

Gabriel Marcel's *The Mystery of the Family* in the Filipino Context

Ivan Efreaim A. Gozum

Angeles University Foundation | gozum.ivanefreaim@auf.edu.ph

Abstract: As modernization produced a more liberal modern world, the society now needs to reflect on this situation and be awakened of the need to go back and focus on its very foundation: family, the basic unit of the society. However, the way of life of families was also changed by the negative effects of modernization, resulting to the increasing number of cases of broken families, cases of divorce, annulment and the improper formation of children. This paper aims to look at the situation of Filipino families as it delves on how the Filipino families have changed from its traditional roots to the landscape that is the Filipino family is at today. In order for one to have a realization of what an epitome of a Filipino family could be, the research uses Gabriel Marcel's lecture entitled *The Mystery of the Family* to offer a new perspective and proper lenses on how one must look at today's situation of the Filipino family. Issues regarding adultery, divorce, annulment and child formation in particular will be discussed appropriately using Marcel's thoughts on the family. These thoughts are mainly his discussion on the person and the pact between person and life, creative fidelity and hope from the said essay

Keywords: *Mystery, Fidelity, Filipino Family, Modernization*

Introduction

The modern period led to the rise of modern empirical science and one of its greatest contribution – industrialization. Industrialization is a way of life that propagates profound economic, social, political, and cultural changes in the society. It is by undergoing industrialization that societies become modern, thus, undergoing fully to the continuous process of modernization.¹⁷³ It seems to be no-brainer for any one to not acknowledge the positive effects of modernization. Modernization paved way to technological progress which is indubitably very much of help in today's society. Scientific discoveries also occurred during modernization.

Behind all these positive contributions, there are also negative events that happened due to modernization. Many tragedies happened during the modern period because of the invention of different weapons of mass destruction. The technological progress that modernization was able to

¹⁷³ See Krishan Kumar, "Modernization," in *Britannica Encyclopaedia*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/modernization>, retrieved on September 11, 2018

engender made each person focus more on themselves. This led to humans look at themselves at the “center of the universe.” Behind all the noisiness that the modern period was able to engender, one can realize that there is a longing for a home. One will long for the love and solace that can be found from one’s beginnings. This, the researcher thinks, seems to originate from one’s home – family.

The family is the basic unit of the society. It is the beginning of social relationships. The family plays a vital role in the society and is considered as the most important formation house for a person. Martin Plattel, a British writer, said that the family has frequently been spoken to as the community par excellence.¹⁷⁴ It is expected that all citizens must have a strong foundation of good moral character and prepare them to what the world will bring. It is sad to see that in today’s world, the bonds of the families are gradually weakening. The family is slowly being desecrated. Some people have forgotten the real importance of the family: the divorce rate, child abuses and cases of adultery have been increasing.

Filipino families value their families very highly, an exceptional character which they are known for. Without regards of the liberal influence they have gotten from the western culture, the family remained the basic unit of the Philippine society as they maintain their high respect to elders and close connection with their relatives.

Modernization is catching up with the Filipino family which provided both positive and negative effects to the Filipino family. The once patriarchal trait of the Filipino family is gradually changing. Today, women are allowed to go to work and the father may not be the sole provider for his family. The problem that arouse from this practice is the lack of parental guidance for the children. A result of lack of parental guidance is the tendency of some children to be rebellious; they tend not to maintain close family ties.

In this paper, these situations are to be viewed in the light of Gabriel Marcel’s eye-opening essay, from his book *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, entitled *The Mystery of the Family*. From this essay, he suggests that the family must not be dealt as a problem; rather, as a mystery. Also, he explicates the importance of the sanctity of marriage and the need to have a proper child formation to bring hope in the family.

The Filipino Family: Traditional to Modern

Filipinos are known for their high value of family. The importance of the family to Filipinos shows that “it is as if to be a member of a family is a Filipino’s most striking quality.”¹⁷⁵ This statement shows that Filipinos truly value their family in a deeper sense. They feel special and ‘at home’ when they know that they are a member of a family. Niels Mulder adds:

Before anything else, the family commands the Filipino’s loyalty and is considered to be the wellspring of a meaningful existence, of identity and fulfilment. Sanctified by religious representations and ritual, the household-centered, often multigenerational, nuclear family is inviolable and relatively autonomous.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ See Martin Plattel, *Social Philosophy*, (Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press, 1965), 110.

¹⁷⁵ Niels Mulder, *Inside Philippine Society: Interpretations of Everyday Life*, (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1997), 21.

¹⁷⁶ Niels Mulder, *Inside Philippine Society: Interpretations of Everyday Life*, 37.

The family is not only being given importance by Filipinos because they are simply a member of such. They give importance to the family because it was enriched by tradition and history through the different factors which contributed to how the Filipinos value and perceive what a family is today. The high respect that Filipinos are giving to the family shows that the family for Filipinos is very much relevant due to a reality that everyone is a member of a specific family. Florentino Timbreza even states, “Filipinos are well known for their family-centeredness.”¹⁷⁷

Moreover, the Filipino family has been known throughout the years for the values that characterizes it such as close family ties, deep religiosity, respect to elders, faithfulness in the family and child-centeredness. These values make the Filipino family remarkable. These values solidify one’s perception of the Filipino family for these values have been the basis for any person each time that they talk about Filipino family. However, these values have changed due to the rise of modernization. In the modern setting, these values are not really observed anymore by most modern Filipino families. There has been a change of focus in the family. Modernization made people to be more focused on work in order to cope up with the economic demands that the society has demanded. Medina et al. states:

With modernization, however, many changes are going on in Filipino society which have affected the family. Among these are increased participation of women in the labor force, the growth of mass media, transportation, and communication; the unabated rural to urban migration; and outmigration of Filipinos to other lands.¹⁷⁸

This statement clearly shows how modernization made the Filipino family veer away from its traditional values. The traditional family in which the father is the only one working and the mother is the one taking care of the children has not been applicable because of the situation that the family is in. With modernization, poverty has become a problem and has made the traditional Filipino family values to be somehow ‘unguarded’ due to the lack of focus on parenting because, in most cases, both parents in a family now work in order to survive. Somehow, the Filipino family has lost its brilliance for it has been one exemplar type of family due to its traditional values.

The family, as a social institution, requires members. The family, per se, has its own founding members. These founding members are the husband and wife. The couple who met, fell in love and married each other. These two persons are vital for they are the ones who were united during marriage. These two persons would eventually be the ones to procreate and start the family. Medina states, “Since the family institution is a universally essential aspect of human society, each culture provides some kind of arrangement for the selection of people who will make up the family – who will mate, procreate, and nurture the young.”¹⁷⁹

Traditionally, Filipinos are very critical and sensitive in choosing a partner. The suitor usually undergoes a very hard process of courtship in order to gain the love and trust of both the family of the woman and the woman that he wants to be with. A long-time of proving the worth of the suitor is needed in order to gain the favor of being a couple. However, in the modern setting, some women’s

¹⁷⁷ Florentino Timbreza, *Filipino Values Today*, (Manila: National Bookstore Inc., 2005), 103.

¹⁷⁸ Belen Medina et al., *The Filipino Family: Emerging Structures and Arrangements*, (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 1996), 2.

