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## **Social Philosophy in the Philippine Context**

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SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE PHILIPPINE CONTEXT. By Pedro V. Salgado, O.P. No place and name of publisher, 1972. x, 258 pages.

The publication of textbooks for Philippine schools continues to be one of the pressing needs of Philippine education. There is a dearth of textbooks especially in the field of philosophy. In trying to fill this need, Fr. Salgado's book does a service. But his efforts are only a beginning, and it is hoped that his book will serve to prod other philosophy teachers to do likewise and better.

Fr. Salgado is a Dominican, a chaplain of the Federation of Free Farmers. The purpose of his book as he states in his prologue is to present "a blueprint for the just society, striving to give answer to the varied problems that plague Philippine Society." This is indeed an ambitious project. Today, it is highly questionable whether it is the task of the philosopher to set up an *a priori* model of what a just Philippine society should be. Pope Paul VI in his recent apostolic letter, *Octogesima adveniens*, points out that Christian social morality can give a total vision of man and society and indicate the human and Christian values to be realized, but that concrete solutions to social problems will have to come from a growing dialogue between moralists and all the experts in the various disciplines.

What makes Fr. Salgado's book interesting and relevant is the subject matter. It deals with important social issues of the day, such as social justice and charity, property, work, wages and profits, land, unions, the social responsibility of both the Church and the state. Of special interest and relevance are the chapters on nationalism, youth activism, and revolution. What comes into question is the nature and status of social philosophy as a distinct philosophical discipline with a methodology of its own. The way the author deals with the topic of each chapter makes social philosophy a dubious, or to say the least, an ambiguous science.

Each chapter of the book more or less follows the same outline; first, a summary exposition of the social philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas; second, a confirmation of these philosophical concepts from the social teaching of the papal encyclicals and of Vatican II; and third, a summary application to the Filipino and Philippine society. This procedure justifies the title of the book — *Social Philosophy in the Philippine Context*. It would appear to the reader that social philosophy is identified with the philosophy of Aquinas and that the social teachings of the Church are used as philosophical arguments under the hidden assumption that their philosophical underpinning is mainly that of Thomistic or scholastic philosophy. It is very doubtful whether this is the case with the documents of Vatican II and with the more recent documents of the Church including Pope Paul VI's apostolic letter, *Octogesima adveniens*, to which the author often refers.

In the philosophical parts of the book, Fr. Salgado uses the traditional conceptual or essentialistic method of scholastic philosophy. This reviewer can only point out that this method is not the only one and that it has long been superseded by a more phenomenological method in philosophy. The deliberations of Vatican II showed the inadequacy of scholastic philosophy

to provide the philosophical anthropology for the new theology of "the signs of the times." Although it was not the intent of Fr. Salgado to begin to write an indigenous Filipino social philosophy, it might be well to point out that a Filipino philosophy does not mean merely adapting the philosophy of Aquinas or any other to the local situation. The future task of the Filipino philosopher is a more difficult one — from the life-experience of the Filipino people, create a philosophy which is truly our own. Fr. Leonardo N. Mercado, S.V.D., in his article on "Filipino Thought" (*Philippine Studies* 20: 207–272), has indicated one direction which a future Filipino philosophy can take.

It is quite understandable why Fr. Salgado employs a variety of approaches in his book. In the use of the papal encyclicals and other Church documents, it really does not matter whether he is using the philosophical or theological method, be it the traditional one or that of the new theology of the signs of the times. His use of the encyclicals is certainly a better substitute for the past encyclical courses in Catholic schools. In his application to Philippine conditions, Fr. Salgado uses socio-historical analysis and whatever findings scientific or popular sources may shed on understanding the Filipino and Philippine society. Now and then, the author confirms a point by an appeal to his own personal contact and experience with the Filipino farmer. After all, there is no substitute for "living with the people." Fr. Salgado is not concerned with methodology. His concern is a very practical one — to fill a vacuum and provide the Filipino student with a Catholic philosophy textbook on current and vital Philippine social issues.

As a result, social philosophy ceases to be a distinct philosophical science in its own right. Under the rubric of "social philosophy," we have nothing but a disguised form of moral theology, history, and social science. If this is social philosophy, it will not be long before the new human sciences take over the role of the social philosopher or moralist. Since one of the main sources of Fr. Salgado's book is Jeremias U. Montemayor to whom the book is dedicated, this reviewer cannot see why the latter's textbooks, *Ours to Share* and *Philippine Socio-Economic Problems*, both of which contain many references to the papal encyclicals and to the philosophy of Aquinas, may not serve better as *Social Philosophy in the Philippine Context*. A far more successful effort in a simple presentation of the philosophy of Aquinas and other modern philosophers within a Philippine context is Dr. Emerita Quito's *Ang Pilosopiya sa Diwang Pilipino*, a textbook written not for experts but for Filipino students.

The sections on the Philippine context are the most interesting and relevant parts of the book but they will probably draw the most criticism because of the way the author handles his sources which are uneven and sometimes inadequate. One would expect that the "answer to the varied problems that plague Philippine society" would come from an objective and impartial analysis of the Philippine situation in the light of the social philosophy of Aquinas and of the social doctrine of the Church. However, one is never sure when he is getting an objective and impartial view and when he is being presented a partial and one-sided view. Historians will surely find many difficulties with some of the socio-historical analyses of

the book. Sometimes the author's generalizations or conclusions are based on scholarly studies like those of Horacio de la Costa and other historians, but more often on the views of Jeremias U. Montemayor and, occasionally, on such controversial writers as Jose Maria Sison, Alejandro Lichauco, Jose W. Diokno, as well as on popular newspapers and magazines. On the one hand, the author quotes the scholarly study of Antonio Ledesma on land reform; on the other hand, he refers to Arsenio Jesena's personal-experiential account of the plight of the sacadas in Sugarland, without mentioning the scientific study, *A Bittersweet Taste of Sugar*, by Frank Lynch. It seems that Fr. Salgado is not investigating his sources to find out what the objective Philippine situation is. Rather in many parts of the book he seems to select his sources merely to confirm either his own ideological or political stand or that of the Federation of Free Farmers. At least, this is the impression he gives the reader.

Despite these shortcomings, Fr. Salgado's book does fill a need and does a great service. The book is a good introduction to the social philosophy of Aquinas and to the social doctrine of the Church as found in the papal encyclicals and especially in the most recent Church documents such as Vatican II and Pope Paul VI's apostolic letter, *Octogesima adveniens*. Fr. Salgado has put into a single volume a wealth of valuable information and data which is not easily accessible to the student. The chapter on nationalism is both historical and ideological in orientation. The chapter on youth activism is most informative. Confrontation with the Philippine situation of the seventies cannot ignore the phenomena of liberation and development and the question of reform or revolution. We are indebted to Fr. Salgado for giving an excellent and clear summary of the arguments for or against a violent or nonviolent revolution. Incidentally, the chapter on revolution appeared in an article entitled "The Cross and Violence" in the May 1972 issue of *Solidarity*. With regard to the Church and social involvement, there has been a real lacuna among Catholics on their knowledge of the social message of the bible. Fr. Salgado shows from both the Old and New Testaments why the Church should be on the side of the poor. It is clear from the 1971 Roman Synod's *Justice in the World* that the mission of the Church in the Philippines of the seventies is that of justice, liberation, and development. This reviewer would have wished that the chapters on nationalism, youth activism, and revolution had been written in the larger context of liberation and development. Perhaps in a second edition, Fr. Salgado will elaborate a philosophy of justice, liberation, and development within a Philippine context.

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