FIHAVANANA-FRIENDSHIP: A NORM OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS FOR LIFE IN MADAGASCAR

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Abstract

This thesis examines the concept of *Fihavanana* in Malagasy morality, characterized by the promotion of life in its fullness. Currently, global and local socio-political crises have resulted in significantly increased violence in Malagasy society. It reviews and examines the concept of *Fihavanana* through the lens of Christian friendship as expressed in scriptural and Christian tradition. The thesis endeavors to assess and guide the Malagasy response to the loss of social friendship and increase in deadly violence in the nation. It interprets *Fihavanana* through Christian friendship rooted in charity to arrive at a principle that can be embraced at the national level. *Fihavanana* thus interpreted is a norm of Christian ethics for life that can shape and guide Malagasy morality to build (re-build) a peaceful and harmonious society.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Post-independence Madagascar (1960) has been presented as a peaceful and harmonious country based on the *Fihavanana*.[1] Inter-ethnic wars that took place during the colonial era (1894-1960) finally ended, even if political and social conflicts remain visible today at all levels of Malagasy society. Fear of God the Creator, *Andrimananitra* or *Zanahary*[2], and *Fihavanana*, which began to develop at the time of decolonization, animate the daily acts and words of the Malagasy people and shape their moral life. *Fihavanana* was born under the impulse of Malagasy and Christian elites who were searching for values that would define the national identity.[3] It is a reality of the Malagasy everyday way of life expressed in proverbs, traditional songs, and sayings as well as in relationships and solidarity with others. This ongoing human relationship, bonded by mutual love, kindness, respect, and support, which the Malagasy people call *Fihavanana,* establishes and maintains their peaceful and harmonious society.

Though post-independence Madagascar has never been permanently involved in armed conflicts with internal or external enemies, today its revered tradition of consensus and solidarity to preserve peace and harmony in the nation is visibly deteriorating. Pride in living together peacefully, as well as the protection and promotion of human life, are diminishing. Growing

[1] Cf. Mireille Razafindrakoto, François Roubaud, and Jean-Michel Wachsberger, "Violence et Non-Violence à Madagascar: Réflexion Sur Les Formes de Régulation Sociale," (décembre 2017), https://horizon.documentation.ird.fr/exl-doc/pleins_textes/divers18-03/010072516.pdf.

[2] The proverbs "*Aza ny lohasaha mangina no jerena fa Andriamanitra ao antampon'ny loha*" (do not look at the silent valley but at God who is at the top of your head) and "*Ny adala no tsy ambakaina, Andriamanitra no atahorana*" (we do not deceive fools because we fear God), for example, illustrate the Malagasy people's fear of God.

[3] Cf. Jonas Razanadrakoto (Madagascar), "Le fihavanana: Mythes et réalités d'une valeur garante de la paix sociale," *Observatoire Pharos*, October 16, 2020, accessed March 2, 2023, https://www.observatoirepharos.com/pays/madagascar/le-fihavanana-mythes-et-realites-dune-valeur-garante-de-la-paix-sociale/.

insecurity, accompanied by deadly violence in many corners of the island, shows that significant social and moral crises must be addressed in the nation.

In Madagascar, *Fihavanana* is one of the most relevant resources for fixing Malagasy social and moral issues. Its primarily *raison d'être* is to connect all Malagasy people as a unified nation regardless of origin, ethnicity, religion, gender, and social status. A few Malagasy and foreign scholars, however, have observed that *Fihavanana* is still imprecise, and is limited to family and ethnic spheres due to some conceptual issues and nuances when it is used at the national level.[4] To assess and guide the Malagasy moral life, *Fihavanana* has to be clarified and understood by the whole nation. In order to do so, I suggest interpreting *Fihavanana* through the lens of Christian friendship, since *Fihavanana* has inherited some aspects of Christian tradition. *Fihavanana* interpreted as such this essay calls *Fihavanana*-Friendship.

This thesis, therefore, argues that Christian friendship, as expressed in Tradition and Scripture, helps us clarify the concept *Fihavanana*-Friendship as one aspect of how *Fihavanana* ought to be understood in order to guide the Malagasy response to the loss of social friendship and the deadly violence that often occurs in the nation.