¹⁷⁹ Belen Medina, *The Filipino Family*, (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2001), 78.

affection can easily be gained by suitors by easily sending sweet messages through text, chat and other different means of communication. Today, there are also mobile applications which make the process of courting easier. There are now dating apps that enable any person to have an actual conversation without even knowing each other and without any personal interaction. Sadly, there are people who date even though they do not interact personally often anymore.

After courtship, as long as the couple is ready to be together, they decide to be united through marriage. In the Filipino tradition, marriage is very much highlighted. The Filipino wedding of a couple starts the union of the couple and lets them enter the married life. Traditionally, a Filipino wedding does not only unite the husband and wife but it unites the families of both husband and wife. This tradition shows the high regard for family of the Filipinos and signifies the approval of both sides. Hence, the married couple is challenged to be more committed to their obligations due to the public affirmation between their families.

This is a great event for both families, especially for the couple. This is the fulfillment of their love for each other. Being united by marriage is very essential to Filipinos because they will have an extension of their family. Marriage is being done mainly because the two individuals are ready to commit themselves to each other and have their own family. By being married, they vow for faithfulness and full dedication of themselves to each other and to the family that they will have. With the traditional Filipino setting of being married in the church, the couple is given more responsibility to become faithful for it is what the church is urging.

However, in the modern setting, various changes occurred. There are couples who do not get married and choose to cohabit with each other, in other words; a 'live-in' relationship. Cohabitation is described by Medina as:

The most common type of cohabitation, however, is the joint living of a man and a woman as husband and wife without formal legality of marriage. There is exclusive sexual involvement but there is no assumption of permanency, and commitment is only for as long as the relationship is mutually satisfying.¹⁸⁰

This situation has become common in the country due to the influence that the Western narrative have. Couples do not marry because of the fear of having a lifetime commitment. Moreover, married couples also undergo different situations in today's society. Not all marriages are successful. Due to the marital adjustments that the couple undergo when they live together, marriages have different results. Some result to broken families and unhappy couples. Some situations result to family violence, husband-wife conflict and husband-wife separation.

Violence in the family is very dangerous because it will leave a mark on the relationship. Usually, the family must be the place of safety and refuge for the members. The couple usually are the ones to help each other out through thick and thin. However, some cases indicate that violence against women has been a big issue. Medina explicates:

When women become victims of violence within their own homes and at the hands of their own husbands, it is not only their right to protection that is violated, but all their rights of survival, participation and development are endangered. Yet, many victims helplessly bear

¹⁸⁰ Medina, *The Filipino Family*, 91.

the situation to keep the family intact at all cost even if violence is perpetrated with such debilitating effects as stunted emotional growth, low esteem, and depression.¹⁸¹

This situation is said to have a stigma to the family. The happy life that they are trying to reach during the taking of their marital vows are not met due to the violence that they are experiencing. On the other hand, there are husband-wife conflicts that are due to economic problems. Medina states, “Conflict that is economic in nature, can include issues on savings, investments, purchases, wife’s career aspirations, husband’s working overtime or moonlighting on a second job and other occupational matters.”¹⁸²

For Filipinos, when someone marries, one marries into the better half’s family and takes that thought very seriously. However, today, marriage is being desecrated. This has become a problem because the traditional definition and importance of marriage is slowly degrading and cases of infidelity rise. Gonzales states, “A common concern emerging from family ministry in the Philippine setting is of a marriage affected by infidelity. Infidelity is the breaking of marital vows.”¹⁸³ Minyong Ordoñez supports this claim by saying:

The culture of a people, the Filipino culture in our case, defines our racial identity. Culture manifests goodness and virtues, creativity, and accomplishments in symmetry with the material and spiritual faculties of the people. Culture is the bedrock of a nation’s continuity, unity, subsidiarity, and dignity. And lovability too. We Filipinos are disarmingly called the happiest, most hospitable people on this side of the planet, a national character that originates from our profound celebration of the joy and sanctity of life. No racial pride or culture can evolve based on self-destructive and sinful acts of a people.¹⁸⁴

He points out the importance of the Filipino culture and tradition. However, he also stated that some Filipino values are lost because of the effects brought by the times. Also, it is reported that many Filipinos nowadays support divorce in the country.¹⁸⁵ This is what the traditional Filipinos have been negating, but now, it is starting to rise. This legalization of divorce is being pushed and supported by many Filipinos because of factors such as infidelity and poverty. Gonzales writes:

In Philippine culture, infidelities or extramarital relationships range from casual relationships to the keeping of a querida or paramour (Medina 1991). Alano (1995) lists some Filipino terms referring to infidelity: pakikiapid or pangangalunya (used in legal and scholarly documents), paglalaro sa apoy (playing with fire), pamamangka sa dalawang ilog (rowing up two rivers), pagsusunong ng uling (carrying of burning charcoal), pangangaliwa (turning left or going against the expected direction), pagkulasisi or pangtsitsiks (catching chicks or birds), and pambababae (collecting women). Kabit (clinging attachment) and querida or kirida (Spanish word for beloved, refers to the mistress). The husband’s infidelity is a major concern in Filipino marriages (PCP II, 1992). Carandang (1987) notes that wives rank infidelity as the number one family stressor. Lacar (1993) reports that male infidelity is the

¹⁸¹ Medina, *The Filipino Family*, 192.

¹⁸² Medina, *The Filipino Family*, 193-194.

¹⁸³ Gonzales, *The Filipino Context of Infidelity and Resilience*, n.pag.

¹⁸⁴ Minyong Ordoñez, *Filipino culture, family values*, RH, 2011, <http://www.bworldonline.com/content.php?section=9&title=Filipino-culture,-family-values,-RH&id=31456>, retrieved on September 5, 2018.

¹⁸⁵ “A recent poll by Social Weather Stations (SWS) shows that in the fourth quarter of 2014, more than half of Filipinos (60%) supported the legalization of divorce.” Paulo Taruc, *SWS: Support for divorce growing in Philippines*, n.pag.

most frequent reason for marital separation. Vancio (1980, 1977) cites male infidelity as a major issue for marital break-ups in Metro Manila.¹⁸⁶

Cases of adultery and infidelity in the Philippines are growing.¹⁸⁷ In spite of the statistical figures, records on marital break-ups with finality are not duly listed because of the absence of legal divorce in the Philippines. However, even though divorce is not legalized in the Philippines, infidelity and separation has become an issue. It can be derived that infidelity can also be traced as a gender issue. In addition to, the findings of Gonzales show that marital infidelity is a major concern among Filipino married couples, especially in fast growing cities such as Metro Manila and Iligan City. On the other hand, further observations show that this is largely a male gender phenomenon.¹⁸⁸

With this, it is said that the time that the couple are not together contribute to a conflict which is a bitter pill to swallow. This situation results to infidelity. The absence of both due to the need to satisfy the economic demands does not meet the need of each couple in their relationship. Hence, infidelity came out because of the difficulties that an individual has gone throughout one's life which show the worst side of the individual's personality. The cases of infidelity somehow always point out to the unresolved wants of one, if not both, of the married couples. It can be because of financial difficulties and continuous husband-wife conflicts which contribute to the infidelity of one of the couple.

