



Hitik: International Journal of Catechists and Religious Educators

Volume 3 Issue 1 (June 2026)

ISSN (Online): 3082-3501 | ISSN (Print): 3028-2691

doi: <https://doi.org/10.63130/hijcre.v3i1.226> | Pages: 64-77

Received: January 14, 2026


Revised: February 3, 2026

Accepted: February 9, 2026

Published: June 30, 2026

Original Article

From Beauty to Holiness and Panata: An Interreligious Reading of Iḥsān (إحسان) and Kalos (καλός)

Paul Mark Andres 

Technological University of the Philippines, Philippines

Correspondence: paulmarkandres@gmail.com

Abstract

In postcolonial contexts such as the Philippines, contemporary understandings of beauty are frequently shaped by commercial, visual, and consumerist norms, detaching beauty from its moral and spiritual foundations. This study reexamines beauty as an ethical and theological reality through an interreligious reading of Iḥsān (إحسان) in Islam and kalos (καλός) in Christianity, interpreted within the Filipino cultural practice of panata. Drawing on qualitative interreligious hermeneutics and comparative textual analysis, the study examines selected passages from the Qur'an, ḥadīth literature, the Hebrew Bible, and the Greek New Testament to show how beauty in these traditions is inseparable from moral integrity, spiritual awareness, and responsibility toward others. In Islam, Iḥsān frames beauty as excellence in action grounded in consciousness of God's presence, while in Christianity, kalos denotes moral goodness expressed through fidelity, sacrifice, and justice. These perspectives are brought into dialogue with panata, understood as a Filipino vow that translates inner devotion into communal and civic responsibility. The study argues that panata functions as a culturally grounded embodiment of ethical beauty, linking faith, moral action, and social commitment. By integrating Islamic, Christian, and Filipino cultural perspectives, this research contributes to interreligious theology and Filipino cultural ethics by proposing beauty as a lived moral practice oriented toward justice, dignity, and the common good.

Keywords: Beauty, Filipino Ethics, Holiness, Iḥsān, Interreligious Theology, Kalos, Panata

Suggested citation:

Andres, P.M. (2026). From Beauty to Holiness and Panata: An Interreligious Reading of Iḥsān (إحسان) and Kalos (καλός). *Hitik: International Journal of Catechists and Religious Educators*, 3(1), 64-77. <https://doi.org/10.63130/hijcre.v3i1.226>

Publisher's Note: Hitik: International Journal of Catechists and Religious Educators stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright:©2026 The Authors. Hitik: International Journal of Catechists and Religious Educators is published by the Religious Educators Association of the Philippines, Inc..This is an open access journal under the terms and conditions of the [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 International \(CC BY-NC 4.0\) license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

Introduction

In the Filipino worldview, beauty or “kagandahan” transcends the purely aesthetic; it is a moral and relational construct deeply rooted in the alignment of one’s inner self (loob) with their conduct and connections to others. Traditionally, a person is deemed “beautiful” not through physical symmetry alone, but through their integrity, honor, and faithfulness to the community (Miranda, 1989). However, the forces of globalization and pervasive commercialism have shifted this paradigm, commodifying beauty into a metric of marketability, physical perfection, and media-driven imagery (Rafael, 2000). This modern “crisis of meaning” severs the inherent link between aesthetics and ethics, leading to what scholars describe as a shallow or “homeless” beauty that lacks spiritual depth. To reclaim beauty as a theological and moral reality, one must move beyond the superficial and embrace relational frameworks, such as interreligious dialogue, which restore the sacred connection between the human person and the Divine (Mercado, 1994).

In Islam, the concept of *Iḥsān* (إحسان) is regarded as the pinnacle of faith, surpassing mere adherence to law or doctrine. In the Hadith of Jibrīl in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, *Iḥsān* is described as worshiping God as if one sees Him, and if one does not, being conscious that He always sees (Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, 2007). This awareness produces beauty in action, as every deed is shaped by God’s presence and moral responsibility. In this sense, *Iḥsān* is not only social virtue but a form of spiritual beauty rooted in a faithful relationship with God (Nasr, 2003).

In the Christian tradition, the Greek word *kalos* (καλός) in the New Testament signifies moral weight in beauty. In John 10:11, Jesus identifies Himself as *ho poimēn ho kalos*, the Good Shepherd, who is not only kind but willing to lay down His life for His flock. Here, *kalos* denotes beauty arising from sacrifice, fidelity, and truth, not from appearance or power (Nestle, Aland, & Aland, 2012; Wright, 2013). The root of this perspective is also found in the Hebrew Bible, where *ṭōb* (טוֹב) describes the goodness and order of creation. In Genesis 1:31, after creating all things, God declares creation *toṽ me’od*, very good, signifying not only aesthetic pleasure but moral and cosmic order (Von Rad, 1972). These perspectives are particularly meaningful in the Filipino context, where *panata* serves as a bridge between faith and social life. *Panata* is not merely private devotion but a public pledge rooted in inner virtue and concern for others, oriented toward the community’s well-being (De Mesa, 2003). In this sense, beauty, read through the lens of *Iḥsān* and *kalos*, becomes a form of patriotic holiness, a moral ethic of service and responsibility connecting God, others, and the nation.

This study aims to show that *Iḥsān* in Islam and *kalos* in Christianity are not merely religious concepts but theological foundations for a beauty that informs *panata*, shapes moral character, and fosters social responsibility. Through interreligious hermeneutics, this research demonstrates that beauty, when re-rooted in holiness, becomes a force promoting justice, dignity, and relationality within a patriotic framework of faith (Clooney, 2010; Nasr, 2003; Wright, 2013).

