

Beyond Understanding Pariwara: A Philosophical Journey Toward Authentic Being

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Abstract

This paper examines the Filipino concept of *pariwara* and reinterprets it through existential, ethical, and Filipino philosophical perspectives. In common usage, *pariwara* refers to a person whose life, behavior, or choices have gone astray, often carrying negative judgments of irresponsibility, moral failure, or social disconnection. However, this paper challenges the assumption that being *pariwara* constitutes a permanent identity. It argues that *pariwara* is better understood as a condition of existential disorientation that may become a turning point toward self-understanding, moral responsibility, and authentic being. The study employs conceptual analysis and hermeneutic-phenomenological reflection to examine the lived and philosophical meaning of *pariwara* and to place it in dialogue with Western existentialism, virtue ethics, the philosophy of hope, and Filipino philosophical psychology. The discussion draws from Sartre's concepts of freedom, choice, and responsibility; Heidegger's distinction between inauthenticity and authenticity; Kierkegaard's understanding of becoming oneself; Aristotle's theory of habituation and character formation; and Gabriel Marcel's philosophy of hope. These perspectives are complemented by the Filipino concepts of *kapwa* and *loob*, which emphasize that authentic personhood is relational and inseparable from responsibility toward others. The paper proposes a transformative movement from *pariwara* toward authentic being through recognition, reflection, responsibility, choice, practice, transformation, and renewed relational participation. Such transformation does not erase past wrongdoing or remove accountability but requires confronting the past while refusing to let it determine the future. Ultimately, the study argues that *pariwara* should not signify the end of a person's moral or existential journey. Rather, it can represent a moment of possibility through which individuals may recover agency, rebuild character, restore meaningful relationships, and consciously pursue a more authentic way of being.

I. Introduction

The Filipino term **pariwara** generally refers to a person who has gone astray from the right path. In contemporary Tagalog usage, *pariwara* may describe someone who is careless or irresponsible regarding the consequences of one's actions, or someone whose life or behavior has become misguided or off-track (Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino [KWF], 2025). In everyday social discourse, however, the label may carry a strong negative judgment, suggesting that an individual has failed morally, neglected personal responsibilities, or become a disappointment to family and society. This raises an important philosophical question: *Does becoming pariwara mean that a person has permanently lost the possibility of becoming good?*

Philosophy offers a more nuanced perspective. Rather than viewing waywardness as a fixed identity, existential and ethical philosophy understands human existence as involving possibility, choice, responsibility, and transformation. Sartre's existentialism, for example, argues that human beings are not defined by a predetermined essence but continually constitute themselves through their choices and actions (Sartre, 2007). Similarly, Aristotle's virtue ethics understands character as something cultivated through habituated action rather than something permanently fixed from birth (Aristotle, 2009).

This paper argues that **pariwara** should not be understood as a permanent identity but as a condition of existential disorientation and a possible turning point toward self-knowledge **and** authentic being. Through reflection, responsible freedom, moral practice, and hope, individuals can confront their past, recognize their possibilities, and reconstruct a meaningful way of living.

Methodology

This is a philosophical, not an empirical, study. It proceeds through conceptual analysis and hermeneutic-phenomenological reflection: examining the lived meaning of *pariwara* as it functions in Filipino moral vocabulary, and placing that meaning in dialogue with primary philosophical texts and concepts from both the Western existentialist tradition and Filipino philosophy. The method is comparative and interpretive rather than experimental: its aim is not to test a hypothesis but to construct a coherent, defensible philosophical account of a moral-existential phenomenon, and to draw out its implications for how a person might actually live.

II. Understanding : Etymology and Cultural Context

II. Understanding *Pariwara*: Etymology and Cultural Context

The root word *pariwara* appears in Tagalog with a semantic field that centers on misdirection, moral decline, irresponsibility, and misfortune. Contemporary dictionaries define *pariwara* as referring to one who brings misfortune or, in more common usage, one whose life or conduct has gone astray. Derived forms such as *mapariwara* ("to suffer ruin," "to go astray," or "to experience moral decline") and *napapariwara* ("to become corrupted" or "to fall into vice") are especially associated with young people whose lives are perceived as having been shaped by harmful influences or a lack of proper guidance.

Some lexical analyses trace *pariwara* to the prefix *pa-* combined with the root *diwara*, although the historical etymology remains open to further linguistic investigation. Whether or not this derivation is historically definitive, the association is philosophically suggestive, since *diwa* in Filipino thought signifies the inner spirit, consciousness, or animating principle of the person. Read in this light, *pariwara* evokes not merely behavioral failure but a condition in which one's inner orientation has become disordered or misdirected.

In everyday Filipino usage, *pariwara* is fundamentally relational before it is individual. One does not simply become *pariwara* in isolation; rather, the condition emerges through the breakdown of relationships—with family, community, and the shared moral expectations that sustain social life. The term therefore functions less as a description of isolated vice than as an indication that a person's life has become detached from the network of responsibilities and mutual recognition that ordinarily give it coherence.