Thus, the situation that the couple are in today often makes marriage fragile. With the issue of infidelity, the vows of the couple that they made during their marriage are being set aside. As Medina describes, "Judging from the number of court cases filed by spouses against each other, by the number of applications for annulment of marriage, and by the number of couples who are actually separated, marriages today are becoming fragile and full of stresses and tensions... The marriage starts to crumble once they fail to find emotional satisfaction."¹⁸⁹ Infidelity has been really an issue because if the couple does not stay together and be unfaithful with each other, it will affect their family. The marriage and the whole family will surely be affected if the expected heads of the family are not true to their words and do not embody the commitment that they made.

The child is a very important member of the family because the child is the product of the love of both parents. The child has been in the center of the family through time. The parents sacrifice many things for the betterment of their children. Parents invest well for the education of their children. Parents do their best in order to leave a good mark to their children. Also, parents always try their best to provide money and properties that can be beneficial to their children up to the time that they get

¹⁸⁶ Gonzales, *The Filipino Context of Infidelity and Resilience*, n.pag.

¹⁸⁷ "In the McCann Metro Manila Male Study (1995), half of the 485 male respondents reported having had extramarital affairs. As stated, "Relucio reported in her in-depth interview with seven separated women, notes that "infidelity was found to be a common problem." (Dayan, et. al. n.pag) in their study of 60 petitioners for nullity of marriage, report that adultery was one of the major reasons cited." Gonzales, *The Filipino Context of Infidelity and Resilience*, n.pag.

¹⁸⁸ "Thirty-six percent of the males of the 368 respondents admitted to extramarital relations while only 2 percent of the females did so. The male respondents did not find that their extramarital relations were at variance with their marital involvement. About 85% of them said that their marriage was not in any danger of breaking up and actually the marriage had turned out better than they had expected." Gonzales, *The Filipino Context of Infidelity and Resilience*, n.pag.

¹⁸⁹ Medina, *The Filipino Family*, 282.

old. Thus, the Filipino family is a child-centered family. Its structure has always been a family which expresses a sense of importance for the child.

Moreover, Filipinos value their children because they expect their children to be the ones to help them financially, take care of them and assist them in housework when they get old. For this reason, the parents try their best in order to provide good education and formation to their children. Filipinos look at their children as inspirations to become better parents. With this, parents aim to have a good status and successful career in order to provide the best life that they can give to their children. Thus, the child becomes a driving force to parents in order to live a moral life and furnish the craft of their careers. Parents are challenged to be the best that they can be for their children.

This is the way parents think because they are positive with their children and are very hopeful that their children will be the ones to help them progress in life. The child is expected to be the one to help them improve the socio-economic status that their family has. Moreover, Filipino parents look at their children as blessings from God and are hopeful and expected to bring good luck to the family. It has been a tradition for Filipinos to look at their children as a sign of grace and God's gift to them. The children that the parents have symbolize a more blessed marital union and boosts more the morale of the parents. Thus, the children of the couple keep the couple hopeful and joyful in the family.

However, the husband and wife often have different perspective on why they value their children. Usually, a male looks at having a child as an affirmation of his masculinity. The number of children that a man can produce is often looked as the measuring stick for a man's manliness. On the other hand, a woman feels a sense of fulfillment when she is able to bear a child. It is a great amount of joy and satisfaction for a woman to have a child. With this, one can see how important the child really is to the parents. Moreover, Filipinos look at the child as the one that binds the couple more. Medina explicates:

Many wives believe that one way to hold a man is to have children. When they have children, husbands think twice before deserting the family or separating from the wife. Wives also try hard to keep their marriage intact for the sake of the children. When there is a serious quarrel between husband and wife, children often help bring about reconciliation between them. Children, therefore, indirectly cement the union of their parents by helping strengthen the marital bond.¹⁹⁰

Thus, children are very important to parents. On the other hand, parents are also important to children because they will be the first teachers that they will encounter in their life. It is true that the child will eventually be taken into school or other social institutions but it is always in the family that the child will have a more time to be formed. They are the very first persons who gave support, love and care to the child. Thus, it is expected that the parents will have the greatest influence on the child. Hence, the family is the first formation place for the child. The family is the one who will mostly be responsible on the formation of the child because it is the first place for socialization for a child. It is true that the child will meet many people at school, church and social media but it is still in the family that the child will spend more time with. Thus, the family is greatly responsible in inculcating the values that the child needs in his life. The family will always be the first ones to mold the child's character.

¹⁹⁰ Medina, *The Filipino Family*, 217.

Hence, the parents are very much liable in the formation of the child. It is their duty to raise their child well. It is in the hands of the parents on how they will discipline and inculcate good habits and values to the child. There are parents who are overprotective while some parents are lenient to their child. There are parents who impose themselves through punishment in order to discipline their child while there are parents who are soft-spoken in order to always comfort their children.

However, as the child grows, the child will meet more people. The child will be able to socialize more and gain the influence of other people. The peers somehow become more influential than the parents. With this, the child becomes more liberal and somehow veers away from the command of the parents.

Moreover, today, due to different influences from modernization, some parents do not live together often because of the fact that one needs to work abroad in order to satisfy the economic demands. Some of those who are not living together result to unsuccessful marriage because not all can withstand the situation of not being together. For this reason, there are cases of solo-parenting. In addition to, solo-parenting does not only come from situations of people who separated due to the situation of not being together due to the necessity of working abroad. Some parents do not live together anymore due to their situation of being single or unwed, abandoned families, divorced and legally separated couples and also those who are widowed. Thus, this situation asks more from the parent who is with the child for that parent needs to do more than the usual parental role needed. Hence, it can be seen in this situation that the child will really look for a role model and other people to look up to.

All of these situations are something to be pondered on with regards to child formation. It is because some children are not formed well because of the peer influences and bad parenting. Different ideas and people influence the child as soon as the child goes out of the home and interacts with others. Apart from this, the issue of child formation, there are also two issues in which children are dealing with today – child abuse and child labor. Medina states:

One problem with regards children is child abuse which includes physical, emotional, and sexual abuse and neglect. It is sad to say that most abhorrent type of child abuse, which is incest, is usually perpetrated by the father, but the victim is afraid to report the crime because of threats by the abuser. Another form of exploitation is child labor. Many children are in hazardous jobs like quarrying, mining, deep-sea fishing, construction, etc. which is against the law, while others are in domestic work. Also, many urban poor children are on the streets trying to earn a living as hawkers, newsboys, watch-your-car boys and shoe-shine boys. This is attributed not only to poverty but also to the state of the family relationships such as parental separation and remarriage of widowed parents.¹⁹¹

These two issues are very relevant today because of the on-going reports of cases of both. With this, one looks on how the child is in today's world. Child abuse has been an issue in the country. There are many cases of child abuse in the Philippines. Some of the child abuse cases are because of sexual abuse and some are because of violence.¹⁹² There are children who underwent different types of child

¹⁹¹ Medina, *The Filipino Family*, 286.

