is *piyo* for one person, *pilo* for two, and *puyo* for three or more persons.

Kinship terms also disclose the social thinking. *Papa* and *mama* can mean any elder of one’s tribe and not necessarily one’s biological parents. Every member of one’s age level is called *brata* (brother) or *susa* (sister).

What do the foregoing linguistic data indicate? They show that the Melanesian is group-conscious and not individualistic. More of this can be seen in the *wantok* system. Since Melanesian society is evolving, let us trace the phenomenology of the *wantok* system from the traditional to the modern context. In traditional Melanesian society, one’s identity was tied up with the tribe. This is so deeply rooted that even expatriates are asked about their tribal affiliation. The tribe is the source of one’s protection and life in general. That

explains why people give money for bride-price, contribute food for funerals, and offer their lives in tribal fights. Compensation for accidents also takes a tribal perspective. If one member is hurt, the whole tribe is involved. Melanesians support their aged parents, divorced sisters, *etc.*, as a matter of duty. We shall not dwell here upon leadership which is egalitarian, unlike the hierarchical or pyramidal style of the Polynesians.¹³

If the Melanesian leaves his place and goes to another surrounding, he will not forget his tribe-oriented behaviour and thinking, but will form or join another tribe known as *wantok* where he retains a similar network of social relationships.¹⁴ 'In a limited sense, *wantoks* are people who have a common language, while in a broader sense, *wantoks* are people who understand and support each other.'¹⁵ Thus, if a highlander goes to Port Moresby, all highlanders, including those from enemy tribes back home, become his *wantoks*. In urban areas, settlements are often based on geographic origins. That means that there are areas for coastal migrants, for highlanders, and for those from the islands.

When Melanesians go abroad they also form a *wantok* system, but based on a national system. If a stranger meets an accident in a town, all the people of his province in that town will help him. This behaviour would be impossible in the West. University students in Lae and in Port Moresby group themselves into regional alliances. The new 'tribe' functions in a manner similar to those in a traditional setting, that is, for protection, for revenge in case of harm sustained by any member, for seeking of compensation, *etc.* Whereas the Simbu and the Hagen students may be enemies back home, they form one 'tribe' with other highlanders on the university campus.

The core of Melanesian social philosophy is reciprocity as expressed in brotherhood and harmony.¹⁶ This is seen, for instance, in the bride-price exchange among the highlanders or in the bride exchange among the lowlanders. This is also seen in the ending of hostilities where both warring tribes become friends again through the exchange of pigs and other valuables.

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An example of this exchange may be seen in the decision made by a village court which reflects traditional thinking. Two men broke into the house of a male catechist and stole his valuables. The catechist found the thieves and hurt them in a fight. The village court decided that the thieves pay 200 kina to the catechist for stealing. But the latter was to pay 140 kina for hurting the thieves.

Reciprocity has always been pragmatic. Even the big man who throws a party expects his guests to give him status. According to Narokobi, ‘cooperation and mutual support, especially in times of need and crisis are part of our living experience. Confrontation and competition are kept to a minimum.’¹⁷

Is individualism absent in this social philosophy? In the traditional setting a child may disobey his parents, but when the community or the tribe is at stake, the child has to toe the line. A member will offer his life in the case of a tribal fight; this is unthinkable for the Westerner. We do not deny that some form of individualism is creeping in because of modernisation. For the typical Melanesian, however, the good of the group takes precedence over himself.

III. Philosophy of the world

In this section we shall discuss time, space, property, and law.

Time

“PNG time” has the derogatory meaning of being tardy by about one hour. But being unpunctual is symptomatic of a different philosophy of time, as can be gleaned from the language and behaviour.