Gaps Addressed by the Study

Detachment of Beauty from Morality. This research engages with the contemporary “crisis of meaning” in postcolonial societies like the Philippines, where globalization and consumer culture have transformed beauty into a commodified and

superficial ideal. In such a context, aesthetic appreciation often becomes disconnected from moral, spiritual, and ethical considerations, resulting in a form of beauty that is aesthetically pleasing but morally “homeless.”

- **Theological Distancing.** The study responds to concerns highlighted by De Mesa regarding theology’s tendency to distance itself from lived human experience. Here, beauty is explored not merely as an abstract or aesthetic category but as an intrinsically moral and theological reality, embedded in ethical action and relational life.
- **Underutilized Local Frameworks.** Traditional catechetical approaches often draw on foreign models, overlooking indigenous Filipino perspectives. This research emphasizes a theology that arises from local experience and cultural expression, employing the concepts of *loob* (inner self) and *kapwa* (shared identity) as central hermeneutical lenses for understanding ethical and spiritual life.
- **Lack of Interreligious Synergy in Ethics.** Finally, the study addresses a gap in the integration of interreligious moral thought by showing how Islamic principles such as *Iḥsān* and Christian notions of *kalos* can interact to enrich ethical reflection and offer culturally grounded solutions to local moral challenges.

Contributions to Religious Education and Ethical Formation

The comparison of *Iḥsān*, *kalos*, and *panata* offers several important contributions to religious education and ethical formation:

- **Pedagogical Shift to Lived Experience.** The study encourages a move away from traditional rote memorization in religious education toward approaches that prioritize lived experience. For example, students engage in "Integrity Portfolios" that document their sustained ethical actions and commitments, fostering reflection and accountability.
- **Operationalizing Virtue.** Concepts such as *kagandahang-loob* (shared goodness) are translated into practical action through community-based projects, where moral and social competence are expressed alongside compassion, making ethical principles tangible in everyday life.
- **Holistic Character Formation.** This research offers a framework for youth formation in which "true beauty" is understood not as outward appearance but as a manifestation of dignity, care for others, and responsible citizenship, cultivating character that integrates moral, social, and spiritual dimensions.
- **Cross-Traditional Ethical Frameworks.** By examining *Iḥsān*, *kalos*, and *panata* together, the study demonstrates that beauty is inherently multidimensional—spiritual, reflecting awareness of the divine; moral, expressed through honesty and humility; and social, realized through commitment to the common good.
- **Integration of Faith and Civic Duty.** Finally, the research highlights how religious devotion and civic responsibility are intertwined, framing public service as a form of *panata*, a sacred commitment to others, which reinforces ethical formation through the integration of faith, moral integrity, and communal engagement.

Importance of *Iḥsān* (إحسان), *Kalos* (καλός) and *Panata*

This study makes a significant contribution to deepening the understanding of the relationship between beauty, morality, and holiness within the context of

Filipino religion and culture. By examining the concept of kalos in Christianity, Iḥsān in Islam, and the local Filipino concept of panata, it demonstrates that true beauty goes beyond mere appearance or aesthetics. This beauty is rooted in moral and spiritual goodness and grounded in responsible engagement with God, others, and the community. From this perspective, beauty becomes a reflection of ethical living and spiritual integrity, intertwined with social responsibility (Nasr, 2003; Clooney, 2010).

Guidance from the Catechism of the Catholic Church

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 2500–2501), goodness (*bonum*), beauty (*pulchrum*), and truth (*veritas*) are inseparably interconnected and originate from God, the *summum bonum*, the source of all that is good, beautiful, and pleasing (Catholic Church, 1994). In this understanding, the concept of kalos as ethical and moral beauty exemplifies how human beings are called to participate in God's providential plan (*providentia divina*) by promoting justice (*iustitia*), human dignity (*dignitas humana*), and the common good (*bonum commune*) in the world. Moral and spiritual beauty is thus not merely a personal ideal but an active engagement in ethical living (*vita ethica*) in accordance with divine order (*ordo divinus*).

In the Filipino context, the practice of panata illustrates the integration of internal conviction and external action. When a person undertakes a panata, the inner virtue (*virtus interna*) and devotional intent are not merely private sentiments; they are translated into outward moral actions (*actio moralis*) that foster social cohesion and communal welfare (Alejo, 1990). This commitment embodies a form of moral integrity (*integritas moralis*) where the fulfillment of the vow serves as a public testament to one's faithfulness to both the Divine and the community (Ileto, 1979). Ultimately, panata functions as a lived theology that harmonizes the "inner" and "outer" dimensions of the human person. The Catechism further reinforces this duty in CCC 1877–1879, which emphasizes that faith (*fides*) must be lived through good works (*opera bona*), demonstrating that religious beauty is inseparable from moral responsibility and ethical practice. Through panata, the Filipino experience reveals how devotion becomes a lived ethics, where spiritual awareness (*conscientia Dei*) and moral action converge to shape social life, promote justice, and manifest beauty as an active expression of faith (*pulchrum fidei*) in service to God, community, and nation.