The thesis is made up of five chapters. Chapter 1 describes post-independence Madagascar (1960), known as a peaceful and harmonious society but now losing its traditional values of living together peacefully and being concerned for others. In doing so, the chapter begins with a brief account of where the island is now regarding violence. Then, it gives a historical account covering the post-independence period to the present regime to explain the origin and development of Madagascar's social and moral issues today. Finally, this chapter

[4] Cf. Hilaire A. Raharilalao, Eglise et *Fihavanana* à Madagascar (Fianarantsoa: Edition Ambozontany, 1991); Razafindrakoto, Roubaud, and Wachsberger, "Violence et Non-Violence à Madagascar: Réflexion Sur Les Formes de Régulation Sociale,"; Robert Dubois, *Fihavanana* Malagasy sy ny Heriny [Malagasy *Fihavanana* and its strengths] (Antananarivo: Editions Ambozontany, 2005).

concludes by pointing to the loss of the traditional values of supporting life together and the increased violence that has resulted, and advocating for the necessity of recovering them. To accomplish this recovery, we need to review *Fihavanana.*

In chapter 2, I provide a fresh look at the concept of *Fihavanana.* This chapter begins with a review of the concept of *Fihavanana* from different perspectives, namely etymology, proverbs, writings, ritual, and historical accounts. The review emphasizes that *Fihavanana* is a reality of everyday life in Madagascar and plays a crucial role in Malagasy morality. Then, the chapter presents a few Malagasy and foreign scholars who have observed nuances in *Fihavanana* when it is used at the national level. Finally, it concludes by pointing out the dire need to make *Fihavanana* understood at the national level. To do so, we propose an interpretation of *Fihavanana* through the lens of Christian tradition and biblical perspective on friendship.

Chapter 3 gathers the constructive resources necessary to interpret *Fihavanana* at the national level. It has three sections: the first section examines friendship in scriptural tradition using classic examples of friendship from the Old and New Testaments; the second section reviews friendship in the Christian tradition which emphasizes the virtue of charity, using Aquinas on the virtue of friendship, Paul Wadell on Christian friendship, and Pope Francis on social friendship; and the third section stresses the relevance of Christian friendship in today's Christian ethics. Chapter 3 ends by concluding that Christian friendship, understood as a human relationship rooted in charity, can help to better interpret *Fihavanana* at the national level.

In chapter 4, I interpret *Fihavanana* through the lens of Christian friendship as understood in chapter 3. This chapter begins with a brief recapitulation of the two concepts of *Fihavanana* and Christian friendship highlighted in chapters 2 and 3. Then, it shows how *Fihavanana* interpreted through Christian friendship as understood in chapter 3 gives a more

precise understanding of *Fihavanana*, which has the capacity to be used in order to assess and guide Malagasy moral action. This chapter concludes by providing two sets of ethical concepts and virtues, allowing us to assess and guide the Malagasy moral response to the loss of social friendship and increase in deadly violence.

Chapter 5 is the applicative part of the thesis. This chapter begins by recalling Madagascar's social and moral problems described in chapter 1. Then, it demonstrates briefly how the virtues correctly order human beings in life, before assessing the Malagasy response to the loss of social friendship and increase in deadly violence in the nation through the two sets of ethical concepts and virtues issued in chapter 4, and providing a guide to a better response.

The conclusion of the thesis will propose *Fihavanana*-Friendship, one aspect of how *Fihavanana* ought to be understood as a norm of Christian ethics for assessing and guiding moral life in Madagascar.

CHAPTER 1: SOCIAL AND MORAL PROBLEMS IN POST-INDEPENDENCE MADAGASCAR

This chapter will show that post-independence Malagasy society, thought of as being peaceful and harmonious, is losing its traditional values of living together peacefully and being concerned for others. The increase in violence in the nation exemplifies these social and moral issues. This chapter will first present Madagascar's context with a brief account of where the island is currently with regard to violence. Next, it will give a historical account of post-independence Madagascar to explain the origin and development of the social and moral issues facing the nation today. Finally, it will conclude by emphasizing the loss of values supporting life together and the increased violence in Madagascar.

1. The Context of Madagascar

Until the end of the 19th century, ethnic wars and hostile encounters characterized the daily life of the Malagasy people. In 1896, French colonizers forced pacification through the intervention of armed forces. A few years after independence on June 26, 1960, ethnic or regional wars characteristic of the colonial era finally ended, though the vestiges of political and social conflicts are visible today at all levels of Malagasy society. Madagascar's independence has allowed the emergence of a Malagasy society with a form of community justice accepted by all the community members. This is called in Malagasy "*Dina*" or community pacts. This "*Dina*" is a traditional form of justice composed of social rules at the local level that impose sanctions in the event of a crime.