Western languages usually have many tenses. The present tense in English, for example, has the simple present, present perfect, and present progressive. If the past, present, and the future tenses are multiplied with their three corresponding forms, the total is nine! But this “excess” of tenses is absent in Pidgin. According to Michalic, ‘verbs have no real tense forms in Melanesian Pidgin. Time relations outside of the present are expressed with the help of ad-

verbal modifiers.¹⁸ Thus 'I am reading' may be translated as *mi stap rit* or *mi rit i stap* or *mi rit nau* or *mi wok long rit*.¹⁹

Nau is much broader than the English 'now' because the former can also mean 'today.' Suppose one asks, *em bai kam long wanem taim?* (What time will he come?), the answer from a Melanesian can be *nau tasol* (right now). The European who is used to his restricted meaning of now may have the frustration of waiting for hours or the whole day.

In the Simbu language the equivalent of 'yesterday' can mean 'tomorrow', but also can mean 'yesterday.' The Simbu language is more concerned about whether or not a particular action is finished than about tense.²⁰ The same is true among the Mogeis, a Melpa-speaking tribe of the Western Highlands.

Natives distinguish two kinds of verbal action, complete and incomplete. Both are indefinite, in the sense that in the verb form itself, the idea of time is not indicated, or the time element can be understood from the context itself.²¹

Thus *na punt* can variously mean 'I am going', 'I went', or 'I shall go'. Time has to be specified by other markers like *na agup punt* (I am going now).

The Melanesian speaks more of time in relation between himself and the world. A few examples: *taim bilong dai* (at the hour of death), *taim bilong drainwara* (at ebb tide, at low tide), *taim bilong kaikai* (meal-time), *taim bilong pait* (wartime). The Melanesian uses *taim* with the weather and the seasons such as *taim bilong ren* (rainy season), *taim bilong hangre* (season of hunger), *taim bilong san* (dry season), *taim nogut* (bad weather), *mit tambu taim* (lent), etc. *Taim* can also mean 'when', 'while', 'then.'

How the Melanesian behaves also reflects his time orientation. It is common knowledge that Melanesians in general do not know their age or their birthdays. Keeping historical records has not as yet generally occurred. But people in Kundiawa (Simbu Province) are reported to reckon events as *bifo long Jumbo o bibain long Jumbo* (before Jumbo or after Jumbo).²² Jumbo was the first elephant they saw in 1973. This significant event was their point of time reference. When the sick woman in the Western Highlands was asked about the date

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of her last confession, she replied: ‘That was when our communion minister was still alive.’ Although some Melanesians may sport cheap quartz watches in rural areas, they may still be late because the wristwatches may serve more as decorations than as timepieces.

What then is the Melanesian philosophy of time? Time may be viewed either as cosmic or as human.²³ Cosmic time stresses time as linear, that is, as either past, present, or future. This is peculiar to Western languages with their emphasis on the tenses. Western languages may be linear or tense-oriented as an effect of the four seasons. The winter season forces people to store food in summer and autumn when it is plentiful. But this future concern is not needed in Melanesia where it is spring and summer throughout the year. They would resemble more the southern Europeans (such as lower Germany, lower Spain, or lower Italy) who differ temperamentally from their northern counterparts.

The Melanesian is more inclined to measure time with himself as the reference. In the examples given above, events are measured according to their relevance to the individual and to his group. Events still remembered belong to the ‘living memory time’ and those earlier belong to ‘ancestral time’ (*taim bilong ol tumbuna*).²⁴

The latter stores the people’s values and mores and is also the focus of myths and the superhuman. Time for the Melanesian is not an absolute because his community takes centre stage. What has meaning to him and to his community has relevance in time; what is outside man is in chaos. Time then, insofar as it has meaning to the Melanesian, is relational.

Linear time, which is oriented to the clock and the calendar must be adjusted to by those working in offices and factories, as well as children who attend school, because of the inroads of urbanisation. But the typical Melanesian will be more prone to human, than to linear, time.

Space

Space and time go together. If the Melanesian philosophy of time is different from the Western concept, so is its idea of space. Here language again is a window for looking at Melanesian thinking. The

Pidgin word *long* is intriguing. European languages as exemplified in English have prepositions like of, in, on, at, to, from, with, about, because of, and during. All these words are rendered as *long* in Pidgin.²⁵ Furthermore, *long* is used with indirect objects, e.g., *givim kaikai long mi* (give me food). It is also used with adverbs and in adverbial phrases, e.g., *antap long* (on top of), *bihain long mi* (behind me), *kelostu long mi* (near me). The above linguistic clue suggests that space is linear for the Western mind, but nonlinear for the Melanesian.