This relational understanding distinguishes *pariwara* from more individualistic accounts of moral failure found in certain strands of Western moral philosophy. Filipino philosophy has long emphasized that personhood is constituted through *kapwa*—a shared identity in which the self is always understood in

relation to others rather than as an autonomous individual (Enriquez, 1992; Mercado, 1974). From this perspective, to be *pariwara* is not merely to make poor moral choices but to become estranged from the relational horizon that constitutes authentic human existence. It is a condition of existential dislocation: the self drifting away from family, community, and ultimately from its own *diwa*. Conceived in this way, *pariwara* becomes more than a cultural label; it may be understood as an existential structure whose dynamics invite comparison with philosophical accounts of alienation and inauthentic existence.

III. as Existential Dislocation: A Phenomenological Interpretation

III. *Pariwara* as Existential Dislocation: A Phenomenological Interpretation

Although *pariwara* is commonly understood as a moral or social judgment, its deeper significance emerges when interpreted phenomenologically—as a lived condition of estrangement rather than merely a category of deviant behavior. Phenomenology is concerned not simply with what a person does but with how the world is experienced from the first-person perspective (Husserl, 1970). From this perspective, *pariwara* may be understood as describing a transformation in one's mode of being-in-the-world: the gradual loss of meaningful orientation toward oneself, others, and the world that previously provided direction and purpose.

This interpretation resonates with the relational ontology articulated in Filipino philosophy. Virgilio Enriquez (1992) argues that the Filipino self is fundamentally constituted through **kapwa**, a concept that exceeds the English notion of "other" by emphasizing a shared identity and mutual personhood. Likewise, Leonardo Mercado (1974) maintains that Filipino conceptions of the person are inseparable from communal relationships and moral reciprocity. Within this framework, becoming *pariwara* is not simply an individual moral lapse but a rupture in the relational fabric that constitutes the self. The disorder lies not only in conduct but in the collapse of meaningful participation in the community that sustains personal identity.

Such an interpretation also invites comparison with Martin Heidegger's existential analysis of **Verfallen** ("fallenness") in *Being and Time*. Heidegger (1962) argues that human existence (*Dasein*) is often absorbed into the anonymous social world of **das Man** ("the They"), where one's possibilities are dictated by conformity, distraction, and everyday publicness rather than authentic self-understanding. Fallenness is therefore not a moral defect but an existential tendency in which one loses oneself in modes of existence determined by external expectations. Although Heidegger's account emerges from a very different intellectual tradition, the structural similarity is noteworthy: both *pariwara* and *Verfallen* describe a condition in which human beings become estranged from their proper way of being.

Important differences, however, should not be overlooked. Heidegger's analysis is fundamentally ontological, describing universal structures of human existence rather than prescribing moral norms (Heidegger, 1962). By contrast, *pariwara* remains embedded within Filipino moral discourse and communal life, where judgments about becoming *napapariwara* carry ethical and social implications. The concept therefore unites existential and ethical dimensions in a manner that Heidegger deliberately

separates. Rather than merely describing existential inauthenticity, *pariwara* also reflects the communal consequences of a fractured relationship with family, society, and shared moral expectations.

This distinction illustrates the value of engaging Filipino philosophical concepts in dialogue with Western existential thought without reducing one to the other. Comparative philosophy, as Raimon Panikkar (1988) argues, seeks neither assimilation nor simple equivalence but a "dialogical dialogue" in which concepts illuminate one another while preserving their cultural distinctiveness. Accordingly, *pariwara* should not be treated as the Filipino translation of Heideggerian fallenness. Instead, it may be understood as a culturally situated existential category that reveals how alienation is experienced within a relational worldview, where personal identity is inseparable from obligations to others.

Seen in this light, *pariwara* names an existential condition characterized by disorientation, fractured belonging, and the erosion of meaningful relationships. Its significance extends beyond moral instruction to disclose a distinctly Filipino understanding of existential alienation—one in which the loss of self is inseparable from the loss of community. Such a perspective contributes to contemporary comparative philosophy by demonstrating that existential concerns are not the exclusive domain of European thought but emerge through culturally specific conceptions of personhood, responsibility, and shared existence (Enriquez, 1992; Mercado, 1974).

IV. Understanding Beyond Social Judgment

IV. Understanding *Pariwara* Beyond Social Judgment

In Filipino society, *pariwara* is more than a descriptive label; it carries profound moral and social implications. The term is commonly associated with failure, shame, irresponsibility, moral decline, and the inability to fulfill expected familial and social roles. A person described as *pariwara* is often perceived not merely as someone who has made poor decisions but as someone who has deviated from socially accepted standards of conduct. This negative connotation is reflected in the *KWF Diksiyonaryo ng Wikang Filipino*, which defines *pariwara* as being careless or negligent regarding the consequences of one's actions, as well as misguided or off-track (Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino [KWF], 2025). In everyday discourse, therefore, the label frequently functions as a moral judgment rather than a neutral description of one's circumstances.