The people of post-independence Madagascar aspire to unite in a peaceful and harmonious society through *Fihavanana*.[5] Political speeches of all leaders of the country have appealed to the Malagasy people to maintain order and appreciate the importance of society, and encouraged a sense of respect, mutual support, and solidarity.[6] These appeals, which regularly refer to *Fihavanana*, have reduced violence in Madagascar.[7]

Today, Madagascar comprises about 20 ethnic groups. The population is 80 percent rural. The Malagasy people are unevenly distributed over the national territory; 52 percent of the population is concentrated in the central highlands.[8] The relative heterogeneity between coastal societies with clan traditions and those of the highlands with hierarchical traditions is balanced somewhat by the fact that both populations have the shared history, language, and national structures.[9] The country has a single language, Malagasy. Christianity is the main religion on the island, constituting 58 percent of the population. Those following traditional faiths account for 39 percent of the people. The traditional Malagasy faiths believe in one Creator, known as *Zanahary* or *Andriamanitra,* who is believed to have unlimited power and is, therefore, able to bless those who act according to his will and punish those who offend him.[10] Muslims comprise

[5] *Fihavanana* means unity in diversity, solidarity, communion, reconciliation, caring love, relationship, friendship, and union. I also find helpful Casey Woodling's definition of *Fihavanana* as "a state of peace or harmony that people can achieve with others within their communities; it is modeled on the peace, harmony, solidarity, love, and closeness that is often seen in family ties." (Casey Woodling, "The Malagasy Ideal of *Fihavanana* and Western Ethics," *Comparative Philosophy: An International Journal of Constructive Engagement of Distinct Approaches toward World Philosophy* 13, no. 2 (July 30, 2022): 95, accessed September 2, 2022, https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/comparativephilosophy/vol13/iss2/11). There is no precise word to translate *Fihavanana*. We will re-examine it in chapter 2 of this work.

[6] Cf. Frederic Gannon et al., *Fihavanana - La Vision d'une Société Paisible à Madagascar (2e Édition Corrigée)*, 2016, 16.

[7] Cf. Mireille Razafindrakoto, François Roubaud, and Jean-Michel Wachsberger, "Violence et non-violence à Madagascar: réflexion sur les formes de régulation sociale." (n.d.): 12.

[8] Cf. "INSTAT Madagascar - Institut National de La Statistique," accessed December 14, 2022, https://www.instat.mg/p/resultats-definitifs-du-rgph-3-2018-troisieme-recensement-general-de-la-population-et-de-lhabitation.

[9] Cf. Mireille Razafindrakoto, François Roubaud, and Jean-Michel Wachsberger, *Madagascar, d'une Crise l'autre: Ruptures et Continuité*, Karthala. (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2018), 26.

[10] Cf. "Religious Beliefs in Madagascar," *WorldAtlas*, last modified April 25, 2017, accessed December 30, 2022, https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/religious-beliefs-in-madagascar.html.

2 percent of the population, and 0.65 percent are classified as unaffiliated or adhere to other faiths.[11] Many Christians continue to integrate or combine their religious beliefs with traditional faiths.

Local and global socio-economic crises have affected the social and economic lives of the Malagasy people. These crises have worsened their living conditions and pushed them to use all possible means to survive, including deadly violence. The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) notes that "the number of conflict events in Madagascar has risen sharply since the start of 2017,"[12] and the reality in the nation shows that deadly violence has become a daily topic in Malagasy newspapers. According to ACLED, "two factors have contributed to this increase in violence in Madagascar: the increase in violent raids and attacks perpetrated by 'bandits,' often referred to as the *dahalo* [Malagasy for bandits], and the related increase in local community mob justice against suspected criminals."[13] In the world ranking of most violent countries, Madagascar in 2017 was ranked 44th out of 163 countries in the world and 6th out of 44 countries in sub-Saharan Africa.[14] Five years later, the Global Peace Index (GPI) in 2022 ranked Madagascar 88th most violent country in the world.[15] Madagascar, with its revered tradition of consensus and solidarity to preserve harmony and protect human life, is now visibly deteriorating.

A review of post-independence Malagasy political history helps us explain the origin and development of these social and moral issues facing the nation today. This historical review

[11] Cf. "National Profiles," accessed December 14, 2022, https://www.thearda.com/world-religion/national-profiles?u=137c.
[12] Daniel Moody, "Madagascar - March 2017 Update," *ACLED*, April 11, 2017, accessed February 1, 2023, https://acleddata.com/2017/04/11/madagascar-march-2017-update/.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Cf. "Global Peace Index 2017 - World | ReliefWeb," 18, accessed September 18, 2022, https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-peace-index-2017.
[15] Cf. "Institute for Economics & Peace. Global Peace Index 2022: Measuring Peace in a Complex World" (Sydney, June 2022), 11, http://visionofhumanity.org/resources.

shows that the violence caused by earlier political crises was always minor and easily explained compared to the current deadly violence.

