

CHAPTER X

**BAHALANA: A PHILOSOPHICAL
ANALYSIS¹**

ROLANDO M. GRIPALDO

This article tries to clarify the various senses of the term “Bahala na” in Filipino usage. It attempts to show that the term has many senses but the primary one is to leave one’s life—or anything—in the care of God. The paper explores the various types of determinism and points out the types which entail the “Bahala na” fatalistic attitude. Finally, the work shows that “Bahala na” as a cultural value is ambivalent in that it can be applied in various situations responsibly or irresponsibly. The author contends that it is best for Philippine society if Filipinos themselves can avoid using “Bahala na” irresponsibly.

INTRODUCTION

Bahala na is a Filipino cultural trait² which is situationally-based, that is to say, its meaning can best be understood in a situational setting. The word “*Bahala*” is believed to have been derived from the word “*Bathala*,” which in the Tagalog language literally means God³ (Bostrom 1968:401). Thus “*Bahala na*,” as a linguistic expression, signifies leaving something or someone in the care of God. In time this expression has become a philosophy of life, a cultural trait that has strongly developed into a significant core of Filipino attitudes.

I find it interesting and theoretically surprising that the Internet provides a wealth of information about the *Bahala na* subject. The Google search engine yields some 3,710 entries as of 6 December 2001 and gives us 100 pages of 1,000 selected entries on this subject. The phrase is so popular that we find a *Bahala Na* martial arts (Arnis) association (with many branches) based in the United States, a *Bahala Na* gang, a Japanese *Bahala Na* sports team, a *Bahala Na* veterans organization, some *Bahala Na* songs, a *Bahala Na* movie, some *Bahala*

Na messages in German, Japanese, and other languages, etc. (see Google+Search 2001: *Bahala Na*).⁴

The books and articles which directly discuss “*Bahala na*” are meager. There is one book by Jose de Mesa (1979: 1-206) which discusses *Bahala na* and providence, and one article by Alfredo Lagmay (1977: 120-30), which discusses some psychological situations that invoke the “*Bahala na*” expression, but they do not really zero in on the different meanings of the phrase from the philosophical point of view. All other discussions in books treat this phrase only lightly or in passing (see Singson 1979: 196-99; Guthrie 1968: 68-69; Cruz 1977: 8-11; Church and Katigbak 2000: 6).

This paper identifies the various situations in which the expression is used, that is, the various senses or meanings associated with it. It also determines the metaphysical underpinning of the primary sense of this term and enumerates the practical and impractical applications of this expression, i.e., its ambivalence in terms of value.

THE MEANING OF “*BAHALA NA*”

Situations have boundaries but they are not clear-cut. These boundaries are fluid and they interpenetrate one another. In the stream of consciousness, the transitional boundaries of one idea to another, one feeling to another, one decision making to another, and so on, are overlapping. We can, however, abstract from these fluid situations a rational construct of a particular situation and identify its components.

I have identified six of these different senses of “*Bahala na*,” from the Internet entries and from discussions with other people, although two of these are clearly derivatives in that the word “*na*” can be missing.

First Meaning

Of the 1,000 entries from the Internet, the first meaning of “*Bahala na*” that I was able to extract is “Come/Happen what may” or “Whatever will be will be.” Let us analyze a song composed by Heber Bartolome (2001) entitled “*Bahala Na*.” (The translation into English on the right column.)⁵

The song captures the *Bahala na* attitude of the Filipino. A Filipina worker goes abroad to seek greener pastures and hopes she will be fortunate in her work, that is, without adversities (see Lagmay 1977: 121). There is so much uncertainty in working abroad

Bahala Na by Heber Bartolome

Bahala na
Yan ang sabi ng isang Filipina
Bago siya nagpaalam papunta
sa bansang iba
Ang sabi nya—*Bahala na...*
Bahala na

Mga ariarian ay naisanla
Milyon-milyong katulad nyang
mga manggagawa
Hangad nila'y—guminhawa
Guminhawa

Koro:
Bahala nang pamilya kong
maiwan sa bayan ko
Mabubuhay naman sila,
hanggang sa unang sweldo ko
Bahala na... Bahala na...
Bahala na...

(Instrumental)

Koda:
Dakilang Maylikha, ako'y
nagdarasal sa 'yo
Bahala na kayong
pumatnubay sa biyahe ko
Ang tanging nais ko'y buhayin
ang pamilya ko
Bahala na kayo sa
manggagawang katulad ko

Baka naman sakaling
swertihin ako
Sariling buhay at lakas na
syang puhunan ko
Iaalay sa bayan ko
Bahala na.

(Ulitin ang Koro)

(Instrumental)

[Whatever will be will be.
That's what a Filipina says
Before saying goodbye
in going abroad
She says: Whatever will be will be,
whatever will be will be.