Yet, from a philosophical perspective, there is a crucial distinction between **what a person has done** and **what a person is capable of becoming**. Equating a person's identity entirely with past actions assumes that character is fixed and immutable—that one's mistakes permanently define one's essence. Such an assumption reflects a deterministic understanding of human identity, where an individual's future is bound by past failures. However, existential philosophy rejects this static conception of the self by emphasizing freedom, responsibility, and the continuous process of becoming (Crowell, 2020).

This perspective is particularly evident in the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre's famous proposition that **"existence precedes essence"** argues that human beings are not born with a predetermined nature or fixed identity that dictates who they must become (Sartre, 2007). Unlike objects, whose purpose is

determined before they exist, human beings first exist and then gradually define themselves through their choices, actions, and commitments (Sartre, 2007). Identity, therefore, is not something inherited once and for all but something continually constructed through lived experience. Every decision contributes to the ongoing formation of the self, making human identity fundamentally dynamic rather than static (Crowell, 2020).

Viewed through this existential lens, *pariwara* can be understood not as an essential identity but as a **condition** or mode of existence. It signifies a state of being lost, morally disoriented, irresponsible, or disconnected from one's values and responsibilities. Such a condition may accurately describe a person's present circumstances or even a prolonged period of life, yet it does not constitute the person's permanent essence. An individual may have chosen destructive paths, neglected responsibilities, or acted recklessly, but these choices do not irrevocably determine who that individual must remain. Because human beings retain the capacity for freedom and self-determination, they also retain the possibility of choosing differently (Sartre, 2007).

This distinction is philosophically significant because it separates **identity** from **condition**. To say that a person is experiencing a *pariwara* condition is different from asserting that the person **is**, by nature, *pariwara*. The former recognizes the reality of moral failure without reducing the whole person to that failure; the latter risks transforming a temporary state into an unchangeable identity. Existentialism resists this reduction by insisting that every individual remains open to new possibilities and future self-definition through acts of choice and responsibility (Crowell, 2020). Therefore, the concept of *pariwara* may be understood not as a final definition of a person's being but as a temporary or changeable condition within the ongoing process of human becoming.

V. Existentialism: Freedom Despite Failure

Existentialist philosophy provides one of the strongest foundations for understanding the possibility of overcoming *pariwara*. Jean-Paul Sartre's statement that **existence precedes essence** challenges the idea that a person's identity is predetermined. Human beings continually constitute themselves through their choices, projects, and actions (Sartre, 2007). Consequently, a person who has previously made destructive choices is not necessarily condemned to reproduce those choices indefinitely. However, existential freedom should not be confused with unrestricted freedom. Sartre connects freedom with **responsibility**. Because individuals participate in creating themselves through their choices, they must also assume responsibility for those choices.

From this perspective, overcoming *pariwara* requires more than simply wishing to change. It requires the individual to confront previous choices honestly and begin making different ones. Søren Kierkegaard provides another important perspective. His philosophy of despair concerns the individual's relationship with the self. The self is not simply a fixed object but a developing relation that must come to terms with itself. Authentic selfhood therefore involves confronting one's existence rather than escaping from it (Kierkegaard, 1980). Contemporary scholarship on Kierkegaard similarly emphasizes his conception of

the self as a relation that continually develops through one's concrete way of living (Davenport, 2012). For someone who has become *pariwara*, therefore, the painful recognition of failure can paradoxically become the beginning of self-understanding.

VI. Heidegger and the Possibility of Authentic Being

Martin Heidegger's philosophy further deepens this argument through his distinction between **inauthenticity and authenticity**. For Heidegger, human beings often become absorbed in what he calls *das Man*—the anonymous “they” of social existence, where individuals live according to prevailing expectations, conventions, and judgments rather than confronting their own unique possibilities. In such a mode of existence, a person may allow society to define who they are instead of actively taking responsibility for their own being. Authentic existence, by contrast, requires individuals to recognize themselves as beings with possibilities and to make meaningful choices in relation to those possibilities (Heidegger, 1962).

This perspective is particularly relevant to the experience of being labeled as *pariwara*. A person who is repeatedly defined by society through this label may gradually internalize it, accepting the social judgment as a fixed identity. Over time, the individual may begin to think: “*This is who I am, and I cannot become anything else.*” In this way, the person becomes confined by an external definition rather than engaging with the possibilities that remain open within their own existence.

Heidegger's concept of authenticity challenges this form of resignation. Authentic existence does not mean rejecting one's past or denying the influence of social conditions; rather, it involves confronting one's situation and recognizing that one still has the capacity to choose how to respond to it. A person's history may shape their existence, but it does not have to completely determine their future. Therefore, the movement from *pariwara* to authentic being can be understood as a transformation:

from being defined by others → to confronting one's own existence → to recognizing personal possibilities → to choosing responsibly.

The aim is not to erase the past but to reclaim one's relationship with it—to understand past experiences as part of one's existence while refusing to let them become the sole definition of who one can become.