Thomas Aquinas on Beauty and Panata

In *Summa Theologiae* (I-II, q. 62–64), Thomas Aquinas explores the profound connection between goodness (*bonum*) and beauty (*pulchrum*), emphasizing that true beauty is grounded in *ordo* (order), *integritas* (integrity), and *fidelitas* (fidelity) within creation, and is inherently oriented toward justice (*iustitia*) and moral goodness (*virtus moralitas*) (Aquinas, 1947). According to Aquinas, the manifestation of *pulchrum* is not merely in physical form but in the proper alignment of parts, harmony of function, and the fidelity of created beings to their natural and divine purpose. In this framework, the Christian concept of kalos, understood as moral and ethical beauty, is a concrete realization of this principle, while the Islamic concept of Iḥsān exemplifies spiritual beauty in action, where every human deed is performed with awareness of God's presence (*praesens Dei*) and a conscientious commitment to ethical excellence.

In the Filipino context, panata serves as a living embodiment of these principles, translating inner virtue (*virtus interna*) into public action that nurtures communal justice, dignity, and social well-being. When devotees undertake a panata,

whether as a personal vow to God, a promise to fulfill a spiritual obligation, or a commitment to serve the community, they enact a moral and spiritual harmony akin to Aquinas' understanding of pulchrum, where beauty is inseparable from goodness and ethical fidelity. Panata thus exemplifies how faith and moral responsibility converge in Filipino lived experience, demonstrating that true beauty is relational, ethical, and oriented toward the common good, reflecting both divine order and human accountability (Bauckham, 2007)

Overall, the significance of this study is threefold. First, theologically, it highlights the relationship between beauty, morality, and holiness in both Christianity and Islam, facilitating deeper interreligious dialogue and expanding understanding of the ethical and spiritual dimensions of faith. Second, culturally and Filipino, it shows the concrete application of beauty in ethical and social responsibility through the concept of panata, linking personal morality with accountable action within the community and nation. Third, pedagogically and practically, the study can guide values formation, civic education, and spiritual formation, teaching youth and communities the true meaning of beauty as moral, spiritual, and patriotic action (De Mesa, 2003; Wright, 2013).

In summary, the study demonstrates that beauty is multidimensional, rooted in morality, holiness, and ethical responsibility. It is not for oneself alone but for others, the community, and the nation, in accordance with the principles taught by the CCC and Thomas Aquinas, which emphasize purposeful, moral, and spiritual beauty.

Kalos in the Christian Tradition: Moral and Ethical Beauty

The concept of kalos (καλός) in the New Testament extends far beyond aesthetic or visual beauty, encompassing profound moral, ethical, and spiritual dimensions rooted in divine goodness (agathos, ἀγαθός). In John 10:11, Jesus identifies himself as ho poimēn ho kalos, the Good Shepherd, in whom beauty is inseparable from moral virtue, sacrificial care, and faithful leadership. The term kalos here conveys not only external dignity (timē, τιμή) but also truthfulness (alētheia, ἀλήθεια) and the ethical obligation to act justly (dikaiosynē, δικαιοσύνη) toward others (Nestle, Aland, & Aland, 2012; Wright, 2013). Similarly, in Romans 12:9, Paul exhorts: “ἡ ἀγάπη ἀνυπόκριτος· κακὸν μισεῖτε, τῷ ἀγαθῷ κολλητοῦσθε”, “Let love be genuine; abhor what is evil, hold fast to what is good” (Nestle, Aland, & Aland, 2012). The use of agathos emphasizes that true beauty is inseparable from moral goodness, sincerity (eilikrineia, ειλικρίνεια), and ethical action (praxis ethikē, πρακτικὴ ἠθικὴ). The ethical and moral beauty of kalos is mirrored in the Hebrew Bible through the concept of tōb (טוֹב), which signifies what is good, right, and pleasing before God. In Genesis 1:4 and 1:10, God observes the creation of light and land, saying: “וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים וַיֵּבְרַךְ אֶת-הָאוֹר וַיִּשְׁמְרוּ אֶת-יְמֵי-טוֹב” and “וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הַיַּבֵּשׁ וַיִּבְרַךְ אֹתָהּ וַיִּשְׁמְרוּ אֶת-יְמֵי-טוֹב” — “God saw the light... and the land... that it was good” (Von Rad, 1972). After the completion of creation, God affirms in Genesis 1:31: “וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה טוֹב מְאֹד” — “God saw all that He had made; and behold, it was very good.” The expression tov me’od reflects that true beauty is not superficial but entails moral and cosmic order, echoing the ethical dimensions emphasized in the Greek understanding of kalos. Further, in the Psalms, beauty is tied to moral integrity and justice (dikaiosynē, δικαιοσύνη), as in Psalm 33:5: “The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his steadfast love” (ESV). The Hebrew tzedek (קִדְשׁ) here parallels the Greek dikaiosynē, showing continuity between moral goodness and beauty across scriptural traditions. Likewise, Proverbs 31:30 asserts: “Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to

be praised,” linking inner moral and spiritual excellence to true beauty, akin to kalos in the New Testament.

Both kalos and tōb converge in demonstrating that beauty is inseparable from goodness, ethical living, and justice. True beauty is manifested in acts of love (agapē, ἀγάπη), fidelity, humility (tapeinophrosynē, ταπεινοφροσύνη), and sacrificial service (tharseō, θάρσος in moral courage), shaping the individual to live in alignment with God’s will and cosmic order. In this framework, kalos is not merely aesthetic but fundamentally moral and spiritual, calling believers to cultivate inner virtue (aretē, ἀρετή), pursue justice, and enact beauty through ethical action (praxis kalē, πρακτική καλή) toward God and neighbor, in continuity with the Hebrew understanding of divine goodness (tōb) as the foundation of cosmic and moral order.