All the property is pawned
Millions of workers
like her
Wish to live comfortably
To live comfortably

Chorus:
The family I leave behind will
have to take care of themselves
They will survive
until my first salary
Come what may... come what may...
come what may...

(Instrumental)

Coda:
Great God, I am
praying to you
I leave it to you
to guide my journey
My only desire is the [comfortable]
survival of my family
I leave it to you to take care
of workers like me.

I hope
I will be fortunate
My own life and strength
which are my capital
I will offer to my homeland
Whatever will be will be.

(Repeat the Chorus)

(Instrumental)]

considering the fact that (1) the contract signed in the native country may not be honored or may be replaced by another contract when she arrives at the workplace; (2) the salary may be delayed and cause anguish to the family left behind; (3) the prospective employer may be inconsiderate or too strict; (4) the employer may sexually abuse the worker; or (5) the spouse left behind may become unfaithful. She hopes: “Baka naman sakaling swertihin ako” (“I hope I will be fortunate”). If she is unfortunate, the pawned property will not be recovered and the family will not live comfortably.

Plagued by these uncertainties, the worker is not sure as to the outcome of her going abroad to work. She leaves to God whatever may become of her and her family. She leaves to God her fate. God will guide and take care of her and her family. Such attitude gives her, at least temporarily, peace of mind.

The situation may be summarized thus: “I am going to a foreign land to work, but the outcome of my undertaking is uncertain, so *Bahala na*.” To elaborate, “Whatever will be, will be,” in this context, means “I will leave everything to God; He will take care of me. It is up to Him. I am ready to face the consequences of working abroad.”

Second Meaning

The variations in the second meaning pertain to the performer of the action. It can be in the third person singular (s/he, him/her) or plural (they, them), in the second person (you), or in the first person singular (I, me) or plural (we, us). The second meaning thus says: “It is up to the person(s) [him/her, us, me, you, them] to take care of things. The person(s) [s/he, they, we, I] will take care of the situation.” An example is: “...*Bahala na* kayo kay Inay. Pamimisahan ko na lang siya dito. Balitaan niyo na lang ako pagkatapos ng libing...” [“Take care of my mother. I will have a Mass for her here. Just send me news about her burial later.”] (Local Jokes 2001a). Vilma Santos, in this connection, is quoted to have said, “*Bahala na* nga lang ang mga kritiko ang humusga sa naging acting ko” [“I will just leave to the critics the judgment on my acting”] (Pinoy Central 2000). We often hear something like this among friends: “Pumunta kayo sa party. Huwag kayong magdala ng anuman. *Bahala na* ako sa pulutan at inuman.” [“Please go to the party. Do not bring anything. I will take care of the food and the drinks.”] The more common expressions are: “Sila na ang bahala,” “*Bahala na* kayo,” or “Ako na ang bahala.” The purpose

of the *bahala na* expression in this context is to dissipate any possible worry.

Third Meaning

The third usage of the term “*bahala na*” pertains to a situation where the person is left to do what he wants but must be prepared to face the consequences. An example is: “Bahala ka na diyan. Sarili mong problema iyan.” [“It’s up to you. It’s your own problem.”] (Ekonomiya 2001). Sometimes the “na” is missing: “...bahala ka, umalis ka kung gusto mo! Ganyan ka naman, eh!” [“Do what you want; you leave if you like! You’re like that anyway.”] (Jacq’s 2001). In this context, *bahala na* means “Do what you want, it’s up to you, but be ready for the consequences.”

In a related context, being ready for the consequences is tantamount to issuing a threat.⁶ “Bahala ka kung aalis ka’t pumunta sa barkada mo, pero...” [“It’s up to you to leave and join your friends [somewhere], but...”]. The “but” here could mean a threat, as in, “...but when you come home you cannot enter the house.”

Fourth Meaning

The fourth situation indicates unmindfulness on the part of the person concerned. It means basically, “Never mind or it does not matter.” This usage is common among Bisayans: “*Bahala na* ug dili perfect ang akong writings as long as this [sic] can be understood” (Ipage 2001). In Tagalog, we say, “Hindi na bale....” The translation of the example into English is: “Never mind if my writings are imperfect as long as they can be understood.”

Fifth Meaning

The fifth situation is to tolerate the person or allow him/her to do what s/he wants by just leaving him/her alone. An example is: “*Bahala na* siya; pabayaan mo na lang siya sa kanyang ginagawa. Okey lang; pasensiyahan mo na lang siya.” [“Let him/her be; tolerate what s/he is doing. It’s okay. Just be patient with him/her.”] The Internet entry talks about corruption and bewails the Filipino attitude towards it: “...because we purportedly LET IT BE (and this must also be our one true weakness: ‘okay lang’ or ‘pabayaan mo na lang’ or ‘*bahala na* siya’ or ‘pasensiya na lang’)” (Messages 2001).