¹⁹² "As many as 2,147 cases of child abuse were reported to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in the first quarter of 2016, more than one-fourth of which was of a sexual nature. The figure was nearly half of the total 4,374 child abuse cases reported in the entire year of 2015, according to the Policy Development and Planning Bureau of the DSWD. Social Welfare Secretary Judy Taguiwalo called for greater vigilance among the

abuses – physical, neglect, emotional and sexual. There are already many children who are victims of abuse. Whatever type of abuse it is, it is still not right to abuse the children. Some parents inflict physical injury, deprive basic needs, assault their children verbally and make their children as objects of sexual gratification. Thus, children are very much vulnerable in the society because they are often the ones looked down and abused by those who are older and in authority. The children are very much vulnerable to different acts of discrimination, abuse, exploitation and many more oppressive actions.

On the other hand, another way of child exploitation is through child labor. Medina says, “Child labor is practiced in economically depressed cities and towns where most parents have either little education or training for any job; therefore they often ask their children to work.”¹⁹³ It is quite clear that parents result to child labor because of the economic demands due to the high cost of living in today’s society. Instead of sending their children to school, they send them to work places such as factories and streets where they earn money in order to help the family. Therefore, the child will exert effort and time working and away from their parents. Medina explicates:

They don’t question why they should be helping in breadwinning or even acting as main breadwinners of the family instead of going to school because they accept this as part of their duty as children. Living and working in the streets, however, force them to relate to city thugs, criminal elements, and other strangers, thus exposing them to risks of physical harm, crime, and other anti-social activities (Porio, 1994). The increase in the number of street children and the kind of life they experience in the streets are attributed not only to poverty but also, to a certain extent, to the state of family relationships such as parental separation or marital discord, remarriage of widowed parents, and relationship with step-father or step-mother (Lamberte, 1994). Most of these street children are abandoned or neglected by their parents (*Situation Analysis, Children and Women in the Philippines*, 1992).¹⁹⁴

The cases of child labor did not only result from poverty but also from unsuccessful marriages. It is still dependent on the parents on how they will be able to survive and form their children well. These cases of child labor show the different effects of how the family landscape has changed throughout the years.

Marcel’s *The Mystery of The Family*

Gabriel Marcel talked about *The Mystery of the Family* during one of his sessions in the Gifford Lectures. He provided points that can help one to look at family in a different light. He suggests that the family must not be dealt as a problem; rather, a mystery. He says:

The family does not suggest just one problem, but an infinity of problems of every description which could not be considered as a whole; you have already heard several of them discussed with a competence which I lack. But it is above all because the family seems to me to belong to an order of realities, or I should rather say of presences, which can only create problems in so far as we are mistaken, not so much with regard to their special character, as to the way in which we human beings are involved in them.¹⁹⁵

public to protect the children in the face of the growing number of child abuse cases in the country.” Yap, *Child abuse on rise, DSWD report shows*, n.pag.

¹⁹³ Medina, *The Filipino Family*, 234.

¹⁹⁴ Medina, *The Filipino Family*, 234.

¹⁹⁵ Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962),

In here, one can see that Marcel looks at the family as a mystery because of his notion of mystery. Problems are facts exterior to one's existence, whereas the family is a mystery because its reality is bound up with one's existence. Realities which unquestionably influence one's existence. That is why Marcel compared the mystery of the family to the mystery of the body and soul which he considers as the root of presences. He said that the family is a mystery because one is talking about presence not outside of the family but the family in itself.

In Marcel's comparison of the body and soul to the family as a mystery, one can see the reason for such comparison. Marcel pointed out a deep similarity between the union of the body and soul and the mystery of the family. He explains that union of the body and soul is not something he cannot place in front of him or consider as an object because there is a certain fundamental unity between the two.¹⁹⁶ Sweetman explains, "As with the union of body and soul, I cannot make of family relationships a pure idea to be placed in front of me to be considered as an object without misunderstanding their essential nature."¹⁹⁷ Marcel says:

This unity is less a *given* principle than a *giving* one, because it is the root from which springs the fact of my presence to myself and the presence of all else to me. Thus it encroaches upon its own data and, invading them, passes beyond the range of a simple problem. It is in this very definitive sense that the family is a mystery, and it is for this reason that we cannot properly and without confusion treat it simply as a question to be solved.¹⁹⁸

With this perspective, one can look also at the family as something that is bound within one's existence. Marcel suggests that one should look at the family as something not outside of oneself. The family is a mystery which is something that encroaches the person. It is not exterior to the person. Sweetman explicates, "It is more accurate to say that I am involved in the "mystery" of the family."¹⁹⁹ For Marcel, the family is something wherein one has a vital involvement and deep connection. The mystery of the family is likened to the mystery of the body and soul because this comparison suggests that it is the root of all presences. The presence which Marcel would categorize is the presence that is present to oneself and others or to one's presence. This fact shows that "...the family is also the root of presences too close and too far away to be found in the objective knowledge zone, in the realm of facts."²⁰⁰ Marcel adds:

I can discern enough, however, to enable me to follow this umbilical cord of my temporal antecedents, and to see it taking shape before me yet stretching back beyond my life in an indefinite network which, if traced to its limits would probably be co-extensive with the human race itself. My family, or rather my lineage, is the succession of historical processes by which the human species has become individualised into the single creature that I am. All that is possible for me to recognise in the growing and impressive indetermination is that all these unknown beings, who stretch between me and my unimaginable origins whatever they may be, are not simply the causes of which I am the effect or the product: there is no doubt that the terms cause and effect have no meaning here. Between my ancestors and

¹⁹⁶ See Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 69.

¹⁹⁷ Brendan Sweetman, "Book Review on HOMO VIATOR: INTRODUCTION TO THE METAPHYSIC OF HOPE," in *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, (Virginia: Philosophy Documentation Center, 2012), 713.

¹⁹⁸ Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 69.

¹⁹⁹ Sweetman, "Book Review on HOMO VIATOR: INTRODUCTION TO THE METAPHYSIC OF HOPE," 713.

²⁰⁰ Dy, "Marcel's Mystery of the Family and the Problems of Modernization in the Asian Context," in *Karunungan: A Journal of Philosophy Volume 20*, ed. Alfredo Co, (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2003),71.

myself a far more obscure and intimate relationship exists. I share with them as they do with me – invisibly; they are consubstantial with me and I with them.²⁰¹

Marcel discussed that the relationship between the child and the ancestors, who have a very far relationship with the child, pertains that there is vagueness in their relationship because of the lack of closeness. Their relationship is very far because one will look at them historically far from the child's nearest family lineage which are the parents. However, even though these ancestors are very distant origins, there is an intimate relationship that exists precisely because of the fact that they came from the same lineage. The same family roots that they have is the main connection between the child and the distant ancestors. That even though they are already distant, there is something that still binds their relationship. Marcel also wants everyone to realize that the family is not only a value but also a living presence. He says:

If the family is a reality it cannot be simply expressed or objectively established like a simple succession. Let us even insist that it is infinitely more than what appears from pure and simple entries in civil registers. It exists only on condition that it is apprehended not only as a value but as a living presence.²⁰²

Because of this, Marcel regards the family as both a value and a presence. First one, the family is a value. One can trace the way the family is a value through one's sentiment during childhood. This is the pride of belonging to a certain community or group. He says:

A value first of all. I think that here we must make an attempt to relive but in such a way that we think it out and elucidate it an experience which was shared by most of us when we were children, an experience which it is actually very difficult not to distort when we try to express it, because it includes a certain pride. This pride if we are not careful might seem to be confused with vanity, but this is a degradation of it. We are proud to belong to a certain community because we feel that something of its lustre falls upon us.²⁰³

This pride is a certain response made from depths of one's being to an investiture of which it behooves one to prove oneself worthy.²⁰⁴ This concept of pride depicts that pride must be constructive and not aim to impress another. Thus, pride must help one to have a foundation in order to establish one's conduct. On the other hand, Marcel pointed out that pride is not like vanity, wherein one turns outwards, in order to preserve unity. Dy supports this claim by saying, "Pride is constructive, helping me with a foundation for my conduct, and therefore should not be mistaken for vanity, which is sterile because it turns toward the rest of the world to impress it."²⁰⁵ With this discussion of pride, Marcel suggests:

But it is through this sentiment of pride that we can trace in what way the family is a value. It is a recognised hierarchy, and I do not merely have to integrate myself into it by recognising the authority vested in its leader; I have actually been caught up in it from the

²⁰¹ Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 71.