VII. Virtue Ethics: Character Can Be Rebuilt

Aristotle's virtue ethics provides another important philosophical foundation for understanding the possibility of human transformation. Rather than viewing character as something completely fixed, Aristotle understands moral character as something that is formed through repeated patterns of action. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he argues that virtues of character develop through habituation: people become just by performing just actions, courageous by performing courageous actions, and temperate by repeatedly practicing temperate conduct (Aristotle, 2009). Contemporary scholarship likewise

emphasizes habituation as central to Aristotle's account of character formation, while also suggesting that habituation need not be confined exclusively to childhood or early upbringing (Oliveira, 2024).

This perspective has significant implications for understanding the *pariwarā*. If a person has acquired patterns of irresponsibility, dishonesty, impulsiveness, or other destructive forms of conduct, these patterns need not be interpreted as the person's immutable essence. They may instead be understood as dispositions that have been reinforced through repeated actions and social circumstances. Consequently, the possibility of transformation lies in the person's capacity to establish new patterns of conduct through sustained practice.

A person who has repeatedly acted irresponsibly, for example, may begin to cultivate responsibility through consistent fulfillment of obligations. Someone who has developed a pattern of dishonesty may begin cultivating truthfulness through repeated acts of honesty. Similarly, an individual whose life has been characterized by destructive impulses may gradually develop greater self-control by repeatedly choosing more responsible responses.

Nevertheless, Aristotle's position should not be reduced to the simplistic claim that changing one's habits is easy. Habits become incorporated into one's character, and established dispositions can therefore be difficult to change. Moreover, virtuous action requires more than mechanical repetition. Aristotle's account also emphasizes practical wisdom (*phronesis*), through which a person learns to deliberate about what is appropriate in particular circumstances. Virtue, therefore, involves not merely doing something repeatedly, but progressively learning **how, when, why, and to what extent** an action ought to be performed.

This makes Aristotle particularly relevant to the philosophical interpretation of *pariwarā*. The label may describe a person's present conduct, but it does not necessarily exhaust the person's capacity for moral development. A person's past actions are significant because they contribute to character formation; however, character formation also remains connected to future choices and practices. Thus, the philosophical question need not be limited to:

Is this person good or bad?

It can instead be reframed as:

What kind of person is this individual becoming through repeated choices and actions?

This shift is philosophically significant. It moves the discussion away from a static judgment of identity toward a developmental understanding of character. The person who has gone astray is not thereby reduced permanently to the identity of one who has gone astray. Transformation, in an Aristotelian sense, involves the gradual cultivation of better dispositions through deliberate and sustained practice.

VIII. The Philosophy of Hope: From Despair to Possibility

Yet the possibility of transformation requires more than the recognition that change is theoretically possible. It also requires **hope**. A person who has been socially defined by failure, irresponsibility, or destructive behavior may eventually internalize that judgment and come to believe that change is impossible. At this point, the problem becomes not merely behavioral but existential: the individual may lose the capacity to imagine a meaningful future beyond the identity imposed by the past.

This is where the philosophy of **Gabriel Marcel** becomes particularly relevant. Marcel distinguishes hope from mere optimism or wishful thinking. Hope emerges precisely in situations where despair appears possible. Despair closes the horizon of possibility by suggesting that nothing meaningful remains to be expected, whereas hope represents an affirmation that the future is not completely exhausted by present circumstances. The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* describes Marcel's conception of hope as an active response to despair and emphasizes that genuine hope is neither passive resignation nor simple optimism.

Marcel's understanding of hope is therefore particularly valuable for interpreting the experience of the *pariwara*. Social stigma can gradually become an existential judgment:

This is already who I am. I have failed before. People already know me in this way. Therefore, there is no meaningful possibility of becoming someone different.

Such a conclusion transforms a history of actions into a permanent identity. Marcel's philosophy challenges precisely this closure. Hope interrupts the assumption that the present condition constitutes the total meaning of one's existence. It keeps open the possibility that one's life may disclose meanings and possibilities that cannot yet be fully seen.

Hope, therefore, should not be understood as simply believing that everything will become better. It is better understood as an **openness to possibility in the midst of difficulty**. This distinction is important because authentic transformation does not require denying the seriousness of one's past. Rather, it requires acknowledging the past without allowing it to become an absolute definition of the future.

The philosophical significance of hope becomes even clearer when considered alongside Paulo Freire's concept of transformative praxis. In *Pedagogy of Hope*, Freire rejects the idea of hope as passive optimism. Hope is meaningful when it is connected with critical consciousness, struggle, participation, and action. In this sense, hope becomes a condition for human beings to recognize that reality can be questioned and transformed rather than merely accepted as inevitable.

Applied to the *pariwara*, this means that transformation requires the individual to move beyond merely recognizing that change is desirable. The person must critically examine the conditions, decisions, relationships, and habits that contributed to the present situation and then participate actively in creating different patterns of life.