Sixth and Last Meaning

The sixth meaning should portray a situation where a warning is tacitly implied. The meaning is “Go on with it (as a warning) [usually without the ‘na’].” An example from the Internet, which I modified a little to emphasize this sixth meaning is: “Ano na naman and ginawa mo sa Tupperware natin? Bakit mo sinira[an]? Bahala ka, sige. Ikaw ang tumawag na [ordinaryong] plastic [iyan!]” (Local Jokes 2001b). The warning in this context is that if the person continues doing what s/he does, then they will lose their market. The English translation is: “What have you done again to our Tupperware? Why did you disparage it? Go on with what you are doing! It’s you who call it an ordinary plastic.”

The Meaning

It has been mentioned earlier that two of the senses of “*Bahala na*” are clearly derivatives, i.e., the third and sixth meanings, since the “na” can be missing. It would seem, however, that the other three meanings or senses are likewise derivatives from the first sense because, etymologically speaking, the meaning of “*Bahala*” comes from “*Bathala*,” which literally means “God.” In other words, the primary sense or the meaning of the phrase “*Bahala na*” is the first one: “Come what may. It is up to God.”

THE ANALYSIS

Metaphysical Underpinning

When one invokes “*Bahala na*,” there is always a philosophical worldview that is presupposed. This worldview is Fatalism. The classical meaning of fatalism, the Greek *Moira*, appears distinct from determinism and predestination. Fatalism, unlike predestination, is not “prearranged by a being outside the causal order,” or, unlike determinism, is not necessarily causal in nature. But the current usage of determinism has become so broad that even fatalism, or “cosmic determinism,” and predestination are subsumed by it. Determinism is described broadly as a situation where situational conditions, circumstances, or cosmic set-ups or plans exist such that given them, nothing else could happen. Fate in ancient Greece is “blind, inscrutable, . . . inescapable . . . impersonal, and irrational.” Even the gods were subject to it. Christianity replaced

it with the “doctrine of divine providence,” which is “supremely personal and supra-rational” (Bloesch 2001). The Filipino use of the phrase “*Bahala na*” is fatalistic in the sense that it evokes resignation to the consequences of one’s undertaking, but the intent of the phrase is providential in that it carries the wish or hope that Providence will personally take care of one’s future. This paper uses fatalism to mean providential (i.e., theistic fatalism) as the equivalent sense of the phrase “*Bahala na*.”

The fatalistic worldview in the sense of “*Bahala na*” (theistic fatalism) can be consistent with, at least, either pantheism, Leibnizian determinism, panentheism, deistic supernaturalism, or theistic circumstantialism.

Pantheism. Pantheism is the belief that “All is God and God is all,” or the “Universe is God and God is the universe.” Held by the Stoics and by Benedict Spinoza, pantheism has a rigid deterministic system. Here everything is willed by God and individual freedom consists in submitting one’s will to the will of God. It is construed as a violation of freedom when one does not accept God’s will and the person, in this case, becomes psychologically disturbed, emotionally unbalanced, and will generally have no peace of mind. Resignation, indifference, or apathy to adverse occurrences in life are considered the highest good. One is free to do what can be done but must be ready to face the consequences of his/her actions.

Leibnizian Determinism. Gottfried von Leibnitz believes that God is all good and all perfect so He decided to create the best of all possible worlds. Hence, nothing in the universe could be different from what it is. In this best world, that is, a universe which has the maximum of perfection, evil is necessary. Human freedom consists in realizing one’s inherent potentialities that were pre-established before birth. Here the person must surmount whatever obstacles may block the realization of his/her potentials. Voltaire (1946), in his book *Candide*, had the optimist Dr. Pangloss remark “this world is the best of all possible worlds” whenever he met adversities in life. In other words, one is free to do what can be done, as it is in pantheism, but must be resigned to God’s purpose which lurks behind the adversities that one encounters in life.

Panentheism. Panentheism is the belief that God is everywhere immanent in the universe but, unlike pantheism, is distinct from the universe. Here God maintains order in the universe. He serves like a traffic policeman who maintains order on the streets. There is Creativity going on in the universe where chance and individual freedom are

possible. Again, in this metaphysical system, man is free to do what can be done but must be ready to face the consequences of his actions. It is said in this type of worldview that God is man's fellow traveler in that He is with him in his journey, in his joys and travails in life.

Deistic Supernaturalism. Deistic Supernaturalism is the belief that God created the universe with all its scientific laws—biological, chemical, physical, etc. But once in a while, God suspends the laws of nature to perform a miracle. It allows individual human freedom and is consistent with Predetermination/Predestination but God's Foreknowledge does not cause the individual human choice. I may know, for example, that Efren "Bata" Reyes, a world champion in billiards, will hit the red ball at the center to have it roll to the side pouch but my knowledge of it does not cause him to do so. He will do what he must, or through his own free will.