²⁰² Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 76.

²⁰³ Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 76.

²⁰⁴ See Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 76.

²⁰⁵ Dy, "Marcel's Mystery of the Family and the Problems of Modernization in the Asian Context," 72.

origin. I am involved in it, my very being is rooted in it. This hierarchy cannot fail, this authority cannot be abolished without the family bringing about its own destruction as a value.²⁰⁶

Through pride, one can trace family as a value. Family is a recognized hierarchy and authority in which one does not have to integrate oneself into it because one has been caught up in it from the very beginning. The family is already with a person. One can say that the family is something to be proud of because one has roots in which one belongs. Dy explains this thought by Marcel by saying, “Failure to recognize this hierarchy of authority in the family is tantamount to losing its value.”²⁰⁷ On the other hand, Marcel suggests that the family is also a living presence. As presence, the family is a “protective skin” against the foreign, threatening, hostile world. He states:

Each of us, with the exception of a few rare and unhappy individuals, has, at least on certain occasions, been able to prove by experience the existence of the family as a protective skin placed between himself and a world which is foreign, threatening, hostile to him. And there is no doubt that nothing is more painful in the destiny of an individual than the tearing away of this tissue, either by a sudden or a slow and continuous process, carried out by the pitiless hands of life or death, or rather of that nameless power of which life and death are but alternating aspects.²⁰⁸

When one is taken away from one’s family, it is the most painful experience because one is being separated from the “protective skin” one has. This “protective skin” is very evident in family life. The awareness of this primitive privileged “us” in the family which is inseparable from a home of one’s own.

The family as mystery of the incarnation of the pact between the person and life points out that the pact, or nuptial bond, between person and life is within the person’s power to untie but when the person does so, the person loses the notion of existence.²⁰⁹ Marcel says:

It seems as though it were necessary to postulate the existence of a pact, I should almost say a nuptial bond, between man and life; it is in man's power to untie this bond, but in so far as he denies the pact he tends to lose the notion of his existence. What is exactly to be understood by this bond? I may be accused of being led away by a metaphor, of unduly exaggerating abstractions. But however we interpret this fact philosophically, we must recognise that man is a being and the only one we know capable of adopting an attitude towards his life, not only his own life, but life in itself. He is then not a mere living being, he is, or rather he has become, something more, and we might say that it is through this faculty for adopting an attitude that he is a spirit.²¹⁰

²⁰⁶ Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 76.

²⁰⁷ Dy, “Marcel’s Mystery of the Family and the Problems of Modernization in the Asian Context,” 72.

²⁰⁸ Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 77.

²⁰⁹ See Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 84.

²¹⁰ Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 84.

From this point of view, one can see the person as the only being capable of adopting an attitude towards life itself. This viewpoint is another expression of transcendence over life and death. The pact of the person and life shows promises of life and the person's response to life. With this, one can realize that it is precisely in the family that this pact is worked out. Dy explains this by saying, "The pact between the human being and life is the confidence that the person promises life – which makes it possible for one to give oneself to life – and the response of life to this confidence."²¹¹ Marcel used marriage to explain further this pact between person and life. He says:

The essential act which constitutes marriage is obviously not the pure and simple mating which is only a human act, common alike to men and animals; it is not just a momentary union, but one which is to last; it is something which is established. A family is founded, it is erected like a monument whose hewn stone is neither the satisfaction of an instinct, nor the yielding to an impulse, nor the indulgence of a caprice.²¹²

This example of marriage emphasizes that it is marriage that start a family whose ties will last. Marcel also mentioned that there are many false marriages.²¹³ He explicated that in false marriages, there is a legal union but no sacramental character of union between the couple. Thus, divorce can readily and easily be admitted by the couple in false marriages. However, Marcel says, "It is more than probable that in a society where divorce is not only accepted, but regarded in many circles as a more or less normal contingency, a time must inevitably come when the irresponsibility with which so many unbelievers lightly and heedlessly get married, is communicated from one to another until it infects even those who by tradition, human respect or some remnant of faith are still impelled to take a vow of fidelity in the presence of God, only to find out too late that by this contradiction they are themselves caught in a trap from which it is not possible to escape except at the price of a scandalous renunciation or dishonourable subterfuge."²¹⁴

Divorce makes an individual disregard the importance and sanctity of marriage. That is why Marcel does not want one to look at marriage as a simple contract because it would be like a temporary promise who can expire at a given point in time.²¹⁵ Marcel stated that the only condemnation of divorce that can be justified is the condemnation which they must recognize as being pronounced in the name of their own will, a will so deep that they could not disown it without denying their own natures.²¹⁶

Moreover, one can be able to realize that the mystery of the family can be said to be the mystery of fidelity and hope. Sweetman states, "Marcel offers similar analyses in essays devoted to the subject of fidelity in human relationships, and on immortality, in which he tries to show by probing each subject that there is an inexpressible but rational aspect to unconditional commitments that points toward the transcendent."²¹⁷ With this, one can realize that the values of fidelity and hope is important in Marcel's philosophy. To understand it in the family context, Marcel says:

Perhaps we shall now be able to discuss why the mystery of the family can truly be said to be a mystery of fidelity and hope. Analysis shows that the crisis in our family institutions

²¹¹ Dy, "Marcel's Mystery of the Family and the Problems of Modernization in the Asian Context," 74.

²¹² Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 85.

²¹³ See Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 85.

²¹⁴ Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 85.

²¹⁵ See Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 86.

²¹⁶ See Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 86.