2. A Review of Various Social and Moral Problems in Madagascar

2.1. The Period after Independence (1960)

After independence, the means of maintaining national stability reverted to those used in the pre-colonial period. Stability was based on physical coercion, maintaining the hierarchical symbolic order, and following state rule.[16] This principle established a social contract that consisted of subordination to a superior authority in exchange for protection for the dominated. The system was based on traditional hierarchical society[17] and state structures such as the army and government regulation. It was held together by a power legitimated by the hierarchical status of successive heads of state and by a state administration whose power was rooted in royal tradition and thus the divine order.[18] One can see the effects of this line of thinking by reflecting on the epithets given to previous heads of state. President Philibert Tsiranana of the first republic was known as the "father of the nation," Didier Ratsiraka, president of the second republic, was known as the "father of the revolution," Albert Zafy was known as the "father of the democracy", and Marc Ravalomanana, president of the third republic, was known as the "providential man."

[16] Cf. Razafindrakoto, Roubaud, and Wachsberger, "Violence et non-violence à Madagascar: réflexion sur les formes de régulation sociale.," 16.
[17] Before colonization, the traditional Malagasy social hierarchy was distinguished by several statutory groups, sometimes called castes. At the top of this hierarchy were the *Andriana* (nobles), relatives of the king. Below them were the *Hova* (commoners), then the *Mainty* (royal servants), and at the bottom, the enslaved people (*Andevo*) (see Razafindrakoto, Roubaud, and Wachsberger, "Violence et non-violence à Madagascar: réflexion sur les formes de régulation sociale.," 14). This social hierarchy has left Malagasy people with a deep respect for their political and religious leaders, whom they consider "*Raiamandreny*," which means "Parents."
[18] Cf. Ibid., 16.

In general, the Malagasy people are attached to their leaders, whom they consider to be *Raiamandreny* or "Parents," and to the state structure. At the same time, they expect their leaders to provide justice, peace, and harmony. The political crises in Madagascar have arisen from the people's dissatisfaction with their leaders. If the regime in place does not give back to the Malagasy people what is due to them, they usually go on strike and stage demonstrations in the streets. These demonstrations are usually non-violent. Any violence caused remains relatively controlled.[19] The criminal violence during the demonstrations often comes from the regime's side. In the next section, I will successively review relevant demonstrations of the Malagasy people from the time of independence to the present in order to understand the origin and evolution of social and moral problems in Madagascar.

2.2. The First Republic (1960 – 1972)

Madagascar took advantage of the great wave of decolonization in the 1960s and gained independence on June 26, 1960. The first president of the Republic of Madagascar, Philibert Tsiranana, insisted on the unity of all Malagasy people in the name of *Fihavanana*. He brought with him from exile his former political opponents, namely the three deputies of 1947, Ravoahangy, Raseta, and Rabemananjara, on July 19, 1960.[20]

From the time of his second term, Tsiranana and his party believed themselves to be masters of everything and began to govern in an oppressive manner. They neglected the popular discontent that grew out of the people's dissatisfaction with the regime's administration. From 1967 onwards, Tsiranana faced a rise in criticism of the Francophile policies that his regime had

[19] Cf. Ibid.
[20] Cf. Célestin Razafimbelo, "Histoire de Madagascar: L'indépendence," *Madarevues*, no. Ecole Normale Supérieure d'Antananarivo (2007): 63.

practiced since independence. In April 1971, in a worsening economic situation, the south of Madagascar rose up under the leadership of the MONIMA party of Monja Joana.[21] This uprising was a peasant revolt whose primary purpose was to remind the leaders to address the problem of extreme poverty in the southern part of the country.

In January 1972, a strike broke out at the Medical School of Befelatanana-Antananarivo. With the deterioration of the social climate, it spread to the University of Antananarivo. As a result, university students began a general strike that was described as essentially non-violent. For example, Remi Ralibera, a Malagasy Jesuit journalist and writer, recounts:

> *Ces masses marchaient en rang de 8 ou 10, sur une partie de la chaussée, le long du marché du Zoma: personne ne touchait à l'étal des fruits, des mofo gasy ou de pains, quelle que fût l'heure du défilé; à l'approche des masses de grévistes en marche, aucun, mais aucun vendeur sur les bords des rues ou des trottoirs ne bougeaient. Tout le monde savait que ces jeunes ne toucheraient à quoi que ce soit.*[22]
>
> [These masses marched in rows of 8 or 10, on the part of the roadway, along the *Zoma* market: no one touched the fruit, *mofo gasy*, or bread stalls, whatever the time of the march; at the approach of those on strike, none of the vendors on the sides of the streets or sidewalks moved. Everyone knew that these young people would not touch anything].

Ralibera emphasized that the students' demonstration was organized in a respectful way and was conducted in a non-violent manner.