Deistic Supernaturalism does not also lend to Physical or Scientific Determinism because human actions (in terms of behavioral or sociological laws) are statistical in nature and not rigidly causal as in natural laws. Human actions, from a general vantage point of view, behave, as described in fuzzy logic, in a chaotic, random, or disorderly fashion; however, there is a certain statistical uniformity in them that can be expressed in a mathematical formula.

Theistic Circumstantialism. Circumstantialism (see Gripaldo 1977: 1-144) is of two kinds: theistic and atheistic. Both may invoke fatalism after an exhaustive deliberation and decision-making, i.e., when fatalistic conditions are emergent. In the atheistic sense, the circumstantialist invokes cosmic determinism or the paganistic conception of "*Bahala na*." In the theistic sense, s/he invokes providential fatalism or the theistic conception of "*Bahala na*."

Fatalism and Determinism. Fatalism is closely related to determinism. Not all types, however, of determinism entail or imply fatalism. To reiterate, fatalism is "the acceptance of all things and events as inevitable; submission to fate" (Random House *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* 2001). Later, Fate was replaced with the doctrine of divine providence such that "*Bahala na*" is a fatalistic attitude whose intent is basically providential. Determinism, on the other hand, states that "for everything that ever happens there are conditions [causal, situational, cosmic, etc.] such that, given them, nothing else could happen" (see Taylor 1967: 359; Gripaldo 1977: 111-12).

It is, I think, necessary to discuss the types of determinism in relation to fatalism as providential "*Bahala na*" (see Fitelson 1999). There are six standard types of determinism which I will discuss here.

Types of Determinism

Ethical Determinism. Ethical determinism argues that “since every person chooses what seems good to him/her, then his/her voluntary actions are determined by this, if by nothing else.” Plato, for instance, says that one’s action is determined by what appears good to him/her. No one voluntarily chooses what is bad. Although Aristotle disagrees in that one who knows something bad for his/her health, as in smoking (at present there is the television warning that smoking is bad to one’s health), may still continue doing it. At any rate, determinism in the ethical sense does not appear to entail fatalism.

Psychological Determinism. There are two kinds of psychological determinism. The first argues that “human action is caused by an act of will, a motive, or some mental event.” This means that there is always a causal explanation or a reason for a human action. Some philosophers believe that reasons are causes of action. In this regard, rational explanations are causal explanations.

A distinction is made between a human behavior and a human action. The latter, unlike the former, is intentional. One has a reason for doing things. If Pedro wipes the glass wall of Jollibee and all of a sudden it breaks, the manager may shout, “Why did you break the glass?” And Pedro may reply, “I did not break the glass. It broke.” Or Jose is walking on the sidewalk when all of a sudden he hits the sidewalk floor. A bystander asks, “Why did you fall?” And Jose responds, “I did not fall. I slipped.” Psychological determinism does not imply fatalism.

The second type of psychological determinism is behaviorism or operant conditioning. It holds that the individual is conditioned to act in certain ways by his environment as s/he operates or interacts with it within the general framework of stimulus and response and the pleasure principle. B. F. Skinner (1971) believes that a technology of behavior, as in *Walden two*, can be formulated as to condition a community of people to be happy. Psychological determinism as operant conditioning does not appear to entail fatalism.

It is worthy to mention one major objection to behaviorism. The philosophy of cognitive science (Thagard 1996) tries to subvert the general S-R model by emphasizing the element of freedom that takes place in the person’s head or mind in terms of mental representations (such as rules, concepts, images, analogies, logical constatives⁷) and mental procedures (such as deducing, searching, matching, rotating, and retrieving). Even in the recent cognitive neural science or in the shift to the neuron-to-synapse-to-brain-state connectionism, the person

is assumed to be able to project a behavior that is not in keeping with his/her apparent intentions by, for example, lying or pretending.

Logical Determinism. Logical determinism maintains that “If the statement [here conceived as having no third value except true and false] ‘Juan will get rich in the year 2025’ is true, then it is true by 2025.” In appearance, logical determinism entails fatalism. Like the proverbial Juan Tamad, Juan need not work hard because if the statement above is true, then Juan will get rich in the year 2025 whether we like it or not. But this conclusion does not have to be. The precondition of the statement might be that the reason Juan will get rich in 2025 is he continues to work hard till 2025.

The missing premises of the syllogism might be: “Juan works very hard. Juan will continue to work hard till 2025. Therefore, Juan will get rich in 2025.” Construed in this way, this type of determinism does not necessarily entail fatalism (see Kiekeben 2000).