Iḥsān in Islam: The Spiritual Beauty of Action

In Islam, Iḥsān (إحسان) represents the highest level of faith (īmān, إيمان) and piety (taqwā, تقوى), encompassing not only ritual compliance but also the cultivation of moral and spiritual excellence. The essence of Iḥsān is acting with the constant awareness (ma’rifah, معرفة) of God’s presence in every thought, word, and deed. The Hadith of Jibrīl in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (Hadith 8) encapsulates this principle:

“Worship God as if you see Him; and if you do not see Him, know that He sees you” (Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, 2007).

This Hadith illustrates that jamāl al-‘amal (جمال العمل), or beauty in action, emerges when human conduct is consciously aligned with God’s omnipresence. In this light, ethical and spiritual beauty is inseparable from moral responsibility, arising from sincere worship (‘ibādah, عبادة) and righteous interaction (mu‘āmalah, معاملة) with others.

The Qur’an reinforces this understanding of Iḥsān as both moral and spiritual excellence. Surah Al-Baqarah 2:177 emphasizes the ethical foundation of true righteousness (al-birr, البرّ):

لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَآتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَئِكَ الْمُتَّقُونَ

(Abdel Haleem, 2004)

This passage demonstrates that true al-birr is not confined to ritual observance (‘ibādah zahirī, عبادة ظاهرية) but is expressed through faith (īmān, إيمان), moral rectitude (taqwā, تقوى), justice (‘adl, عدل), compassion (raḥmah, رحمة), generosity (iḥsān al-māl, إحسان المال), and steadfastness in fulfilling covenants (‘ahd, عهد). The Qur’an consistently links ethical conduct to spiritual excellence, as in Surah Al-Imrān 3:134, which praises those who “spend in prosperity and adversity, restrain anger, and pardon people; Allah loves the doers of good (muḥsinīn, محسنين)” (Abdel Haleem, 2004). This understanding demonstrates that moral beauty is inseparable from social responsibility (mas’ūliyyah) and divine awareness (taqwā), not merely an aesthetic sense detached from ethical life. In the Filipino context, the Islamic concept of الإحسان (iḥsān, excellence/doing good) resonates with indigenous moral orientations such as panata, where inner devotion and outward ethical responsibility cohere in actions aimed at the welfare of others and the community. The Qur’an enjoins believers, إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ (“Indeed, Allah commands justice and iḥsān...”) emphasizing that moral conduct must manifest in both justice and benevolence toward others (Qur’an 16:90). Iḥsān in the Qur’an further appears as وَأَحْسِنُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (“and do good; indeed, Allah loves the doers of good”), indicating that

upright action is beloved to God when it exceeds mere obligation and is offered with excellence and compassion (Qur'ān 2:195). The Qur'ān also reminds us that هَلْ جَزَاءُ الْإِحْسَانِ إِلَّا الْإِحْسَانُ (“Is there any reward for good other than good?”), suggesting that ethical reciprocity and beauty in conduct are intrinsic to human flourishing (Qur'ān 55:60). This divine framework aligns with social virtues in Filipino moral consciousness, underlining that *ihsān* involves care for parents, neighbors, and the vulnerable in one's society, as outlined in directives to honor and do good to others (وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ) (Qur'ān 4:36). When such relational excellence is internalized, moral beauty extends beyond personal virtue into community care, reflecting both spiritual mindfulness and compassionate service. Scholarly analysis of 'adl wa-*ihsān* (justice and benevolence) shows that ethical perfection comprises both equitable treatment and compassionate responsibility toward others, forging a moral ecology that resonates with communal values across cultures and deepens theological notions of beauty and goodness. It is not merely a private religious commitment but a comprehensive ethic that guides speech, behavior, and social engagement, cultivating character (*akhlāq*, أخلاق) and spiritual beauty in alignment with Qur'anic principles and Hadith teachings (Nasr, 2003). In this way, *Ihsān* provides a framework for understanding moral and spiritual beauty as a holistic, relational, and socially responsible ethic, fostering ethical conduct that benefits both individuals and the wider community.

Panata in the Filipino Context: Moral and Patriotic Beauty

In the Filipino context, *panata* (vow) is more than a simple religious promise; it functions as a social obligation and a patriotic ethic that bridges spirituality, moral responsibility, and interpersonal relationships. It is deeply rooted in indigenous Filipino concepts such as *loob* (inner self) and *kapwa* (shared identity), where the individual is understood not as a separate entity but as inherently connected to others. According to Enriquez's *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* framework, *kapwa* is the core value of Filipino social interaction, emphasizing a shared sense of identity and mutual recognition of humanity (Enriquez, 1992). *Kagandahang-loob* (shared goodness and moral generosity) serves as a linking socio-personal value that connects personal virtue with communal wellbeing, shaping how individuals engage with their *kapwa* in meaningful social relations (Enriquez, 1992). The practice of *panata* reflects a cultural orientation toward *kagandahang-loob*, acting as a mechanism that translates inward moral and spiritual commitments into outward actions that promote justice, dignity, and communal welfare (Alejo, 1990). This commitment is not merely a private ritual but a "sacred contract" that binds the individual to the community, ensuring that one's *loob* (inner self) remains integrated with *pakikipagkapwa* (the act of relating to others as equals) (Enriquez, 1992). Historically and sociologically, the *panata* has served as a catalyst for social integrity, transforming personal devotion into a collective pursuit of the common good (Ileto, 1979). This aligns with the Hebrew *tôb* (good, pleasing) in the biblical account of creation, where God sees all that has been made and declares it "very good," indicating that moral order and integrity are intrinsic to true beauty and wellbeing (Genesis 1:31, as cited in Von Rad, 1972).