This produces an important philosophical relationship among **reflection, action, and hope**:

- **Reflection without action → awareness without transformation.**
- **Action without reflection → behavioral change without deeper self-understanding.**
- **Hope without action → possibility imagined but never realized.**
- **Reflection + responsible action + hope → the possibility of transformative becoming.**

In this framework, overcoming *pariwara* is not simply a matter of becoming socially acceptable. It is a deeper process of **reconstructing the self through conscious choices, ethical practice, and renewed possibilities for the future**. Aristotle explains how character can be cultivated through practice; Marcel explains how hope can preserve openness to possibility in the face of despair; and Freire emphasizes how reflection and action can become praxis for transformation.

Taken together, these perspectives suggest that the person who has gone astray should not be understood merely through the lens of what he or she **has been**. The more important philosophical question concerns what the person is **capable of becoming**. The past matters, but it need not become the final horizon of the self.

IX. Filipino Philosophical Psychology

Where Western existentialism often begins with the individual's solitary encounter with freedom, responsibility, and the burden of self-creation, Filipino philosophy emphasizes that personhood is fundamentally relational. In the works of Leonardo Mercado's linguistic phenomenology and Virgilio Enriquez's *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, the Filipino self is not understood as an isolated consciousness but as a being constituted through relationships, shared meanings, and communal participation (Mercado, 1974; Enriquez, 1992). The concept of *kapwa*—often translated as the “shared self” or “the self in the other”—expresses the idea that the boundary between self and others is not absolute. One's dignity, identity, and moral obligations emerge through participation in a wider human community (Enriquez, 1992; Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000).

Closely related to *kapwa* is the Filipino concept of *loob*, which refers not merely to an inner psychological space but to the person's moral interiority, will, and authentic orientation toward action. For Mercado, Filipino concepts of personhood reveal a view of the human being in which interior life is inseparable from lived relationships and moral expression (Mercado, 1974). This inner disposition becomes visible through virtues such as *kagandahang-loob* (a gracious and benevolent disposition toward others) and *pakikiramdam* (a shared sensitivity or intuitive awareness of another's feelings and situation), both of which demonstrate that authentic action is realized through attentiveness to others (Enriquez, 1992).

From this perspective, becoming *pariwara* can be understood as a disruption of *kapwa* and a disorientation of *loob*: the self loses its moral and relational bearings when its connection to others, community, and shared responsibility is weakened or neglected. The condition is therefore not simply a private failure of the individual but a rupture within the network of relationships that sustains human flourishing. The movement beyond *pariwara* cannot be achieved solely through solitary self-assertion, as

a strictly individualist reading of existentialism might suggest. Rather, transformation requires both an inward act of will and a restoration of relational belonging.

This does not reject the existentialist insight that individuals must ultimately assume responsibility for their own choices. Thinkers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Heidegger emphasize that authenticity involves confronting one's freedom, finitude, and responsibility rather than escaping into inauthentic forms of existence (Heidegger, 1962; Sartre, 1956). Yet Filipino philosophy expands this insight by insisting that the self who chooses is never completely detached from others. Authentic being is achieved with and through relationships—with family, mentors, and community—even though the decisive movement toward transformation must still arise from one's own *loob*. The dialogue between Western existential resolve and Filipino relational grounding therefore provides the philosophical foundation for understanding the journey beyond *pariwara*: a journey in which the self is renewed not through isolation, but through the recovery of meaningful connection with others.

X. Authentic Being Within Kapwa: A Filipino Synthesis

Here the Filipino inflection of this journey becomes philosophically significant because it marks a departure from a purely individualist interpretation of authenticity associated with Heidegger and Sartre. The self that emerges from this transformation is not a self that achieves freedom by escaping *kapwa*; rather, it is a self that learns to inhabit *kapwa* more consciously and responsibly. In the Filipino ethical framework articulated by Virgilio Enriquez, *kapwa* does not merely signify social belonging or the presence of others but expresses a fundamental shared identity in which the self is understood through relationality (Enriquez, 1992). Authenticity, therefore, cannot mean radical separation from others, because the Filipino conception of the person begins from the recognition that the self is always already constituted through relationships.

The formerly *pariwara* person does not become authentic by severing ties with family and community in pursuit of an abstract ideal of individual autonomy. Such a movement would merely replace one form of inauthenticity with another: the unquestioning submission to the expectations of the social world described by Heidegger as *das Man* (the “they”) with the Sartrean fantasy of a completely self-created individual detached from the conditions that make human existence possible (Heidegger, 1962; Sartre, 1956). Sartre's emphasis on freedom and self-creation remains valuable, but when interpreted without attention to relational existence, it risks overlooking the ways in which human identity is formed through history, culture, and encounter with others.

Read through the Filipino concepts of *loob* and *kapwa*, authentic being is instead the capacity to remain genuinely connected while no longer allowing one's existence to be determined entirely by the judgments, expectations, or recognition of others. The work of *pagkatao*—the ongoing formation of personhood—requires neither the rejection of community nor passive conformity to it. Rather, it involves developing an interior freedom (*loob*) that allows one to participate in relationships without losing responsibility for one's own becoming (Mercado, 1994; Alejo, 1990).