²¹⁷ Sweetman, "Book Review on HOMO VIATOR: INTRODUCTION TO THE METAPHYSIC OF HOPE," 714.

can be traced to a deeper and deeper misunderstanding of the virtues through which the unification of our destiny both terrestrial and super-terrestrial is consummated.²¹⁸

Marcel invites everyone to have a deeper understanding of the family. This disaffection in the family that Marcel was saying is said to be due to a deeper misunderstanding of the virtues of fidelity and hope. With this, Marcel discusses the mystery of fidelity and hope to understand further the family's mystery. The crisis in family institutions can be traced to deeper misunderstanding of the virtues of the family through which the union of one's destiny is concluded. With this, Marcel explicates this situation through discussing the mystery of fidelity and hope. It is quite clear that many will regard that fidelity is often likened to faithfulness. This faithfulness is what one often asks to a family member in each family. One is often asked to become faithful with one's family. Marcel says:

First of all a fundamental error or illusion must be disposed of concerning fidelity. We are too much inclined to consider it as a mere safeguard, an inward resolution which purposes simply to preserve the existing order. But in reality the truest fidelity is creative. To be sure of it, the best way is to strive to grasp the very complex bond which unites a child to its parents. There we have a relationship which is always exposed to a double risk of deterioration.²¹⁹

Fidelity is not a mere safeguard to preserve an existing order but, for Marcel, true fidelity is something which is creative. As Dy explains, "Fidelity is not to be misconstrued as an inward resolution to preserve an existing order."²²⁰ Genuine fidelity is creative and this can be envisaged in the complex bond of a child to its parents. The bond between parents and their child is unprotected to the risks of deterioration. Marcel explicates the relationship between the parents and their child through narrow traditionalism. He explained that narrow traditionalism is wherein a child is entirely in debt of those who gave life. Moreover, they treat the child as creditor because they look at life as a burden. Marcel applied this to birth control practitioners, who out of pity for possible descendants, rejects the chance to live by the child.²²¹ The pity is given on those who are not yet born, and the value of life is measured in terms of pleasures and comforts of the individual. Thus, life is a possibility for good or evil. Marcel discusses further creative fidelity by saying:

So then in the end everything comes back to the spirit which at the same time is to be incarnated or established, and maintained, the spirit spreading beyond the self; and it is precisely this spirit which is expressed by the words "creative fidelity". The more our hearts as well as our intellects keep before them the idea of our lineage, of the forbears to whom we are answerable because in the last analysis it is from them that we receive the deposit which must be transmitted the more this spirit will succeed in freeing itself from the shroud of selfishness and cowardice in which a humanity, more and more cut off from its ontological roots, is in danger of becoming gradually enveloped.²²²

With this perspective, one can understand creative fidelity more. Creative fidelity is keeping one's heart and intellect before the lineage to whom one is answerable, because it is from them that one receives the deposit to be transmitted.

²¹⁸ Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 90.

²¹⁹ Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 90.

²²⁰ Dy, "Marcel's Mystery of the Family and the Problems of Modernization in the Asian Context," 75.

²²¹ See Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 90.

²²² Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 92.

Apart from Marcel's discussion on creative fidelity, he also accentuated the importance of child formation. He says, "But this possibility is only achieved in so far as the being to whom it is granted appears from the moment of his birth as a subject, that is to say as able to enjoy and above all to suffer, and capable of one day attaining to the consciousness of what he has at first only felt."²²³ Procreation transmits life that can actualize the possibilities that it produces. It can produce good and bad. Dy supports this by saying, "The truth is that life itself is neither a blessing nor a curse but a possibility, a chance for good and evil."²²⁴

The child must be formed well so that when the child grows up and develops the child's own attitude towards life, the child can appreciate this challenge to form the offspring that is to come and acknowledge the effort of the parents. As explicated by Dy, "The child must be formed with this opportunity so that when he grows up and develops his own attitude towards life, he can appreciate this challenge and acknowledge his debt."²²⁵ The parents must teach the child well. Hence, this is an explication of the debt and credit between parents and children. With this, Marcel looks at this idea and says:

It is, then, the sacred duty of parents to behave in such a way towards their child, that one day it will have good reason to acknowledge that it is in their debt. But if ever they are to be justified in considering that they have a credit here it will be exclusively in so far as they have succeeded in discharging a debt themselves, which to tell the truth cannot be likened to a payment of account but rather to the production of a work of art where their only share is the laying of the foundations.²²⁶

The debt and the credit on the parents and the child's side urges the duty to have proper formation. This can urge both to have a relationship wherein the child is being formed and the parents will have the sense of responsibility toward the child. As Dy states, "The debt and credit are as much on the parents as on the child's side."²²⁷ In addition to, it seems that there is a deafness to call of creative fidelity which Marcel traced from a human being's loss of sense of hope. Marcel says:

I said that hope cannot be separated either from a sense of communion or from a more or less conscious and explicit dependence on a power which guarantees this communion itself. "I hope in Thee, for us", such is the authentic formula of hope. But the more this "for us" tends to confine itself to what concerns the self instead of opening onto the infinite, the more hope shrivels and deteriorates, and, in the domain of the family, the more it tends to degenerate into a short-sighted ambition and to fix its attention on ways of safeguarding and increasing a certain Having which actually need not take a grossly material form. But I added that it is only by breaking through Having that hope can effect an entrance into our soul.²²⁸

From this, one can draw out that hope is linked to a sense of communion: "I hope in Thee for us."²²⁹ The more this "for us" can be seen in the family. As Dy explains, "Authentic hope is linked to a sense of communion, an openness to an infinite power which grounds our communion, our us."²³⁰

²²³ Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 91.

²²⁴ Dy, "Marcel's Mystery of the Family and the Problems of Modernization in the Asian Context," 76.

²²⁵ Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 76.

²²⁶ Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 91.

²²⁷ Dy, "Marcel's Mystery of the Family and the Problems of Modernization in the Asian Context," 76.

²²⁸ Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 92-93.

²²⁹ Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 60.

²³⁰ Dy, "Marcel's Mystery of the Family and the Problems of Modernization in the Asian Context," 77.

Hope is linked to communion which is an openness to an infinite power that constitutes togetherness and belongingness. Hope fades when it is limited only to the self. In the family, hope must break through the state of having in order for hope to be of help to the person and enter the very soul of the individual. Marcel defines having by saying, “By the term Having I did not mean exclusively the visible possessions of which each of us can make an inventory, but rather the armour of good or bad habits, opinions and prejudices which makes us impervious to the breath of the spirit, everything in us which paralyzes what the Apostle calls the liberty of the children of God.”²³¹

It is hope that veers away from the anxiety of modern living. Of the things that are happening in the society, one is led to a realization that life is the incarnation and the family is the meeting point of the vital and spiritual aspects of life. That is why one must have an acknowledgement of Divine Fatherhood. Marcel says:

It is natural that under such conditions the family should be choked between the claims of two systems apparently opposed, but actually converging and reinforcing each other. In fact, it only assumes its true value and dignity through the functioning of a central relationship which cannot be affected by any objective causality and which is the strictly religious relationship whose mysterious and unique expression is found in the words *divine fatherhood*.²³²

From this discussion, one can know that hope is something that looks at the journey of a person and have the family as the meeting point of the vital and the spiritual. This is the reason why Marcel is against naturalism and materialism because of the very fact that naturalism and materialism is a form of an arrogance of an acknowledgement of a higher being and also the development of pride which denies obedience. Dy fortifies this claim by saying, “Against naturalism and materialism, hope accepts the creature condition of the human being and acknowledges the Divine Fatherhood.”²³³

Marcel’s *The Mystery of the Family* in the Filipino Context

As a being-in-situation, Gabriel Marcel suggests that one must not look at a situation as a problem. One must look at it as a mystery. One must not detach from the situation in order to have a better grasp of the situation. Thus, one must not look at the family as a problem, rather, it must be dealt as a mystery.²³⁴ To further have a full perspective on the family, one must not be like a legislator or judge for these persons look at a situation from above and detached from their selves. One must realize that the family is not something that is outside the self. In a family, a member must not try to veer away from the existing reality of the family precisely because of the very truth that one belongs to such. It seems impossible to detach the very self of any individual in the family because it is very evident that there is an inclination to the family. Hence, the family is a mystery and any one must always be reminded that the family is something which is attached to any person.