In the Filipino setting, *panata* thus becomes a practical expression of moral and spiritual beauty, integrating inner commitment with ethical conduct toward others and society. By fulfilling one's *panata*, the Filipino believer cultivates qualities such as humility, sincerity, compassion, and responsibility in public life. These virtues are reinforced through social norms like *hiya*, guiding ethical behavior in relation to others, and *utang na loob*, which fosters gratitude and reciprocity in communal life. Moreover, the practice of *panata* fosters *pakikiramay* (shared empathy) and

bayanihan (communal cooperation). This is not merely a social habit but a manifestation of what Enriquez (1992) identifies as the shared inner self (*kapwa*). In this framework, a *panata* functions as a moral commitment that prevents the "self" from becoming isolated; instead, it binds the devotee to the suffering and needs of the community. To address the concern of a "vow toward evil," Jocano (1997) emphasizes that Filipino values are governed by *diwa* (spiritual essence) and *dangal* (honor). A vow intended to cause harm would be a violation of *dangal* and would be culturally categorized as *masamang loob* (evil intent), which is the antithesis of the *kagandahang-loob* required for a legitimate *panata*. Thus, the structural nature of *panata* in the Philippine context is inherently oriented toward the "good" and the "communal.". This moral beauty is not limited to personal devotion but becomes a shared relational ethic that responds to societal needs and nurtures communal harmony, solidarity (*pakikipagkapwa*), and moral integrity (*loob*) within the broader social fabric (Enriquez, 1992; Galano, 2017). In this way, *panata* bridges religious faith and ethical living, strengthening the beauty of inner character, social responsibility, and national unity through ethical action that benefits the community and society at large, embodying a uniquely Filipino understanding of virtue, relationality, and civic duty.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative interreligious hermeneutical approach focused on the careful reading and comparison of key Islamic and Christian texts, situated within the Filipino context of beauty and vows (*panata*). This approach is appropriate for studying theological and ethical concepts because these cannot be measured statistically but are understood through meaning, context, and the traditions from which they emerge (Clooney, 2010).

First, a textual analysis was conducted on selected passages from the Qur'an, collections of *ḥadīth*, the Hebrew Tanakh, and the Greek New Testament. For the Qur'an, the translation and commentary of Abdel Haleem (2004) were used to ensure a clear and scholarly reading of verses concerning *Iḥsān* and ethical beauty. The *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, translated by Siddiqui (Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, 2007), was used for the *ḥadīth*, as it is recognized as one of the most reliable collections in Islam. The Hebrew texts were examined in light of the Septuagint and Old Testament theological studies by Von Rad (1972), while New Testament passages were based on the Nestle Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* (2012) to maintain precision in Greek terms such as *kalos*.

Second, comparative theology was used as the framework for comparison, following the methodology outlined by Clooney (2010), which seeks not merely to juxtapose texts but to allow each tradition to illuminate the other. Rather than searching for simple similarities, the study explored how *Iḥsān* and *kalos* operate within their respective theological worlds and how they may engage in dialogue within the ethical and social context of the Philippines.

Third, a Filipino cultural theological reading was incorporated, drawing on local concepts of *loob* (inner self), *kapwa* (shared humanity), and *panata* as hermeneutical categories. This reading follows De Mesa's (2003) view that Philippine theology must emerge from Filipino experience and language, not solely from foreign conceptual frameworks. In this way, beauty is not treated as an abstract idea but as a lived value connected to communal and civic responsibility.

No statistical or empirical analysis was conducted because the study's goal was not to measure religious behavior but to understand the theological meaning of beauty as an ethical and spiritual reality. The focus is on how Islamic and Christian

texts provide narratives and concepts that can shape a patriotic ethics of beauty, where faith is expressed as a vow of service and justice (Nasr, 2003; Wright, 2013).

Criteria for Selecting Scriptural Passages

The study deliberately selected texts according to theological and linguistic considerations rather than at random:

- **Linguistic Precision:** Passages were chosen to feature the key terms, *Iḥsān* in Arabic, *kalos* in Greek, and *ṭôb* in Hebrew. Ensuring that the analysis remained faithful to the semantic depth of each religious tradition.
- **Theological Centrality:** Within the Islamic corpus, priority was given to the Hadith of Jibrīl, recognized as the authoritative articulation of *Iḥsān* as the highest dimension of faith.
- **Moral and Sacrificial Dimensions:** Biblical passages, such as John 10:11, were selected because they illuminate *kalos* through the lens of sacrificial leadership and ethical fidelity, rather than mere external or aesthetic qualities.
- **Cosmic and Moral Order:** Hebrew texts, including Genesis 1:31, were analyzed to show how beauty (*ṭôb*) reflects divine order and moral integrity inherent in creation.

Filipino Cultural Theological Reading as Method

This study employs "Filipino cultural theological reading" as an active interpretive method rather than a passive perspective:

- **Indigenous Hermeneutics:** Local concepts, *loob* (inner self), *kapwa* (shared identity), and *panata* (vow), serve as primary hermeneutical categories to engage and interpret universal religious texts.
- **Theological Re-rooting:** Drawing from De Mesa's approach, the study insists that theological understanding emerge from lived Filipino experience and language, avoiding exclusive reliance on foreign conceptual models.
- **Operationalizing Concepts:** Abstract theological ideas are translated into practical, lived values. For instance, *Iḥsān* and *kalos* are not only compared theoretically but are also examined through the Filipino practice of *panata*, showing how these principles manifest as concrete moral practices in everyday life.