Physical Determinism. Physical determinism says that “everything in nature, including the person himself/herself, behaves in accordance with the unchanging and inviolable laws of nature.” In appearance it seems that physical determinism entails fatalism. If the human constitution and human actions are causally determined by the laws of nature, then there can be no human freedom and fatalism is a matter of course.

There are attempts to subvert this type of determinism. The first is Heisenberg’s Principle of Indeterminacy which argues that in the subatomic level it is difficult to predict both the position and velocity of an electron. One may predict the position of an electron at a given time but not its velocity, or vice versa. There is a quantum jump somewhere and this implies unpredictability. It has implications to ethical decision-making and human freedom. The second comes from the social sciences. I have already mentioned behavioral/sociological laws as statistical in nature which emphasizes group uniformity that allows individual free movements. The third objection comes from the existential and phenomenological experience of human freedom. Not only that a person feels free, but that s/he tries to fill the nothingness between his/her being (present) and his/her becoming as s/he makes himself/herself to be (future). According to Sartre (1968: 568-69), the person is absolute freedom, a project to be realized.

Physical determinism as causal determinism may appear true in the natural sciences, but it does not appear to be so in the social sciences and the humanities. This type of determinism does not therefore necessarily entail fatalism.

Situational Determinism/Circumstantialism. Circumstantialism or Situational Determinism contends that “In any given situation, especially the choosing situation, there are situational conditions (or circumstances) such that given them nothing else could happen.” There are three stages in a rational choosing situation. The first stage is where the alternatives to be chosen are located or in full view at a given time. The second stage is where one starts deliberating and in the process makes up his/her mind. When a decision is made, then the person has chosen an alternative. Then comes the third stage which is the performance of the choice made, that is, the buying, eating, going to the place, etc., of the choice. It is in this context that we say the act of choosing has been fully consummated.

Our primary concern here are the sources of situational conditions: (1) the person’s present environment (where the alternatives are in principle found); (2) the person’s past (through memory where the events or situational conditions that are relevant to the present situation are creatively retrieved); (3) the person’s future (through anticipated consequences of one’s actions/choice); and (4) the person’s physical and mental health. For example, a sick person will generally choose not to go to Hong Kong on a tour.

It is readily noticeable that the chosen action or object, the choice itself, is determined by the situational conditions but it is the person who voluntarily does the choosing act, the deliberation, and the decision-making. One is free to do so. One is not compelled by an authority or by someone else. In short, circumstantialism does not necessarily entail fatalism. But when does it entail fatalism?

Circumstantialism entails fatalism, either theistic or atheistic, when there are uncertainties in the ultimate consequences of one’s choice, when after a thorough deliberation one still remains undecided but is forced to make a choice, when loved ones die unexpectedly, and the like. It is during these situations that one invokes “*Bahala na*” fatalistically.

Theological Determinism. There are, at least, three types of theological determinism: religious, Spinozistic, and Leibnitzian. I will start with the first.

(1) *Religious Determinism.* We can identify at least two kinds of religious determinism. The first is predetermination and the second is predestination. The two terms are sometimes used interchangeably, but they can be distinguished. It is, of course, all right not to distinguish them, but if we wish to do so, then here is the distinction. The first has something to do with the issue of foreknowledge and causality while the second deals with the issue of fatalism and divine providence (see Watson 2001, Ross 2001, Bloesch 2001, and Warfield 1970). There

are necessarily overlappings since the issue of foreknowledge may also come in on the issue of divine providence.

Anyway, regarding predetermination, I have already said that God's foreknowledge is not causal and does not necessarily countervail human freedom. Regarding predestination, or the issue between *Moirai* and Divine Providence, D.G. Bloesch (2001) makes the following contrasts: (a) "Fate is the portentous, impersonal power that thwarts and overrules human freedom" while "Providence liberates the person to fulfill the destiny for which s/he was created." (b) "Fate means abrogation of freedom" while "Providence means the realization of authentic freedom through submission to divine guidance." (c) "Fate is the rule of contingency that casts a pall over all human striving" while "Providence is the direction and support of a loving God." (d) "Fate makes the future precarious and uncertain" while "Providence fills the future with hope." (e) "Fate is impersonal and irrational" while "Providence is supremely personal and supra-rational." Formulated in this way, religious determinism as predetermination and predestination (Divine Providence) does not entail fatalism.

"*Bahala na*" recognizes the precariousness and uncertainty of the future but at the same time hopes that Providence will take care of that future.

(2) *Spinozistic Determinism*. Spinozistic or pantheistic determinism as earlier discussed entails fatalism since God wills everything and since human freedom is in consonance with God's will, then something that runs contrary to the human will must be accepted as God's will and be fatalistically resigned to it, hoping that in the final analysis it is good.