Space for the Melanesian is not abstract, but concrete and personal. For him land is demarcated by trees and rivers, not by some imaginary line crossing the land. He also thinks that not all space is equal because he believes that spirits occupy some places. On the other hand, space for the Westerner is abstract, a boundless extension and infinitely divisible. The equator, latitudes and longitudes are examples of imaginary lines dividing abstract space.

Like time, the Melanesian looks at space from his sense of meaning according to which space is significant insofar as it concerns his community or group. What stands outside human relevance is non-space.

Property

The philosophy of private property stems from its corresponding social philosophy. If the social philosophy enshrines the individual, this has its implications. ‘The Western concept of private property can be traced back to the Roman juridical concept of absolute ownership whereby the owner has the absolute right to use, abuse or not to use his property without any obligation to society.’²⁶ But the Melanesian philosophy of being, centered on community, situates the individual in the context of his community so that property takes a communal dimension.

Traditionally, the great man shared his wealth with others. The more receivables he had, the more he was considered rich, although his house may not look different from that of his neighbours. If a person did not share his goods there were mechanisms (such as adverse comments and ostracism) to make him toe the line. But the advent of modernisation has protected selfishness. A famous New

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Guinea politician who died in office was discovered to have fortunes deposited in foreign banks.

The coming of Western culture also introduced the concept of private property. Melanesia has become a battleground between the concept of property as absolute and the concept of communal ownership where the owner is only a steward.²⁷ This conflict is better understood when placed in the context of legal philosophy.

Law

Lo (the Pidgin for law) has a wider connotation than its English counterpart. The dictionary defines law in its political sense as a rule of conduct or action prescribed by the supreme governing authority and enforced by a sanction, as any edict, decree, order, ordinance, statute, judicial decision, *etc.* However, *lo* has a broader meaning because it can mean not only *lo bilong gavman* (the law of the government), but also *lo bilong ol kanaka* (custom). According to a study, *lo* ‘expresses and establishes religious, social and legal links within a group, over against other groups or in connection with ancestors and deities.’²⁸ Hence *lo* can be applied validly to activities ranging from etiquette (such as giving a betel nut to another person), to religious rituals, or to legal obligations between spouses and relatives.

Lo furthermore implies a mutual relationship between two parties to act reciprocally. The other side of the agreement may include not only the living, but even ancestors and deities who ‘are called upon to safeguard the fulfillment of the *lo* even if they are not directly involved.’²⁹ Even if there may be no original Melanesian word for law, it can be translated as the ‘way of life’.³⁰ In short, *lo* ‘could be described as a system of religious, social and legal reciprocity.’³¹

Since the law concerns the relationship between two parties, the rights and duties of both parties come into play. It can also apply to the same person. For example, the right to marry also implies the duty of the person to support his family. Where the social philosophy enshrines the individual, human rights may be extolled as

something absolute, but in the context of Melanesian social philosophy where the individual is a part of a group, the duty overshadows rights.

Western laws are like geometric principles which are to be applied to concrete situations. But since Melanesian logic is concrete and proceeds inductively, the law is also concrete and, in particular, interpersonal. Since harmony is one important mark of social philosophy, disagreements are often settled by some form of mutual compensation, which gives the semblance of having no winners. According to Narokobi, 'there is a notion of winning and losing in the legal system that we inherited... But the original Melanesian idea is of a no-win, no-lose justice.'³²

Double standard justice seems to be a problem, at least as seen by an outsider. For example, if a great man and a commoner commit rape, the latter may be fined heavily but the former is not. But Mantovani claims that the case may not be double-standard in Melanesia:

The big-man acquires his status through continual proof of his assistance to the community; his position is the acknowledgement by the members of the community of his great services to it. The lesser mortal is just that because the community has not experienced much help from such a person. He or she is useless . . . The big-man has a very positive credit, so his harm is balanced by the good he keeps doing. The ordinary villager, on the other hand, harms the community without any hope of making good the damage he has done, and so is made to pay for his debt. There are not two standards, but only one: the well being of the community, and it is for that community to draw appropriate lines.³³

Papua New Guinea (and perhaps the other Melanesian countries) have two legal systems: the traditional and the imported. The traditional legal philosophy is gradually being eroded by the system imposed by the colonial masters. The village courts still follow the spirit of the Melanesian legal philosophy but the higher courts follow the system imposed by Australia which, in turn, was copied from England. So, the local magistrates of the higher courts put on wigs, shirts, and shoes and follow the mentality of Western courts. But the village court judges go barefoot and follow the wisdom of

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their Melanesian ancestors. Those who lose in the lower courts appeal to the higher courts which often overturn the decision of the former. Thus Bernard Narokobi, who was chairman of the Law Reform Commission of Papua New Guinea, as well as a constitutional planner, decided cases according to Melanesian law. But some of them have been ‘overruled by the supreme court.’³⁴

Egoism existed before colonial times but was not protected by tradition. But now Westernised law protects egoism. The rich and the powerful have the law to protect their selfish interests. The law becomes a tool of the few to the detriment of the majority, as happened also in the Philippines.³⁵ John Momis³⁶ has made decisive contributions in giving a Melanesian flavour to the PNG constitution, but he has enemies who want to bend the constitution to their selfish motives.

The Independent State of Papua New Guinea promotes greed and selfishness . . . We cannot talk about equitable distribution or sharing unless we take control of these mechanisms and reshape them to achieve the goals of our nation’s founding fathers.³⁷

Most of the Melanesian countries have just gained their independence. But they also inherited a legal system based on Western legal philosophy. As mentioned above, the system is biased to protect the powerful rich and will therefore hurt nation-building. Unless some enlightened leaders forget their vested interests and lead reforms according to Melanesian thinking, the future looks dark. But while the new countries are still malleable, there is still hope for reform.

IV. Philosophy of the unseen world

This section will deal with the Melanesian view of the world and with ethics.

Holistic worldview

We have seen that the Melanesian as individual does not dichotomise his faculties, but sees himself as a whole person. The same is true of the Melanesian worldview. All writers agree that the Melane-

sian does not have a dualistic concept of the other world. His Western counterpart thinks of reality as either profane or sacred, physical or spiritual, dead or alive. This distinction does not hold with the Melanesian who holds everything as integral.

Religion is not separate in life. The Melanesian's ultimate concern is life in its material, biological, and spiritual aspects and as it permeates everything. A shorter word for this is biocosmic. Salvation then for the Melanesian is also integral, as in the biblical term for peace (*sbalom*). The all-comprising term in Pidgin is *gutpela sindaun*.³⁸

It means fulfillment in every aspect of life, be it health, success, fertility, respect, honour, or influence over others. Ultimately it is the absence of such negative forces in life as sickness, death, defeat, infertility, contempt, or poverty.³⁹

Connected with *gutpela sindaun* is *pawa* (power) or *strong* (strength) which is concerned with getting results. Since the Melanesian is pragmatic and a concrete thinker, he is concerned about attaining his *gutpela sindaun*. Therefore, he is not interested in what is profane and what is sacred; he is concerned with power and what is powerless. Power is not the same as holy. There are Melanesian words connected with power such as what places are to be avoided. A place is 'powerful' because it may house a special stone. Not everyone has access to the place because the stone can kill an unqualified person.

The spirits are important in the biocosmic worldview. Ancestors (both historical and mythical) and immanent spirits play a major role. One informant said that he always felt the presence of his departed father wherever he went. He felt reminded through ordinary creatures such as a bird or a firefly which appear in unusual places. If the Melanesian forgets his departed elders he becomes sick: sicknesses often are attributed to forgetting the departed. Hence the social philosophy of being in community applies not only to the visible but also to the invisible.