Handling Theological Asymmetries and Differences

The comparative process is designed to respect differences while highlighting meaningful intersections:

- **Comparative Theology Framework:** Following Clooney's (2010) methodology, the study emphasizes "deep learning across religious borders", which preserves the distinctiveness of each tradition while allowing them to illuminate one another.
- **Dialogue over Juxtaposition:** The analysis focuses on the functional operation of concepts within their specific theological and cultural contexts. While terms and practices vary, points of convergence emerge in the integrity of character and the social expression of faith.
- **Contextual Reconciliation:** Differences are mediated by situating both traditions within a shared Filipino cultural framework. Here, *panata* provides a neutral ground, enabling the sacrificial ethos of *kalos* and the spiritual excellence of *Iḥsān* to be expressed in ways that are culturally resonant and socially responsible.

Findings

The analysis of textual and theological material from the Qur'an, ḥadīth, the Hebrew Tanakh, and the Greek New Testament revealed that beauty transcends mere visual or aesthetic appeal, encompassing profound ethical, moral, and spiritual dimensions. First, within Islamic theology, the concept of *Iḥsān* (إحسان) emerges as the spiritual beauty of action, integrating moral consciousness with relational and societal responsibility. The ḥadīth of Jibrīl in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (Hadith 8) emphasizes that *Iḥsān* is not limited to outward deeds but involves a heightened awareness that every action occurs in the presence of God. “Worship God as if you see Him, and if you do not see Him, know that He sees you” (Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, 2007), illustrates that true beauty, *jamāl al-‘amal* (جمال العمل), is inseparable from moral accountability, ethical conduct, and social goodness. In this framework, spiritual beauty becomes the alignment of intention, action, and ethical responsibility toward both God and human communities, where compassion (*raḥmah*, رحمة), justice (‘*adl*, عدل), and honesty shape the human moral horizon.

Second, in the Christian tradition, *kalos* (καλός) articulates moral and ethical beauty grounded in goodness that originates from God. In John 10:11, Jesus' self-identification as *ho poimēn ho kalos*, the Good Shepherd, presents a model of moral excellence that encompasses dignity (*timē*, τιμή), truth (*alētheia*, ἀλήθεια), ethical responsibility, and sacrificial love (Nestle, Aland, & Aland, 2012; Wright, 2013). Across the New Testament, *kalos* extends beyond superficial appearance, expressing *agathos* (ἀγαθός), moral excellence oriented toward justice (*dikaiosynē*, δικαιοσύνη), communal harmony, and care for the vulnerable. This emphasis resonates with the Hebrew *tōb*, טוב, in the Tanakh, exemplified in Genesis 1:31: *vayar Elohim et kol asher asah vehineh tov me'od*, “God saw all that He had made; and behold, it was very good” (Von Rad, 1972). The term *tov me'od* communicates that beauty is inseparable from moral order, integrity, and relational responsibility, indicating that creation itself is a manifestation of goodness and ethical coherence.

Third, in the Filipino cultural context, the notion of beauty becomes concretely social through the practice of *panata*, or vow. *Panata* bridges spiritual devotion and ethical action by translating inner commitment into relational responsibilities toward others, the community, and the nation. This relational moral beauty draws upon indigenous concepts such as *loob* (inner self), *kapwa* (shared identity), and *kagandahang-loob* (moral generosity), where individual virtue is inseparable from social ethics (Enriquez, 1992). *Panata* is further expressed through practices of *pakikiramay* (empathy and solidarity), *bayanihan* (cooperative action), and *utang na loob* (reciprocity rooted in gratitude), which ensure that ethical commitment is visible, communal, and socially transformative (Galano, 2017). In this light, beauty is a lived ethic, where spiritual devotion manifests as practical action, and personal moral integrity is inseparable from social justice, dignity, and care for the community. *Panata*, therefore, embodies a uniquely Filipino integration of faith, morality, and civic responsibility, demonstrating that ethical beauty is relational, communal, and patriotic. Taken together, the study reveals that beauty in its fullest sense, whether as *Iḥsān*, *kalos*, or *panata*, is not a superficial quality but a multidimensional reality that unites spiritual intention, moral integrity, and social responsibility. In Islam, beauty manifests through conscious devotion and ethical awareness of God's presence in every act; in Christianity, through a life characterized by dignity, ethical excellence, and sacrificial love; and in the Filipino worldview, through relational and communal moral action that nurtures *kapwa*, *kagandahang-loob*, and *bayanihan*. By integrating these perspectives, beauty emerges as a theological and ethical principle that informs personal character, social engagement, and civic responsibility, providing a robust

framework for understanding virtue, moral action, and patriotic personhood. This synthesis demonstrates that true beauty is simultaneously spiritual, ethical, and relational, guiding human action toward justice, communal well-being, and the harmonious flourishing of society.