The violence during the May 13, 1972 movement came from the State. The arrest of the strike committee on the night of 12th to 13th May 1972, followed by deportation to Nosy Lava (a small Malagasy island where criminals are jailed), provoked a violent demonstration in Antananarivo, the capital city of Madagascar. Of the 100,000 people in the streets of Antananarivo, the *Forces Républicaines de Securité* (F.R.S), the regime's armed wing, deported 395 students to the Nosy Lava prison.[23] The F.R.S. also shot at the crowd. These events led to

[21] Cf. Ibid., 65.
[22] Remi Ralibera, *Souvenirs & Témoignages Malgaches. De La Colonisation à La IIIème République* (Antananarivo: Foi et Justice, 2007), 237.
[23] Cf. Razafindrakoto, Roubaud, and Wachsberger, "Violence et non-violence à Madagascar: réflexion sur les formes de régulation sociale.," 17.

violent reactions from the crowds, such as the burning of cars and barricades, destruction of public property, attacks on the national radio station, and the burning of the town hall. The violence resulted in about forty dead and a hundred injured, mainly on the demonstrators' side.[24]

Tsiranana, instead of calling for calm, threatened the demonstrators, saying:

> *Il y a des meneurs qui entrainent les petits enfants…Ce sont des politiciens rusés. Attention, ce sont des bandits…Quant au gouvernement, il est prêt à examiner les revendications des élèves. Ici, maintenant il y a des morts. C'est moi le président qui vous donne un conseil, parents, travailleurs, élèves, si vous tenez à la vie, ne participez pas à la grève. Si c'est nécessaire, même s'il faut 2000 morts, nous le ferons en une seule fois. Mais cela ne se fera pas…Soyez sage!*[25]
>
> [Some leaders train the youth...They are cunning politicians. As for the government, it is ready to examine the demands of the students. Here, now there are deaths. I, the president, give you a piece of advice, parents, workers, and students, if you value your lives, do not participate in the strike. If it is necessary, even if it takes 2000 lives, we will do it. However, it should not be done...Be wise!]

In a word, the president warned parents and workers not to send their children to the strike, which the president himself considered a shady affair, to avoid bloodshed. His words were interpreted in Antananarivo as tribalistic. They led to the mobilization of syndicates, churches, and civil society in the capital city on May 15, 1972, calling on the army to "save the country." To calm the situation, Tsiranana gave "full powers" to General Ramanantsoa, the highest-ranking officer in the army.[26]

2.3. The Second Republic (1975 – 1992)

In the 1980s, the regime of Didier Ratsiraka marked a return to criminal violence. The phenomenon of zebu (humped cattle) rustlers, borrowing from the tradition of the Bara ethnic group from the southern region of the country, gained momentum in the rural areas of Madagascar. In 1982, for example, active repression by the gendarmes killed about 100 peasants

[24] Cf. Françoise Blum, "Madagascar 1972: L'Autre Indépendance: Une révolution contre les accords de coopération," *Le Mouvement Social* 236, no. 3 (2011): 16–18, accessed December 8, 2022, http://www.cairn.info/revue-le-mouvement-social-2011-3-page-61.htm.
[25] Ibid., 17.
[26] Cf. Razafimbelo, "Histoire de Madagascar: L'indépendence," 66.

in the Tulear region. In 1989, the multiplication of state operations with authorization to open fire led to several deaths.[27] The unrest spread to urban areas. In December 1984, more than one hundred members of the T.T.S – *Tanora Tonga Saina*, the conscientious youth[28] – were massacred by followers of a Kung-Fu club.[29] This violence had a definite political tone insofar as the T.T.S were part of the Ratsiraka regime's team. As a result, in July 1985, the regime sent special forces to destroy the villa of the Kung-Fu leader. This operation cost the lives of dozens of people and led to many arrests.

In March 1989, disputes over the results of the presidential election in Madagascar provoked another protest movement. A year later, public opposition was formed against the government of Ratsiraka and his autocratic, socialist state, which had ruled since 1975. After daily demonstrations attended by hundreds of thousands of people, the movement's leaders, known as "*Forces Vives*," eventually called a general strike. However, non-violence was again the specific demand of the social movement in the name of *Fihavanana*. The vast gatherings on the "*Place du 13 Mai*" did not give rise to any excesses.[30]

After several months of demands without a satisfactory response from the Ratsiraka regime, the demonstrations culminated on August 10, 1991, in a procession called the "*Marche de la Liberté*" (Freedom March) targeting the presidential palace in Iavoloha-Antananarivo. As with the experiences of the 1970s, violence came from the state. The presidential guards shot the demonstrators during a demonstration directed at the presidential palace. They killed about thirty