Due to modernization, the Filipino family has been slowly disintegrating. This is what Marcel stated when he said that technological progress has affected to the loss of human substance. It is seen very clearly in the craftsmanship in human relationships, standardization of individuals, little respect for individuals and local customs and peculiarities in the society. This change of pace of the rhythm

²³¹ Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 94.

²³² Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 95.

²³³ Dy, “Marcel’s Mystery of the Family and the Problems of Modernization in the Asian Context,” 77.

²³⁴ See Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 68.

of life made the way of living faster. It somehow changed the focus which they have. Marcel calls this situation as an extraordinary acceleration of the rhythm of life.²³⁵ For this reason, one must always be reminded to treat at any situation and the family as a mystery in order for them to not be detached. The family must stay intact and be true to the traditions and culture of the family. One must not veer away from the family's closeness and one must not be affected by any disturbance in order to preserve the sanctity of the family.

With this perspective, one can relive the traditional Filipino values of the family. By treating the family as a mystery, one can see clearly that the family is still a living reality and it can still persevere towards the preservation of the sacredness of the Filipino family. This outlook will make a Filipino realize that the family is something that they are already caught up. It is a reality that one is tied into one's own family. Hence, for Marcel, the sentiment of pride that one belongs to a family makes the family as a value.²³⁶ The family is a value to them because they have pride on their own family for they belong to such. There is no denial that any person belongs to a family. It is quite clear that a person is rooted in any family tree and a person has a connection to the bloodline that the person belongs to. This relation makes one realize more that it is very important to recognize the belongingness to a certain family. Thus, the family is a value because of this certain pride, which is constructive, that will remind the Filipino that they are a part of a family.

Furthermore, Marcel suggests that the family is a presence. He states, "Each of us, with the exception of a few rare and unhappy individuals, has, at least on certain occasions, been able to prove by experience the existence of the family as a protective skin placed between himself and a world which is foreign, threatening, hostile to him."²³⁷ This feeling is innate for every individual and it is very important for Filipinos to be reminded that they always have a protective skin which the family has always been to them. The family is presence for it has always been their comfort place. The family has been a home which comforts and lets the person feel safe for there is the sense of trust and solidarity alive inherently in the family. The family must always make the individual feel 'at home' because the family resembles a comforting image to any member. It must really be a protective skin of the person so one will always have the feeling of belongingness and always have a welcoming atmosphere at home. The family must do its best in order to let the individual experience a sense of love and solace in the family. Thus, the Filipino family must look at the family as a mystery, value and presence in order to further cultivate the values and relive the values in which the Filipino family has been trying to uphold.

Marcel was aware that the family will undergo such situations due to the changes that modernization will have. He explained that one must look at marriage as a pact between humanity and life. This statement means that a human being responds to life and one form of responding to this pact between humanity and life is through marriage. Marcel states, "The essential act which constitutes marriage is obviously not the pure and simple mating which is only a human act, common alike to men and animals; it is not just a momentary union, but one which is to last; it is something which is established."²³⁸ Thus, Marcel wants every citizen to envision a marriage which ties will last.

²³⁵ See Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 79.

²³⁶ See Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 76.

²³⁷ Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 77.

²³⁸ Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 85.

This statement of Marcel propagates a viewpoint to every individual. He suggests that marriage, as a sacramental bond, should be preserved. For this reason, Marcel does not want anyone to tolerate divorce because it removes the sanctity of the sacramental union that couples had during marriage. The vows that were made in front of God during marriage were being disregarded when couples result to divorce. With this, one must look at the sacredness of marriage and one must not treat marriage as a simple contract for it has a sacramental bond. The conjugal union during marriage elevates it from other forms of relationships. It must not be treated like an ordinary contract in work in which one can resign any time that one wants. One must always realize the importance of marriage and always be reminded of the vows that one made during marriage.

For Marcel, marital ties can last if the couples have a form of fundamental generosity and availability to each other. This mindset of couples will result into the unity of the family. Fundamental generosity and availability, or *disponibilité* as Marcel calls it, will both make the couple be open and committed to each other. Both of these make one to be more connected to other human being. The two ideas can further urge the couple to be engaged in their relationship. Thus, a sense of *disponibilité* is very much needed to have a claim or establish a deeper connection between couples.

Moreover, for marriage to last, both couples must have the virtue of fidelity and hope. Fidelity is very much needed for couples to last. For the fidelity to be truly genuine, the fidelity of the couple must be creative. Creative fidelity makes the individual be faithful and committed not by any factor but by own will. The fidelity of the couple is not something imposed but is something that comes out naturally because it is genuine. Thus, even though committed, in order to last, the faithfulness of the relationship of the couple requires both constancy and presence of each other. There must be a middle ground which brings the couple together and love each other. Also, there must be physical and spiritual presence between the couple. There must be an intersubjective relationship between the two in order to really have the feeling of being one. Thus, the sincerity of being together and openness to each other must be maintained.

Moreover, this genuine fidelity of the couple that Marcel suggests boils down to a sense of spontaneity. This sense of spontaneity is very important for it will make the fidelity natural and not hypocritical. As Marcel states, “For fidelity as such can only be appreciated by the person whom it is pledged if it offers an essential element of spontaneity, itself radically independent of the will.”²³⁹ Thus, this element of spontaneity is important for fidelity to be genuine. There must not be any other factor but in order to have genuine fidelity. There must not be any hindrance or any reason to be faithful. Fidelity must always be spontaneous and come out naturally. Hence, it is the own will of the couple which makes them faithful to each other.

Also, Marcel states the need for a creative fidelity for couples. Creative fidelity must have a self-knowledge which Marcel gives importance. One must already have a deeper knowledge or understanding of one’s own self before committing to the other. However, Marcel states, “In principle, to commit myself I must first know myself; the fact is, however, that I really know myself only when I have committed myself.”²⁴⁰ With this, one goes back to Marcel’s notion of mystery and reminds couples who make vows and commitments of marriage to always involve the self in order to further reflect and have a stronghold of the commitment made. The commitment made by the person entails also a deeper understanding and knowledge of the self. The members of the couple complement each

²³⁹ Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, 155.

²⁴⁰ Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, 163.

other and help each other have a grasp of their own selves. Thus, one must always have a response to the commitment made. As Marcel says, “All commitment is a response.”²⁴¹

If all stated are found in the relationship, disposition and fidelity of married couples, their marriage will have ties that last. Creative fidelity will only work for the couple if there is genuine love, constancy, sincerity and trust. No one is sure of this when they made the commitment but all are hopeful to maintain their relationship because of an assurance of the involvement of the self. Marcel states:

In swearing fidelity to a person, I do not know what future awaits us or even, in a sense, what person he will be tomorrow; the very fact of my not knowing is what gives worth and weight to my promise. There is no question of response to something which is, absolutely speaking, *given*; and the essential of a being is just that – not being ‘given’ either to another or himself.²⁴²

Thus, fidelity is creative for it will enable the person to be creative together with the partner. With this, Marcel wants the couple to answer the call of creative fidelity. To hope that by being faithful to a higher Being will urge the couple to be faithful also to each other. It will be a sense of absolute fidelity, a hope, that will enable fidelity to be possible. The inspiration of absolute fidelity will make one be creatively faithful.