Discussion

The analysis of textual materials from Islam and Christianity shows that beauty, represented by *Iḥsān* and *kalos*, goes beyond visual aesthetics; it is moral, ethical, and spiritual. In Islam, *Iḥsān* demonstrates that true beauty arises from action performed with awareness of the presence of God, as illustrated in the ḥadīth of Jibrīl in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, 2007). This awareness fosters moral and spiritual beauty, *jamāl al-‘amal*, in which every action carries responsibility and moral purpose. This understanding transcends mere social goodness and becomes a means of spiritual formation of character. *Iḥsān* connects faith and morality, aiming to uphold justice, ‘adl, compassion, *rahmah*, and honest dealings with others, which are integral to ethical living (Nasr, 2003; Abdel Haleem, 2004).

From the Christian perspective, *kalos* arises from a life of dignity, *timē*, τιμή, truth, *alētheia*, ἀλήθεια, and purposeful goodness, *agathos*, ἀγαθός, directed toward justice, *dikaiosynē*, δικαιοσύνη. The example of *ho poimēn ho kalos* in John 10:11 demonstrates that beauty is grounded in sacrifice, integrity, and care for others (Nestle Aland, 2012; Wright, 2013). The Hebrew concept of *ṭōb*, טוב, in Genesis 1:31 emphasizes cosmic order and moral goodness as a measure of true beauty (Von Rad, 1972). In both traditions, it is clear that beauty is not an external attribute but an integrated moral and spiritual reality that shapes a person’s actions, speech, and relationships with God and others.

When placed in the Filipino cultural context, the concept of beauty becomes practical and social through the idea of *panata*, vow. *Panata* connects spirituality, morality, and patriotic responsibility, reflecting the local understanding of *loob* and *kapwa* (De Mesa, 2003). In this view, beauty is not merely a private virtue but a public duty; it becomes concrete action that promotes justice, dignity, and goodness in the community. *Panata* serves as a bridge between religious devotion and ethical living, emphasizing that moral and spiritual goodness should be applied in the context of the community and nation. The integration of *Iḥsān* and *kalos* with *panata* demonstrates an interreligious and cross-cultural framework in which beauty is multidimensional. First, beauty is spiritual because it is oriented toward awareness of God’s presence and trust in Him. Second, it is moral because it shapes action that is honest, humble, and compassionate. Third, it is social and patriotic because this beauty is directed toward the welfare of others and justice within the community. In this way, it becomes clear that beauty cannot be separated from ethics, faith, and social responsibility. The interreligious hermeneutical approach employed in this study allowed for a deeper understanding of the universality and particularity of beauty in Islam and Christianity. Despite differences in terminology and context, both *Iḥsān* and *kalos* emphasize integrity of character, moral action, and relationship with God and others. This perspective highlights the potential for dialogue and mutual enrichment between traditions and contributes to the development of Filipino cultural theology, where beauty becomes the foundation of ethics and holiness rooted in social life and patriotic responsibility.

Overall, the discussion shows that beauty goes beyond external or personal virtue; it is an ethical, spiritual, and social reality. Through an interreligious and Filipino cultural lens, *Iḥsān* and *kalos* become the basis of moral and civic beauty, emphasizing the connection between faith, ethics, and responsibility to the

community. The concept of panata serves as a concrete way to live out beauty, promoting justice, dignity, and goodness in personal, religious, and public spheres.

Conclusion

The analysis of Iḥsān in Islam and kalos in Christianity demonstrates that beauty goes beyond outward appearance or personal virtue; it is ethical, moral, spiritual, and social. In both traditions, true beauty is rooted in a sincere relationship with God, humble and honest action toward others, and the practice of justice, dignity, and goodness. The Hebrew concept of *tôb* emphasizes cosmic order and moral integrity as a measure of true beauty, while Iḥsān and kalos link beauty to spiritual awareness and moral action. In the Filipino context, panata serves as a concrete application of this interreligious perspective. Panata is not merely a personal devotion but a public ethical obligation that connects the individual to others and to the nation. Through panata, beauty becomes a practical force that shapes moral and spiritual character, promoting ethical living, community cohesion, and patriotic responsibility.

Overall, the interreligious reading of Iḥsān and kalos, along with the Filipino cultural lens of panata, shows that beauty is multidimensional, spiritual, moral, and social. This beauty is not focused solely on the self but on the welfare of others and the community, fostering integrity, justice, and dignity as the foundation of true holiness.

Implications

1. Theological and Interreligious Implications

The study highlights the potential for interreligious dialogue, where concepts of beauty in Islam and Christianity can foster mutual enrichment. Iḥsān and kalos reveal similarities in the moral and spiritual dimensions of beauty, which can serve as a foundation for a deeper understanding of faith, ethics, and spiritual formation in both academic and community settings.

2. Cultural and Filipino Context

Integrating the concept of panata into Filipino cultural theology strengthens the connection between religion and social ethics. Panata can serve as a framework to cultivate ethical and patriotic action, particularly in addressing the challenges of community life and national responsibility.

3. Educational and Practical Implementation Strategy

Rather than mere conceptual inclusion, the integration of "moral beauty" requires a pedagogical shift from theory to lived experience. Educational institutions should adopt Service-Learning Models where students are assessed not on rote memorization of values, but on the execution of panata-based community projects. In these frameworks, *kagandahang-loob* is operationalized as "competence-with-compassion."

Actionable Step: Values Education (ESP) and Religious Education curricula should replace traditional exams with "Integrity Portfolios," documenting students' long-term commitments to social justice, thereby mirroring the discipline of Iḥsān.

4. Academic and Policy Contribution

This research provides a framework for Qualitative Social Metrics. It argues that national progress should not be measured solely by economic indicators (marketable beauty), but by "Ethical Aesthetics"—the visible health of communal relationships and social cohesion.