[27] Cf. Razafindrakoto, Roubaud, and Wachsberger, "Violence et non-violence à Madagascar: réflexion sur les formes de régulation sociale.," 18.
[28] T.T.S are young people from the slums of Antananarivo who were involved in kidnapping and black-market activities. These young people constituted the regime's auxiliary forces of Ratsiraka.
[29] Cf. Razafindrakoto, Roubaud, and Wachsberger, "Violence et non-violence à Madagascar: réflexion sur les formes de régulation sociale.," 18.
[30] Cf. Ibid.

people, and several hundred were injured.[31] Trusting in the value of *Fihavanana*, the "*Forces Vives*" still sought dialogue with the regime. These events – the mass shooting and the dialogue with the "*Forces Vives*" – precipitated the ouster of Ratsiraka, even though he retained the title of President of the Republic. In October 1991, Ratsiraka finally agreed to free elections and established a transitional government.[32]

In 1993, Albert Zafy was elected president of the Republic of Madagascar and ruled the country for three years before being removed by the parliament. The 1996 presidential elections brought Ratsiraka back to power, but this time without unrest.

2.4. From the Second Half of the Third Republic to the Fourth Republic (1996 – 2009)

In 2001-2002, a dispute over the results of the first round of the presidential election between Ratsiraka and Marc Ravalomanana provoked another crisis. Communication within the country was cut in two for four months due to the destruction of bridges linking strategic regions of Madagascar with the highlands. However, clashes between the combatants representing the two candidate protagonists were infrequent, and the number of deaths amounted to about a hundred.[33] The Malagasy people were calm, while the combatants were again used as mere violent pawns of the two political groups.

In 2008, the re-election of Ravalomanana created another opposition movement. Towards the end of that year, the closure of the television station of the former mayor of Antananarivo, Andry Rajoelina, led to a conflict between him and the Ravalomanana regime. At the end of

[31] Cf. Ibid.
[32] Cf. Gannon et al., *Fihavanana - La Vision d'une Société Paisible à Madagascar (2e Édition Corrigée)*, 51.
[33] Razafindrakoto, Roubaud, and Wachsberger, "Violence et Non-Violence à Madagascar: Réflexion Sur Les Formes de Régulation Sociale," 19.

January 2009, their conflict led to looting and widespread violence, mostly apolitical, in various cities in Madagascar, where several dozen people were killed.[34] Violence and looting of Chinese and Indian stores, especially the Magro stores of the Ravalomanana-owned company Tiko, marked the popular mobilizations of 2009. On February 7, 2009, demonstrators headed to the presidential palace. They were stopped by the presidential guards, who killed about forty people and injured more than 150.[35] This event led Ravalomanana to hand over power to the military board. The latter handed over power to Andry Rajoelina. However, the violence here was limited, and the handover took place without an exchange of blows or bloodshed.[36]

The eruption of violence in Malagasy political life was always preceded by a prolonged confrontation between the regime in power and the opposition. The leaders of opposition sought to mobilize its members for a prolonged strike to put the government on the defensive. The result was predictable: the government ended up opening fire on protesters who had crossed the security zones of the presidential palace. Such is the standard method used by opposition leaders to overturn the regime in power because the demonstrators have never responded with counter-violence. Any regime that had opened fire on protesters could not stay in power.

2.5. The Fourth Republic (2010 – Present)

The presidential election in late 2013 was conducted with few challenges; there was no political violence. But almost everywhere outside the well-known places of violence in the country, criminal violence began to develop. In urban areas, newspapers regularly reported robberies, burglaries, and assaults, some of them fatal. In the southern region of Madagascar,

[34] Cf. Gannon et al., *Fihavanana - La Vision d'une Société Paisible à Madagascar (2e Édition Corrigée)*, 51.
[35] Cf. Razafindrakoto, Roubaud, and Wachsberger, "Violence et non-violence à Madagascar: réflexion sur les formes de régulation sociale.," 19.
[36] Cf. Ibid.

cattle rustlers, grouped in gangs equipped with firearms, stole herds and clashed with villagers. Such confrontations inevitably resulted in the loss of villagers' lives. Organized criminal violence, unrelated to politics, began to appear beginning in 2010 with the mutations of the phenomenon of *dahalo*.[37] *Dahalo* are bandits among marginalized peoples in the southern cultures of Madagascar, mainly Antandroy and Bara. Traditionally, *dahalo* practiced occasional theft of zebus in order to provide a dowry when they wished to marry a woman. Since the period of the Second Republic, this occasional theft has grown and has gradually turned into organized theft and big banditry. During the period of the Fourth Republic, the resurgence of *dahalo* has had an increasingly mafia-like dimension. It is also the most worrying expression of a progressive loss of state sovereignty that could foment national divisions.[38]