Hence, Filipino couples can look at their relationship and marriage using Marcel’s ideas. Filipino couples must always have the sense of involvement, responsibility, generosity and availability in order to have a deeper relationship. They must always be reminded of the sacredness of the sacrament that they received during marriage. Moreover, couples must have constancy or a middle ground in order for their relationship to last. They must have a stronghold to the commitments that they had during marriage. Also, they must always be faithful to each other as likened to their faithfulness to God.

Marcel accentuated that the very response of married couples to the pact between humanity and life is to procreate. The conjugal union of the couple will eventually result into procreation. The procreation of the couple will result to a child. This event in life between couples will be the one that fortifies the bond of the couple and also the pact between humanity and life. It is an event which concludes the couple’s commitment to respond to life and commitment to produce life. This is the pinnacle of being a creative being as couples.

Marcel states, “It seems as though the marriage must in some way regulate itself in relation to the offspring, for whose coming preparation has to be made; but it is not less certain, and this observation is of the greatest importance here, that a marriage concluded simply with a view to procreation is not only in danger of degeneration because it does not rest on a firm spiritual basis, but, still more, it is an attack upon what is most worthy of reverence in the specifically human order.”²⁴³ This explicates the creative testimony of the couple to produce a child. The creative testimony of the couple to procreate culminates the response of the couple to the pact between humanity and life.

²⁴¹ Marcel, *Being and Having*, 46.

²⁴² Marcel, *Being and Having*, 47.

²⁴³ Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 87.

Moreover, the child is the binding element of the couple and the couple's family. The child belongs to an indefinite network. Marcel claims:

I can discern enough, however, to enable me to follow this umbilical cord of my temporal antecedents, and to see it taking shape before me yet stretching back beyond my life in an indefinite network which, if traced to its limits would probably be co-extensive with the human race itself. My family, or rather my lineage, is the succession of historical processes by which the human species has become individualised into the single creature that I am.²⁴⁴

The ancestors of the couple are all related and linked to the existence of the child. Thus, the child is the center of the family. The child must be aware of the lineage for the child belongs to the very long family tree that the child has. It is this awareness of the child that helps the parents to also have a deeper connection with each other. The child makes the parents a better couple because of the positive effect that the child brings in the family. The child is the concrete by product of the couple and reminds that the two families of the husband and wife are now really linked with each other. The child represents both the families of the parents.

With this, to further dwell on the child, Marcel envisages a family and home which will form the child into a good human being. The child as a hope for the next generation is Marcel's ideal environment in the family. For this reason, it depends on the hand of the parents in order for the child to be formed well. Marcel states, "It is, then, the sacred duty of parents to behave in such a way towards their child, that one day it will have good reason to acknowledge that it is in their debt."²⁴⁵ It is a debt and credit for the parents to form their child very well. It is their task to lay down the foundations.

Thus, parents must be responsible enough in order to form the child well. They must have a realization that since the child is born out of mutual love, they must have a sense of responsibility towards the child. The child must be cared and formed well in order for them to be responsible beings. The child must not be put into danger and exposed to the bad influences which can negate the proper formation of the child. It is the duty of the parents to be the first educators of the child for they will be the first persons that will affect in the process of socialization of the child.

Hence, Filipino parents must be the one responsible to the formation of their children. They must give importance to the child for the child is the most basic common ground for the married couple. The child is the one that is linked between both the families of the married couple. Thus, the child must be given importance. Moreover, parents must not treat their children as objects. Parents must give the love and comfort that the child needs. Also, the child must be formed properly in order to be a hope for the next generation. Thus, the child will be the springboard for the next generation of families. In addition to, parents must be reminded that their marriage is not limited to the commitment of husband to his wife, wife to her husband, but the commitment of the couple to the family which they will raise, in turn, their commitment in the society in which they belong to, as active agents of bringing about good citizens from their family, and living as morally upright citizens themselves.

Conclusion

²⁴⁴ Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 71.

²⁴⁵ Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 91.

The prevailing traditional values of close family ties, religiosity, respect accorded to elders and affection for the aged are challenged by the influence of the West and modernization. The sacredness of marriage is also affected by modernization. The growing number of infidelity and divorce rate shows how Filipinos are losing their grasp in their relationships. The loyalty they have is lessened. Some relationships also do not result to marriage but just result to cohabitation or 'live-in'. Because of the problems they face, parents now also do not have time to form their children properly. Child abuse and child labor are also increasing. The importance of the child in the family is having a change of outlook. Solo-parenthood and cases of infidelity greatly contributed to the shift of landscape in the formation of the child and in the structure of the family.

For this reason, one must always be reminded not to detach their selves from their own families even though some live distant from each other. They must always be reminded that they are still involved in their own families. As Marcel states:

As for me, who devote myself to this operation, I am outside (above or below, if you like) the facts with which it deals. But when it involves realities closely bound up with my existence, realities which unquestionably influence my existence as such, I cannot conscientiously proceed in this way.²⁴⁶

This perspective of Marcel suggests one to always look at their families as something that involves them. The very "I" of the individual is never detached from the family. The person is always connected and involved in the family that the person belongs.

Moreover, Filipinos must always value their families. They must always have a sense of pride. They must be proud that they belong to a family for their own families are already part of their historicity. Filipinos also must love each member of the family and be present and available to any family member in order to further deepen the bond. In addition to, one must maintain its closeness to their own families because they will always be the 'protective skin' amidst all social institutions. The family will always be the one to bring comfort and love to the individual. The family is always full of love and care. The family will always be home. Also, Filipinos must be reminded to keep marriage sacred. The sacramental union that marriage provides must be maintained and the vows committed must be kept. The oaths and promises of the couple to each other must be upheld. The sacramental bond that marriage constituted must be maintained.

The Filipino couples must also be faithful to each other. They must have generosity and availability to each other. They must have constancy in order to have a common ground. Their fidelity to each other must be genuine and come out of spontaneity. It must not be forced but genuinely or naturally comes out of the individual. Their fidelity must be creative.

As the cases of child labor and child abuse go up, Filipinos must be reminded to look at the importance of the child. The child is the one which strengthens the union of the couple and the families of the couple. The child must be seen as a blessing for it is the child who gives hope for the next generation and accesses what is to come. Parents must be responsible enough to form their child into a good and responsible beings. Love and respect must also be given to the child.

Due to modernization and influences that the times have brought, the Filipino family has lost some of its important values. The heaviness and noisiness of modernization changed the landscape of the Filipino family. It changed the perspective of many individuals. Even though some of the traditional values of the Filipino family are deteriorating, there is still a glimpse of hope for these values to be revived. Thus, Gabriel Marcel's *The Mystery of the Family* can be of help and be used as lenses in

²⁴⁶ Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, 68.

order to see the situation of the family more clearly. For traditional Filipino family values to be relived, one must always be reminded that the family is a mystery. Filipinos must always be proud of their own families, love their own families and respect their own families. Also, parents must remain faithful to each other and form their children well. Hence, one can always hope in Thee for the Filipino family to regain its remarkable character.

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