Actionable Step: This study proposes a "Social Dignity Index" for local government units (LGUs), using the principles of kalos and panata to evaluate the quality of public service and the inclusivity of community programs.

5. Concrete Social Impact through Institutionalized Practice

To move beyond "lip service," the concepts of Ihsān and panata must be institutionalized through Civic Vow Initiatives.

Actionable Step: Government and NGO leadership programs should adopt a "Covenantal Leadership" model. Here, public service is framed as a panata to the kapwa, shifting the focus from individual careerism to the "moral beauty" of collective upliftment. By applying the Qur'anic principle of Ihsān (excellence in service), public officials are held to a standard where efficiency and empathy are inseparable.

Declaration on the Use of AI

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author used ChatGPT for grammar improvement, editing, and organization of ideas, and have reviewed and take full responsibility for the final content of this publication.

References

- [1] Abdel Haleem, M. A. S. (2004). *The Qur'an: A new translation*. Oxford University Press.
- [2] Alejo, A. E. (1990). *Tao po! Tuloy kayo: Isang landas ng pag-unawa sa loob ng tao*. Ateneo de Manila University Press.
- [3] Aquinas, T. (1947). *Summa Theologiae* (Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Trans.). Benziger Bros. (Original work published ca. 1274)
- [4] Bauckham, R. (2007). *Jesus and the eyewitnesses: The Gospels as eyewitness testimony*. Eerdmans.
- [5] *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. (1997). Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.
- [6] Catholic Church. (1994). *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
- [7] Clooney, F. X. (2010). *Comparative theology: Deep learning across religious borders*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- [8] De Mesa, J. M. (2003). *Why theology is never far from home*. De La Salle University Press.
- [9] Enriquez, V. G. (1992). *From colonial to liberation psychology: The Philippine experience*. University of the Philippines Press. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316081561_Filipino_Psychology_Sikolohiyang_Pilipino
- [10] Espiritu, W. A. (2023). Rethinking the panata to the Nazareno of Quiapo. *Journal of Global Catholicism*, 7, 8–29. https://crossworks.holycross.edu/jgc/vol7/iss2/2/?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- [11] Galano, L. P. (2017). Ang loob at pakikipagkapwa sa kagandahang-loob: Pagsusuri sa pagpapakahulugan at mga pagpapahalaga ng kabataan. *Diwa:*

- Journal of Philippine Psychology*, 5(November), 45–62. <https://www.pssp.org.ph/diwa/diwa-e-journal-tomo-5-nobyembre-2017-ang-loob-at-pakikipagkapwa-sa-kagandahang-loob-pagsusuri-sa-pagpapakahulugan-at-mga-pagpapahalaga-ng-kabataan/>
- [12] Majul, C. A. (1999). *Muslims in the Philippines*. University of the Philippines Press.
- [13] Mercado, L. N. (1994). *The Filipino mind*. Council for Research in Values and Philosophy.
- [14] Miranda, D. M. (1989). *Loob: The Filipino within: A preliminary investigation into a pre-theological moral anthropology*. Divine Word Publications.
- [15] Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj. (2007). *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: The translation of the meanings* (A. Siddiqui, Trans.). Dar-us-Salam. (Original work compiled ca. 9th century)
- [16] Nasr, S. H. (2003). *The heart of Islam: Enduring values for humanity*. HarperOne.
- [17] Nestle, E., Aland, B., & Aland, K. (2012). *Novum Testamentum Graece* (28th ed.). Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.
- [18] Rafael, V. L. (2000). *White love and other events in Filipino history*. Duke University Press.
- [19] Sto. Domingo, S. T., Gesmundo, E. C. U., Cordero, A. P. C., & de Guzman, J. M. (2020). Sa awa ng Diyos: Understanding the lived experiences of panata among Filipina Black Nazarene devotees in low-income communities. *Philippine Journal of Psychology*, 53, 55–79. <https://doi.org/10.31710/pjp/0053.03>
- [20] Tallara, M. I. M. (2022). Symbolism and expression of performing panata in the Philippines: An ethnohistorical analysis of Nuestro Padre Jesus Nazareno of Quiapo. *Religions*, 13(4), 272. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13040272>
- [21] Von Rad, G. (1972a). *Old Testament theology* (Vols. 1–2). Harper & Row.
- [22] Von Rad, G. (1972b). *Genesis: A commentary* (J. H. Marks, Trans.). Westminster Press.
- [23] Wright, N. T. (2013). *Paul and the faithfulness of God*. Fortress Press.

About the Author

Paul Mark “Mohammed Amir” Andres, LPT, is a graduate student of Philippine Studies at the University of the Philippines Diliman and a master’s degree holder in Islamic Studies from the Institute of Islamic Studies, University of the Philippines Diliman. He has completed 45 units toward a PhD in Applied Theology with specialization in Religious Education, and also holds a Master in Applied Theology and a Certificate in Teaching Religious Education from De La Salle University Manila.

He pursued foundational Arabic language studies at Saheeh Al-Jaami Institute and completed Advanced Christian Spirituality at Fordham University, New York. For his undergraduate studies, he earned a Bachelor of Secondary Education in General Science with specialization in Women’s Studies from the Philippine Normal University, Manila. He also completed the Curso de Proficiente de la Lengua Española para los Profesores and undertook one year of Arabic Language and Values Education (ALIVE).

He was a scholar at Princeton Theological Seminary in the United States and has also completed the SYOB Business Master Class at the Institute of Small Scale Industries, University of the Philippines Diliman.