Firstly, rustling zebu, which was initially a cultural tradition in the southern region of Madagascar, giving young men an opportunity to prove their virility, has turned into a bloody conflict in recent years. In July 2012, a leader of *dahalo* named Remenabila killed a dozen gendarmes in the southern part of the country. In September 2012, at least 600 *dahalo* stole a thousand zebus in Betroka, a village in southern Madagascar. A hundred people, including local gendarmes, were killed in the clash between the *dahalo* and the inhabitants of Betroka and the local gendarmes.[39] Similarly, in Ranomafana, in the Anosy region of southeastern Madagascar, the local population killed a hundred *dahalo*. A dozen people among the local population were seriously injured during the confrontation. Also, in September 2012, in southwestern

[37] Cf. Ibid.
[38] Cf. Mathieu Pellerin, "Madagascar: Gérer l'Héritage de La Transition," *Ifri* (November 2014): 16, https://www.ifri.org/fr/publications/notes-de-lifri/madagascar-gerer-lheritage-de-transition.
[39] Cf. "Madagascar: Une centaine de personnes tuées pour vols de boeuf," *Seneweb.com*, last modified December 14, 2022, accessed December 14, 2022, https://www.seneweb.com/news/Afrique/madagascar-une-centaine-de-personnes-tuees-pour-vols-de-boeuf_n_76381.html.

Madagascar, 300 *dahalo* attacked the village of Belo Tsiribihina, killing three members of the gendarmerie.[40]

The phenomenon of *dahalo* is growing in various parts of the country and they are committing other criminal acts. On July 29, 2022, a terrifying massacre occurred in Ankazobe, a district about 100 kilometers northwest of Antananarivo. A band of approximately twelve *dahalo* attacked a small village in the Ankazobe district and killed at least thirty-two villagers, including fifteen children. A dispute between villagers is said to have caused this dramatic massacre. Survivors of this tragedy said that seven families were targeted and took refuge in the attic of a brick house in the center of the village. The criminals set the house on fire to force the victims to leave their refuge. They murdered the suffocating victims who left the shelter one after another. One survivor recognized some of the attackers and explained to investigators that these crimes were related to a land dispute.[41]

Secondly, aggressions against albino people, especially children, and murderous attacks by bandits are suddenly on the rise in Madagascar. On August 18, 2020, United Nations agencies and human rights defenders condemned aggression against and the kidnapping of children, young girls, and women, including people with albinism. According to their *communiqués*, statistics from the police and gendarmerie show 118 cases of abduction, twenty-two of which involved people with albinism.[42] In most cases, these children and women were subjected to violence, including murder.

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[40] Cf. Ibid.
[41] Cf. "Madagascar: trente-deux villageois, dont quinze enfants, massacrés," *Réunion la 1ère*, accessed November 27, 2022, https://la1ere.francetvinfo.fr/reunion/madagascar-trente-deux-villageois-dont-quinze-enfants-massacres-1308896.html.
[42] Cf. Zoé Rasoaniaina, "Situation et Reponse sur les Actes d'Enlevement d'Enfants, de Jeunes Filles et de Femmes à Madagascar | Les Nations Unies à Madagascar," last modified Août 2022, accessed December 15, 2022, https://madagascar.un.org/fr/195543-situation-et-reponse-sur-les-actes-denlevement-denfants-de-jeunes-filles-et-de-femmes, https://madagascar.un.org/fr/195543-situation-et-reponse-sur-les-actes-denlevement-denfants-de-jeunes-filles-et-de-femmes.

Aggression against and kidnapping of people with albinism are visibly increasing in the southern region of Madagascar. A United Nations expert officially visited the country in September 2022. According to her analysis and reports from the different entities concerned, aggressions against people with albinism are a relatively new phenomenon in Madagascar. Similar incidents occurred in 2013 and 2017, but the peak of these attacks occurred in the last three years (2020-22).[43] The Gendarmerie reported ten cases of aggression against people with albinism in 2020, eight cases in 2021, and fifteen cases in 2022. In addition, eleven cases were recorded by the National Police for 2021 and 2022, mainly abductions of children. For 2022, there were at least four assaults reported.[44] These are only the reported cases. There are also unreported cases in remote areas where accurate information is difficult or impossible to obtain.