The Melanesian vision sees the human person in his totality with the spirit world, as well as the animal and plant worlds. This human person is not absolute master of the universe, but an important

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component in an interdependent world of person with animal, plant, and spirit.⁴⁰

Ethics

Recent years have witnessed a rethinking of ethics and of moral theology.⁴¹ If morality is based on human nature, there are cultural factors which are not universal and yet affect ethical judgment. One extreme rightist position is that some actions are always evil, while others are always good. The other, leftist, school claims that action are good or bad depending simply upon their results. To avoid both extreme positions, value ranking has been proposed as the basis of morality. We have already dealt with this matter elsewhere, and no elaboration is needed here.

Since Melanesia is in a state of change, its traditional values seemingly have been shaken. Traditional, Christian, and secular values have been competing in society.⁴² As we have seen in the *wantok* system for example, there is change but at the same time cultural continuity.

In the Melanesian value ranking the foremost value is life.⁴³ As mentioned earlier, life is understood here in the context of *gutpela sindaun*, that is, in harmonious relationship with the community, with the ancestors, with the environment. In short, life is experienced as communal and cosmic. The second value is the community which includes the living and the departed. Third is the value of relationships (to one's community and other communities, to the ancestors, and to the whole environment). Fourth is the value of exchange which symbolises relationships.

Mantovani gives as an example of applied value ranking that, in traditional Simbu society, a twin baby was killed because the mother could not breast-feed two babies for the prescribed three years. Furthermore, malnutrition also existed and the rate of infant mortality is high. If it is hard for a single baby to survive in the bush, it is harder for two. 'Experience has taught society that both will slowly starve or die of some illness, and that by cutting the milk from one, the other has at least a 60 per cent chance of survival.'⁴⁴

Another example is that of double standard which was explained above. In Melanesian society stealing in secret is traditionally all right; it becomes bad only when the thief's identity is known. This is so because in an area where property is communal, the value of relationship (which was broken by theft) is more important than the value of property.

Value ranking has to be more clarified as society changes. Thus, if better health comes to the community, the value of life may be translated in the case mentioned above as a shift from infanticide to family planning.

V. Conclusion

The foregoing has been a sketch of Melanesian philosophy. An important characteristic is its philosophy of 'being with' which colours the various aspects of Melanesian thought. As such Melanesian and Filipino philosophy have many things in common. However, this is not the place to point out the differences.

Since philosophical categories are important for theologising, Melanesian philosophy becomes a tool enabling the development of a Melanesian theology. The following are some areas where the categories may apply. Its social philosophy enables the Melanesian to understand more clearly the Mystical Body of Christ, that the departed and the present form one living reality as the Communion of Saints. Salvation as a holistic *gutpela sindaun*, together with the philosophy of time, points to realised eschatology. Likewise, the concrete Melanesian thinking may be applied to the theology of signs. Melanesian philosophy may also be applied to other fields. For example, it may help to rethink the reform of the colonial legal system in Melanesia.

It is not claimed that this analysis is final. Like the other social sciences, the findings of this philosophical study must remain tentative until disproven by more convincing data.