(3) *Leibnitzian Determinism*. Though Leibnitzian determinism is non-pantheistic, it likewise entails fatalism in that human freedom (that is, the freedom to actualize one's potentialities towards perfection) has been predetermined before birth. Someone, like Dr. Pangloss, must be resigned to adversities whose consequences to oneself are objects that need to be ultimately overcome.

"Bahala Na" as a Socio-Cultural and an Individual Value

We may imagine two "*Bahala na*" scenarios. One is Spinozistic and Leibnitzian while the other is pantheistic, deistic supernaturalistic, and circumstantialistic.

First Scenario. In all types of determinism earlier discussed, only the Spinozistic (also stoical) and Leibnitzian types of fatalism directly come into play. In both Spinoza and Leibnitz, human freedom is only

illusory. There is the hovering deterministic scheme of things of which the individual is inevitably a part. The human person acts, decides, and makes choices in situations which appear to be within his/her control. Only when things seemingly do not appear within one's control that s/he leaves them to God.

In Spinoza, a woman, for example, must struggle against a rapist, but if in the process she is still raped, then that must be the will of God, and she must think that in the final analysis what happened to her is ultimately good. She must stoically accept what happened and do what is necessary, such as filing a case against the rapist, if known.

In Leibnitz, being raped is part of the obstacles to be hurdled by a woman in realizing her predetermined destiny which is to actualize her potentialities. She must not allow herself to be deterred by that incident in the pursuit of her dreams. She must stoically accept that incident as God's will for an unknown purpose, and then move on. If she allows herself to be deterred, then she has become unfree since she allows herself to be imprisoned by that incident, and she is paralyzed, as it were, and cannot move on.

Second Scenario. This scenario pertains to the panentheistic, deistic supernaturalistic, and circumstantialistic situations where there is a positive affirmation of human freedom. Phenomenologically and existentially, the person is free to make decisions and choices. S/He feels s/he is not under compulsion, that s/he acts voluntarily or freely. The circumstantialist also believes in this type of human freedom, which is fundamentally Aristotelian, and also in the Sartrean type of human freedom. Jean-Paul Sartre emphasizes the freedom to fulfill oneself in the open future, to fill the void or nothingness between oneself and the project s/he makes his/her being to become.

In "*Bahala na*," in its primary sense, it is only when things or situations go beyond one's deliberative power that the person leaves the situation to God. God helps the person who helps himself/herself, beyond which it is hoped that God will take care of things or the situation. This view is different from a rigid type of deism wherein a person must literally help himself/herself, because God is nowhere to be found: He is an absentee God.

In other words, it is only when things or the situation goes beyond one's control that the person says, "*Bahala na*." It gives him/her a psychological peace of mind and an emotional stability. In this respect, "*Bahala na*" becomes a socio-cultural and at the same time an individual value. For a value is something that a cultural group or a person holds dear because of its reflexive practical consequences.

AMBIVALENCE OF “BAHALA NA”

Ambivalence means the tendency of something (a person or a situation) to go either way in a certain scale. If the scale is ethical, then that something can go either good or bad, depending upon the context or situation.

“*Bahala na*” is a positive value in at least the following situations or circumstances which are beyond one’s control: (1) when calamities or accidents occur despite all precautionary measures; (2) when the death of a loved one takes place in spite of all attempts to let him/her live longer, or in spite of all careful attention made relative to the situation; (3) when the death is sudden or unexpected; (4) when one feels the uncertainties that lie ahead despite making a careful and deliberate choice or decision; and (5) when, in spite of a very extensive deliberative process, one cannot still decide what to choose until finally he picks out a choice indifferently. Here “*Bahala na*” enables one to have the stoic resolve and the attendant peace of mind. As Distor (1997) says, “Held close to the heart, the ‘*bahala na*’ phenomenon becomes a coping mechanism in the face of risky undertakings.”

There is first human responsibility, even in situation (5), before invoking “*Bahala na*.” “*Bahala na*” turns negative, firstly, when one haphazardly deliberates in making a choice. “*Bahala na ang Maykapal diyan*” (“Let God take care of the situation”) or “I’m tired deliberating. I’ll take this one. *Bahala na kung ano ang mangyari*” [literally it means “Never mind what happens, I’ll leave it to God”]. Here one does not exhaust all possibilities to determine the merits or demerits of alternative options before making a choice or a decision. The person is either lazy or simply unmindful of the consequences of his/her choice/decision. In either case, s/he is simply irresponsible.