From this perspective, the return of the formerly *pariwara* person to family and community is not a return as a rehabilitated outsider seeking approval or forgiveness. It is the return of a person who has undertaken the difficult work of self-understanding and moral transformation, and who can now encounter others not as a defendant awaiting judgment but as an equal participant in shared humanity. Authenticity, therefore, is not the achievement of isolated selfhood but the ability to stand within *kapwa* with greater awareness, freedom, and responsibility.

XI. Real-Life Examples of Transformation

The philosophical argument concerning the possibility of transformation becomes more intelligible when examined alongside concrete human experiences. Nevertheless, such examples must be approached with caution. Personal transformation does not erase previous wrongdoing, nor does professional success automatically constitute moral redemption. Rather, transformation should be understood as a continuing process through which a person recognizes the consequences of past actions, assumes responsibility, reorients his or her values, and gradually develops a different way of living. In this sense, the significance of transformation lies not in forgetting the past but in refusing to allow the past to become the final definition of the self.

A classical example can be found in **Augustine of Hippo's *Confessions***. Augustine presents his earlier life as characterized by moral and spiritual restlessness, disordered desires, and a search for fulfillment in pursuits that ultimately failed to satisfy him. His account of stealing pears, for example, is particularly significant because he reflects on the act not simply as an isolated offense but as an indication of the disordered condition of his will. His conversion, narrated most famously through the garden scene in Milan, emerges after an intense internal struggle concerning the direction of his life. Augustine's transformation was also mediated by relationships and intellectual influences, including his mother Monica, the bishop Ambrose, and the example of others whose conversions challenged him to reconsider his own life. In Book VIII of the *Confessions*, Augustine describes this struggle as a conflict within the will and portrays conversion as a decisive reorientation of his existence toward God (Augustine, 2008).

Augustine's significance for the present discussion lies precisely in the way he interprets his past. He does not deny or erase the person he once was. Instead, he incorporates his past into a larger narrative of self-understanding, responsibility, grace, and transformation. His later identity as a bishop, theologian, and philosopher consequently did not simply replace his former self; rather, his earlier experiences became part of the story through which he understood the human condition. His *Confessions* therefore provides an important philosophical model for understanding transformation as **reorientation rather than erasure**. The person who has gone astray may become different, but that difference emerges through confronting, interpreting, and responding to the past.

A contemporary example may be seen in the life of **Robert Downey Jr.** His career experienced significant disruption as a result of substance-abuse problems and related legal difficulties, including

imprisonment. His subsequent recovery and return to sustained professional success demonstrate that a troubled period in a person's life does not necessarily determine the entire trajectory of that person's existence. His later recognition, including his Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor for *Oppenheimer* in 2024, illustrates a dramatic professional resurgence after years of instability (Associated Press, 2024). However, it would be philosophically inaccurate to conclude that his professional achievements by themselves constitute moral redemption. What makes his story relevant is the broader movement from destructive patterns toward recovery, stability, responsibility, and renewed participation in social and professional life.

Danny Trejo provides another particularly relevant example because his transformation is connected not only with personal recovery but also with service to others. Trejo spent years in California's prison system and struggled with substance use before achieving long-term sobriety. After his release from prison, he worked as a substance-abuse counselor and later entered the film industry. In accounts of his life, Trejo has repeatedly connected his recovery with helping other people struggling with addiction. His experience therefore illustrates a form of transformation in which the individual's painful past becomes a source of empathy and motivation to assist others rather than simply something to be concealed (Trejo & Logue, 2021; CBS News, 2023).

A Philippine example may be found in **Manny Pacquiao**, although it should likewise be interpreted carefully. Pacquiao's early life was marked by poverty, interrupted schooling, and the necessity of working and boxing at a young age. His later public accounts have also acknowledged earlier involvement with drugs and other behaviors that he subsequently sought to abandon. In the early 2010s, media reports documented a significant change in his public lifestyle, including his rejection of gambling and other longtime vices and his increasing identification with a faith-centered life (Graham, 2012). Pacquiao himself later acknowledged that he had experimented with various drugs as a teenager, while describing his subsequent desire for change (Lema & Baldwin, 2016). His life story can therefore be read as an example of reorientation: from conditions of poverty and risky behavior toward discipline, religious commitment, athletic achievement, and public service. Nevertheless, his later political career should not be treated as proof of complete moral transformation. The philosophical significance lies instead in the possibility that an individual can consciously redirect the course of his or her life.

These examples suggest that *pariwara* should not be understood as a permanent ontological condition. To describe someone as *pariwara* may identify a period in which the person has become disconnected from socially, morally, or personally valued ways of living, but it should not necessarily become a permanent judgment about who that person is. A human being possesses the capacity for reflection, responsibility, habituation, and reorientation. The possibility of transformation therefore rests on the distinction between **what a person has done and what a person may yet become**.