Notes

- 1 Marie de Lepervanche, 'Social Structure', in *Anthropology in Papua New Guinea*, ed. Ian Hogbin (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1973), 1-60.
- 2 Bernard Narokobi (1943-2010) was a prominent Papua New Guinean politician, legal reformer, philosopher, and Catholic who famously coined the concept of 'Melanesian Way'.
- 3 Bernard Narokobi, *The Melanesian Way*, rev. ed. (Boroko, PNG: Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, 1983).
- 4 Frank Mihalic, *The Jacaranda Dictionary and Grammar of Melanesian Pidgin* (Milton, Queensland: The Jacaranda Press, 1971), 10.
- 5 Leonardo N. Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy* (Tacloban City: Divine Word University Publications, 1974).
- 6 Narokobi, *The Melanesian Way*, 185.
- 7 Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy*, 3-48.
- 8 Tables 10 and 11 are not reproduced in this excerpt and are available in the original text. See Leonardo N. Mercado, *The Filipino Mind: Philippine Philosophical Studies II* (Washington, D.C.: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1994).
- 9 *Tokbokis*: a Pidgin word for 'parable' or 'secret language'.
- 10 See Leonardo N. Mercado, 'On snow and the Filipino mind', in *Synkrētic*, №1 (Feb. 2022): 99-102.
- 11 Darell Whiteman, 'Melanesian Religions: An Overview', in *An Introduction to Melanesian Religions*, ed. Ennio Mantovani (Goroka: The Melanesian Institute, 1984), 93.
- 12 Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy*, 82-89.
- 13 M. John Paul Chao, 'Leadership', in *An Introduction to Melanesian Cultures*, ed. Darrell L. Whiteman (Goroka: The Melanesian Institute, 1984), 127.
- 14 Brian Schwarz, 'Urbanisation', in *An Introduction to Melanesian Cultures*, 238-240.
- 15 Mary McDonald, 'Melanesian Communities: Past and Present', in *An Introduction to Melanesian Cultures*, 221.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 217.
- 17 Narokobi, *The Melanesian Way*, 13.
- 18 Mihalic, *The Jacaranda Dictionary*, 28.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 29.
- 20 Mantovani, personal communication, 8 February 1988.
- 21 William Ross, 'Grammar of the Moge Language' (typescript, n.d.), 29.
- 22 David Vincent, personal communication, 8 February 1988.
- 23 Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy*, 111-115.

- 24 Kev Hovey, 'Towards Effective Ministry in Endemic Cargo Areas', in *Religious Movements in Melanesia Today* (2), ed. Wendy Flannery (Goroka: The Melanesian Institute), 119-121.
- 25 Mihalic, *The Jacaranda Dictionary*, 123.
- 26 Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy*, 145.
- 27 Bernard Narokobi, 'The Old and the New', in *Ethics and Development in Papua New Guinea*, ed. Gernot Fugmann (Goroka: The Melanesian Institute, 1986), 10-14.
- 28 Gernot Fugman, 'Salvation Expressed in a Melanesian Context', in *Christ in Melanesia* (Goroka: The Melanesian Institute, 1977), 124.
- 29 *Loc. cit.*
- 30 Narokobi, 'The Old and the New', 7.
- 31 Gernot Fugmann, 'Salvation in Melanesian Religions', in *An Introduction to Melanesian Religions*, 287.
- 32 Narokobi, 'The Old and the New', 8.
- 33 Mantovani, 'Traditional Values and Ethics', 207-208.
- 34 Narokobi, 'The Old and the New', 15.
- 35 Leonardo N. Mercado, *Legal Philosophy: Western, Eastern, and Filipino* (Tacloban City: Divine Word University Publications, 1984).
- 36 *John Momis*: a former Catholic priest and politician who drafted Papua New Guinea's constitution from 1972 to 1975 and who became President of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville from 2010 to 2020.
- 37 Narokobi, 'The Old and the New', 15.
- 38 See George Mombi, 'The Melanesian concept of *gutpela sindaun*', in *Synkretic*, №1 (Feb. 2022): 34-45.
- 39 Fugmann, 'Salvation in Melanesian Religions', 282.
- 40 Narokobi, *The Melanesian Way*, 6.
- 41 Leonardo N. Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Ethics* (Tacloban City: Divine Word University Publications, 1979), 13-43.
- 42 Garry Trompf, 'Competing Value-Orientations in Papua New Guinea', in *Ethics and Development in Papua New Guinea*, 17-34; William Edoni, 'The Confrontation of Traditional and Christian Values in Papua New Guinea', *Ibid.*, 35-42. In both articles the authors mean Christian values as espoused by the imported westernised Christianity. But if Christianity is to be inculturated, there will be no great conflict between Christian and traditional values.
- 43 Mantovani, 'Traditional Values and Ethics'.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 209.