Secondly, when one indifferently picks out a choice without deliberation. Here there is a refusal to deliberate. The person simply picks out one among the options whimsically or without thinking. Or s/he may toss a coin and let it decide for him/her. “Pag cara pupunta sa party; pag cruz sa bahay na lang” [If heads I’ll go to the party; if tails I’ll stay at home]. Thirdly, when one relies too much on God by not helping himself/herself first (see Lagmay 1977: 121, 124). “Hindi ako nakapag-aral kagabi, pero kukuha ako ng eksamin. *Bahala na*” [I have not studied last night but I’ll take the exam. Come what may]. Lastly, when one knows something detrimental but still pursues it. For example, s/he knows s/he is overcharging his/her credit card beyond his/her capacity to pay. “*Bahala na kung papaano ko ito babayaran*” [I do not know how to pay this, but I’ll let God help me find the way].

In all the above negative instances, “*Bahala na*” is the scapegoat of one’s irresponsibility. The person hides this irresponsibility by invoking “*Bahala na*.”

CONCLUSION

“*Bahala na*” is a characteristic trait of the Filipino culture. The Filipino child is exposed to this culture and s/he unquestioningly imbibes this trait, thereby forming a predisposition towards it and eventually shaping an attitude about it. The attitude is reinforced in his/her daily contact with others in society where “*Bahala na*” is openly manifested. S/He too manifests it and finds no objections from others. In time, s/he cannot distinguish its negative applications from the positive ones. S/He simply lumps them all into one piece. Not until a philosophical analysis points out what the irresponsible practices of “*Bahala na*” are.

To recapitulate, while “*Bahala na*” can presuppose both the Spinozistic/Stoical and Leibnitzian deterministic systems, it is more in keeping with panentheistic, deistic supernaturalistic, and circumstantialistic theological frameworks. The latter two are theistic in orientation, where by “theism” is meant the belief in one personal God. If one is a religious circumstantialist, then “*Bahala na*” in its responsible sense can also be entailed by it since circumstantialism stresses responsible deliberative act of choosing.

In the case of Spinoza and Leibnitz, “*Bahala na*” obliquely affirms human freedom while in the case of panentheism, deistic supernaturalism, and theistic circumstantialism, it directly affirms human freedom as voluntarily making actions and choices within one’s control. There is an explicit recognition of “*Bahala na*” in the power of God on matters beyond human control.

“*Bahala na*” can be positive (with responsibility) or negative (with irresponsibility) in application. It seems to me that Filipino society will be better off if the negative applications were to be avoided or completely obliterated in Filipino decision-making.

NOTES

1. Paper presented as the first of the Claro Ceniza Lecture Series that started on 12 December 2001 at Tereso Lara Seminar Room. The lecture was accompanied with a powerpoint presentation. Also read during the Annual Philosophical Convention of the Philosophical Association of the Philippines at the Holy Rosary Minor Seminary in Naga City. The theme of the convention was “Philosophy and Culture.”

2. Rogelio A. Santos (1998) includes “*Bahala na*” fatalism among

the Filipino cultural traits he has discussed.

3. Gorospe's (1966: 43-44) contention that the term "Bahala" is not derived from "Bathala" is based on a linguistic error. If "meaning is use in the language," as Wittgenstein (1989: 20) would say, then one of the significant usages of the term has a reference to God.

4. In particular, see Goodman (2001), *Bahala Na* Systems International (2001), *Movies* (1957), *Ecochallenge* (2001), *Mabuhay Philipinen* (2001), *Bahala na diving* (2001), etc.

5. The other "*Bahala Na*" song is by Ito Rapadas, Jimmy Antiporda, and the Neocolours (2001).

6. This related meaning of a threat came about during the open forum of the PAP Naga City philosophical convention on 5 April 2002.

7. The original phrase is "logical propositions," but I have replaced it with the term "logical constatives" since I have rejected the term "proposition" in the speech act theory (see Gripaldo 2001).

REFERENCES

- Bahala na diving*. 2001. <<http://www.miko7.com/varshop/shops/gtnd>>. Accessed: 17 November 2001.
- Bahala Na* Systems International. 2001. Giron Arnis Escrima. <<http://www.Gironarniseskrima.com/>> Accessed: 17 November 2001.
- Bartolome, Heber. *Bahala na* [a song]. <<http://www.bahalana.htm>>. Accessed: 26 November 2001.
- Bloesch, D. G. 2001. "Fatalism." <<http://mb-soft.com/believe/index.htm>>. Accessed: 9 December 2001.
- Bostrom, Lynn C. 1968. "Filipino *Bahala na* and American fatalism." *Silliman Journal* 15.
- Church, Timothy A. and Katigbak, Maria S., eds. 2000. *Filipino personality: Indigenous and cross-cultural studies*. Manila: DLSU Press.
- Cruz, Romeo V. 1977. "Ang kasaysayan at ang apat na ugaling Pilipino." In *Ulat ng ikalawang pambansang kumperensiya sa sikolohiyang Pilipino*. Edited by Lilia F. Antonio, Livial Samson, Esther Reyes, and Elena Paguio. Quezon City: Pambansang Samahan sa Sikolohiyang Pilipino.
- Goodman, David. 2001. Comics. <<http://www.bahala-na./comics/onepages/conserv.htm>>. Accessed: 9 December 2001.
- de Mesa, Jose. 1979. *And God said, "Bahala na!"* Quezon City: Maryhill School of Theology.
- Distor, Emere. 1997. Filipino way. *Kasama* 11 (2).
- Ekonomiya. 2001. *Ekonomiya sa larangan ng espiritu*. <<http://>>