From this perspective, transformation does not mean denying one's history. It means confronting one's history and responding to it differently. Augustine's conversion, Trejo's recovery and service to others, Downey's rebuilding of his life and career, and Pacquiao's publicly documented change in lifestyle

demonstrate, in different ways, that identity can develop through significant periods of rupture and reconstruction. These stories should not be romanticized, and they do not prove that every person who has gone astray will necessarily change. They do, however, challenge the assumption that a person's worst period must constitute his or her permanent identity.

The philosophical point, therefore, does not ultimately depend upon celebrity examples. The deeper argument is that **human beings should not be reduced to a single period of failure**. A person may be responsible for past actions while simultaneously possessing the capacity to become otherwise. Transformation becomes meaningful when it involves recognition of wrongdoing, acceptance of responsibility, deliberate change in patterns of action, and the gradual development of a more integrated way of being. In this sense, moving beyond *pariwara* is not simply a movement from being “bad” to being “good”; it is a **process of recovering agency, reconstructing one's character, and becoming more authentically responsible for one's existence**.

XII. From Pariwara to Authentic Being: A Philosophical Movement of Transformation

Philosophy therefore invites a reinterpretation of *pariwara*. Rather than treating *pariwara* as a permanent identity or an essential description of the person, it may be more productively understood as a **condition of existential disorientation**—a situation in which an individual becomes estranged from previously held values, responsibilities, relationships, or possibilities for a meaningful life. Such a reading is consistent with existential philosophy, which generally rejects the idea that a person's present condition completely determines what that person can become. Existentialists emphasize that human beings remain capable of interpreting their circumstances, making choices, assuming responsibility, and projecting themselves toward possibilities that are not yet realized (Sartre, 2007).

From this perspective, *pariwara* should not be understood as the final definition of a person but as a **starting point for existential movement**. The individual may be described conceptually as moving through the following process:

Pariwara → Recognition → Reflection → Responsibility → Choice → Practice → Transformation → Authentic Being

The first movement is **recognition**. Transformation begins when the individual acknowledges that something in his or her way of living has gone wrong. Recognition requires confronting one's actual situation rather than denying it, blaming others entirely, or allowing the judgment of society to become one's complete self-understanding. In an existential framework, this confrontation is important because authenticity requires the individual to take ownership of his or her existence rather than simply allowing social expectations or previous patterns of behavior to determine who one is. Heidegger's analysis of authenticity similarly emphasizes the movement from an unowned existence toward a more resolute appropriation of one's possibilities (Heidegger, 1962).

The second movement is **reflection**. Recognition raises deeper questions: *Who have I become? Why have I lived this way? What choices, relationships, circumstances, and habits have contributed to my present condition? What kind of person can I still become?* Reflection transforms an experience of being “lost” into an opportunity for self-understanding. This movement resonates strongly with Kierkegaard's conception of the self as something that must continually relate to itself. The self is not merely a fixed object but an ongoing task of becoming oneself. In this sense, the individual who reflects upon *pariwara* begins to move from simply being described by a social label toward actively interpreting and taking responsibility for his or her own existence.

The third movement is **responsibility**. Recognition and reflection become ethically meaningful only when the individual accepts responsibility for his or her actions. Responsibility, however, should be distinguished from the destructive internalization of stigma. To accept responsibility is to acknowledge wrongdoing, its consequences, and the need for change; it is not to conclude that one's wrongdoing constitutes one's entire identity. Sartre's existentialism places freedom and responsibility at the center of human existence: individuals are situated within particular circumstances, but they are also responsible for how they respond to those circumstances and for the choices through which they shape their lives (Sartre, 2007).

The fourth movement is **choice**. Once the individual recognizes responsibility, another possibility becomes visible. The person can choose to continue reproducing destructive patterns or begin to construct a different way of living. This does not mean that human beings possess unlimited freedom or can simply erase the effects of their past. Rather, existential freedom concerns the capacity to respond differently within the concrete circumstances in which one finds oneself. Sartre's account of existence emphasizes that identity is not completely predetermined; through choices and actions, individuals participate in the making of who they become (Sartre, 2007).

The fifth movement is **practice**. A decision to change is insufficient unless it becomes embodied in conduct. Here, Aristotle's virtue ethics provides an important complement to existentialism. For Aristotle, moral character is developed through repeated action and habituation. Virtues such as courage, justice, and temperance become stable dispositions through practice rather than through mere intellectual recognition (Aristotle, 2009). Thus, a person who wishes to move beyond *pariwara* must translate reflection and choice into concrete patterns of living. Honesty must be practiced, responsibility must be practiced, discipline must be practiced, and respect for others must be practiced. Transformation therefore becomes not a single dramatic event but a gradual formation of character.

The sixth movement is **transformation**. Transformation should not be interpreted as the erasure of the past. A person's previous actions remain part of his or her history, and genuine transformation does not require pretending that those actions never occurred. Instead, transformation involves developing a different relationship to the past. What previously functioned only as a source of shame, stigma, or repetition can become a source of knowledge, responsibility, and moral learning. The individual does not

become a different person by denying the past; rather, the person becomes different by responding to the past through new choices and practices.