- www.magisx/addu/edu/~jse/relihiyon/ekon.html>. Accessed: 17 November 2001.
- Fitelson, Branden. 1999. "Fatalism, notes & reflections." A handout, 5 April.
- Google+Search. 2001. *Bahala Na* <<http://www.google.com/search?q=bahala+na&btnq=Google+Search>>. Accessed 6 December 2001.
- Gorospe, Vitaliano R. S.J. 1966. *Christian renewal of Filipino values*. Manila: Ateneo de Manila University.
- Gripaldo, Rolando M. 1977. *Circumstantialism*. Dumaguete City: Silliman University Press.
- _____. 2001. "Meaning, proposition, and speech acts." *International Journal of Philosophy* 30 (1).
- Guthrie, George, ed. 1968. "Philippine temperament." *Six perspectives on the Philippines*. Manila: Bookmark.
- Jacq's. 2001. Jacq's hideout [schoolgurlz]. <http://www.asianjoke.com/Filipino/2000_best_things_about_being_Filipino.htm>. Accessed: 17 November 2001.
- Ipage. 2001. <<http://www.Ipage.com/wgb/wgbview.dbm?owner=biliran>>. Accessed: 17 November 2001.
- Ecochallenge. 2001. <<http://www.ecochallenge.com/bc/teams.html>>. Accessed: 17 November 2001.
- Kiekeben, Franz. 2000. "Logical.determinism.and.fatalism." <<http://www.members.aol.com/kiekeben/home.html>>. Accessed: 17 November 2001.
- Lagmay, Alfredo. 1977. "Bahala na." In *Ulat ng ikalawang pambansang kumperensiya sa sikolohiyang Pilipino*. Edited by Lilia F. Antonio, Livial Samson, Esther Reyes, and Elena Paguio. Quezon City: Pambansang Samahan sa Sikolohiyang Pilipino.
- Local Jokes. 2001a. <www.localjokes.8m.com/jul1.html>. Accessed: 17 November 2001.
- Local Jokes. 2001b. <<http://www.localjokes.8m.com/mar3.html>>. Accessed: 17 November 2001.
- Mabuhay Philippinen-Ausgenzeuge, Reisebenichte. 2001. <http://www.mabuhay-philippinen.de/augenzeuge/eiseberichte/reiseberichte_bahala_na.htm>. Accessed: 17 November 2001.
- Messages. 2001. <http://www.pacific.net.ph/talk/poli_ticking/messages/21937.html>. Accessed: 17 November 2001.
- Movies. 1957. <<http://www.boracay.vasia.com/nidablanca/movies/>>. Accessed: 17 November 2001.

- PinoyCentral. 2000. <<http://www.pinoycentral.com/img/Efeatures.nsf/Showbiznews/2000120968612>>. Accessed: 17 November 2001.
- Random House Webster's unabridged dictionary*. 2001. S.v. "Fatalism." New York: Random House, Inc.
- Rapadas, Ito, Jimmy Antiporda, and the Neocolours. 2001. *Bahala na*. <<http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Realm/1477/opm/neocolours/merge.html>>. Accessed: 17 November 2001.
- Ross, Robert L. 2001. "Predestination...chance...fatalism...Is there a difference?" <<http://members.aol.com/>>
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1968. *Being and nothingness*. New York: Washington Square Press, Inc.
- Singson, Jose Mo. 1979. *Philippine ethical values*. Manila: De La Salle University.
- Skinner, B. F. 1971. *Walden two*. New York: Macmillan Company.
- Taylor, Richard. 1967. "Determinism." *Encyclopedia of philosophy* 2.
- Thagard, Paul. 1996. "Cognitive science." *Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*. <<http://www.cognitive-science.htm>>. Accessed: 5 October 2001.
- Voltaire, Francois-Marie Arouet de. 1946. *Candide*. Edited by Norman L. Torrey. New York: Appleton-Century Crofts.
- Warfield, Benjamin. 1970. "What fatalism is." *Selected shorter writings of Benjamin B. Warfield*. Vol. 1. Edited by John E. Meeter. N.p.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company.
- Watson, Cindi, ed. 2001. "That it is fatalism." In *The creed of Presbyterians*. Accessed from the Internet: 9 December 2001.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1989. *Philosophical investigations*. Translated by G. E. M. Anscombe. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.