The final movement is **authentic being**. Heidegger's notion of authenticity is useful here because authenticity involves taking ownership of one's existence and possibilities rather than simply allowing one's life to be dictated by anonymous social expectations. Inauthentic existence can involve losing oneself in what "one" is expected to do, while authenticity involves a more deliberate appropriation of one's own possibilities and responsibilities (Heidegger, 1962). In this sense, the movement from *pariwara* toward authentic being does not mean becoming perfect. It means becoming more conscious, responsible, self-directed, and committed to a way of life that one can genuinely own.

These philosophical perspectives converge while retaining important differences. **Sartre** contributes the language of freedom, choice, and responsibility, emphasizing that individuals participate in creating themselves through their actions. **Aristotle** explains how transformation becomes durable through habituation: a new way of being must be repeatedly enacted until it becomes part of one's character. **Heidegger** contributes the concept of authenticity, emphasizing the movement from an unowned or socially absorbed existence toward the appropriation of one's own possibilities. **Kierkegaard** deepens the account of selfhood by presenting becoming oneself as an existential task involving the individual's relationship to the self. **Gabriel Marcel**, meanwhile, introduces the dimension of hope: even when a person encounters brokenness, limitation, or despair, existence need not be reduced to those conditions. Marcel's philosophy distinguishes genuine hope from mere optimism and understands hope as an existential response that remains open to possibilities beyond the immediately given situation (Marcel, 1951).

Taken together, these perspectives suggest that *pariwara* can be philosophically reconstructed not as a **sentence of identity but as a situation of possibility**. The label may describe where a person is, but it does not necessarily determine where the person can go. Recognition makes change visible; reflection gives it meaning; responsibility gives it ethical seriousness; choice opens new possibilities; practice gives those possibilities concrete form; and transformation gradually produces a more authentic mode of being. In this framework, the journey from *pariwara* to authentic being is neither an escape from the past nor a denial of wrongdoing. It is the **ethical and existential work of becoming someone different through responsible choices and sustained practice**.

Thus, the philosophical significance of *pariwara* lies not merely in describing a person who has gone astray but in asking a deeper question: **Can a person who has lost his or her way still become someone who lives meaningfully and authentically?** The convergence of existentialism, virtue ethics, and the philosophy of hope suggests that the answer is affirmative—not because transformation is automatic, but because human existence remains open to responsibility, choice, practice, and possibility.

XIII. Conclusion

The Filipino concept of *pariwara* often carries the assumption that a person has gone astray and may no longer be capable of returning to a meaningful, responsible, or morally grounded life. In ordinary usage, *pariwara* may describe a person whose actions have become careless, irresponsible, misguided, or destructive. However, while the term may describe a condition or pattern of behavior, it should not become a permanent judgment of a person's identity. To call someone *pariwara* may describe what the person has become at a particular moment, but it does not necessarily determine what that person can still become.

Viewed through existential philosophy, the human person is not completely defined by the past. Although previous choices and actions have consequences, individuals continue to face possibilities through which they can redefine the direction of their lives. Becoming a self is therefore an ongoing process involving reflection, responsibility, decision, and action. A person who has become lost may still recognize the need to return, change, and pursue a more meaningful way of living.

From this perspective, *pariwara* can be understood not as a permanent condition but as a form of existential disorientation—a moment when a person becomes disconnected from responsibility, meaning, and authentic living. Such disorientation, however, can become the beginning of self-examination. It can compel the individual to confront difficult questions: **Who am I? What have I become? What am I responsible for? And what can I still become?**

Transformation, however, does not happen through intention alone. It requires consistent practice and the development of new patterns of action. Recognition of one's mistakes must be followed by responsibility, accountability, and concrete efforts to change. Genuine transformation does not erase past wrongdoing or remove its consequences; rather, it involves confronting the past honestly while refusing to allow it to completely determine the future.

Hope is also essential in this journey. To overcome *pariwara* is to believe that change remains possible even when one's circumstances, reputation, or past actions appear difficult to overcome. Hope creates an opening toward renewal and allows the individual to imagine a different way of being.

Ultimately, *pariwara* should not be understood as the end of a person's journey but as a possible **turning point**. Overcoming it is not simply a matter of becoming socially acceptable again. It is a deeper philosophical journey from **being lost to self-understanding, from irresponsibility to responsibility, from despair to hope, and from inauthentic existence toward authentic being**. The past may demand accountability, repentance, and restitution, but it does not have to become the final definition of a person's existence. What matters is the courage to recognize what has been, take responsibility for what is, and consciously choose what one can still become.

Declarations

Author Contribution

C is the sole author of this manuscript and was responsible for all aspects of the study. The author conceptualized the study, developed the philosophical framework, conducted the literature review, performed the conceptual analysis and hermeneutic-phenomenological interpretation, analyzed and synthesized the relevant philosophical perspectives, drafted and revised the manuscript, and approved the final version for submission. The author is also responsible for the integrity and accuracy of the work.

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