The assault and abduction of people with albinism in Madagascar mainly involve the removal of the victims' eyes due to the belief that these eyes can attract money and make one invisible. This belief has spread through rumor from one district to another, triggering new cases. According to a local belief, the eyes of children with albinism possess a supernatural gift. The *dahalo* would sell these eyes to witch doctors who concoct potions designed to protect them from the bullets of gendarmes or make them invisible.[45]

According to the United Nations reports, perpetrators may be victims' relatives, community or family members, people from other regions, or zebu rustlers.[46] Other information

[43] Cf. "www://Ohchr.Org/Sites/Default/Files/Documents/Issues/Albinism/2022-09-30/EoS_VisitMadagascar_30September2022-Fr.Pdf - Google Search," 2, accessed November 27, 2022,
[44] Ibid.
[45] Cf. Julian Rakotoarivelo, "Vol d'organes: Les yeux d'un enfant albinos arrachés," *Midi Madagasikara*, last modified December 11, 2021, accessed November 27, 2022, https://midi-madagasikara.mg/2021/12/11/vol-dorganes-les-yeux-dun-enfant-albinos-arraches/.
[46] Cf. "www://Ohchr.Org/Sites/Default/Files/Documents/Issues/Albinism/2022-09-30/EoS_VisitMadagascar_30September2022-Fr.Pdf - Google Search," 3–4.

suggests the possible involvement of people in influential positions, arising from false beliefs that rituals using body parts from people with albinism may help them gain and maintain power.

Finally, confrontations between angry mobs and the gendarmerie are increasing in Madagascar. Following the increasing abduction of and violence against albino children, the people of Ikongo, a southern region of Madagascar, sought to do justice for four suspects in detention in the barracks of Ikongo after the disappearance of an albino child. On August 29, 2022, an angry mob went to the gendarmerie barracks and requested the gendarmerie to hand over the four suspects. The gendarmes explained to the mob the judicial process to be followed in such a case. The gendarmes set up a security perimeter to warn people not to cross. The angry mob decided to do justice immediately to the suspected criminals. When the crowd tried to cross the security perimeter, the gendarmes used tear gas and fired warning shots. Finally, they shoot at the crowd. Fourteen people were killed and twenty-eight injured.

The practice of mob justice was a rare phenomenon before the political crisis of 2009. In recent years, however, it has been increasing in Madagascar. According to the most recent Afrobarometer survey, four out of ten Malagasy agree with the application of mob justice, a practice already prevalent in the localities where a quarter of the population lives.[47]

In sum, Malagasy society has shown signs of deteriorating social living conditions. This reality has modified the spirit of humanity and solidarity that traditionally characterized Malagasy society. ACLED says that many Malagasy people have become vindictive because of "their lack of trust in the police, armed forces, and judicial systems."[48] Afrobarometer in 2014 supports this argument by noting that 63% of the sampled population in Madagascar do not trust

[47] Cf. "AD294: Se Faire Justice Soi-Même, Une Solution Par Défaut à Madagascar?" accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.afrobarometer.org/publication/ad294-se-faire-justice-soi-meme-une-solution-par-defaut-madagascar/.
[48] Moody, "Madagascar - March 2017 Update."

the police, 56% do not trust the military forces, and 71% do not trust the courts of law.[49] This lack of trust in the institutions of the state leads many Malagasy people, who have been and still are victims of robberies, assaults, abductions, and armed attacks, to become vindictive and violent against suspected criminals. Crowds have become ruthless towards criminals, applying mob justice immediately because they know that criminals would be released after bribing to the police and the judges.

According to the Malagasy Council of Christian Churches (FFKM), lack of confidence in the criminal justice system and the perceived levels of corruption have been major causes of increased violence in Madagascar.[50] Many victims prefer not to go through the court system because the power of money will always win there.[51] Afrobarometer 2022 says that more than four out of ten Malagasy citizens (42%) believe that most police and gendarmes are corrupt.[52] That is one reason why violence in Madagascar is growing: the victims of violence and the society would prefer to apply mob justice to express their anger and dissatisfaction rather than relying on the police and the court system.

The Afrobarometer survey on insecurity in Madagascar from 2005 to 2022 verifies the increase in violent raids and attacks perpetrated by bandits. The proportion of the population fearing being assaulted at home was 28% in 2005, 29% in 2008, and 45% in 2013.[53] Afrobarometer 2022 reports that 71% of the Malagasy people felt unsafe in their neighborhoods,

[49] Cf. Ibid.
[50] Cf. Yvan Andriamanga, "Les vindictes populaires ne sont pas prêts de s'arrêter," *Madagascar-Tribune.com*, last modified February 2, 2023, accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.madagascar-tribune.com/Les-vindictes-populaires-ne-sont,22935.html.
[51] Cf. Ibid.
[52] Cf. "AD572: Les Malgaches Ne Se Sentent Pas En Sécurité et Doutent Sur Le Professionnalisme des Forces de l'ordre," accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.afrobarometer.org/publication/ad572-les-malgaches-ne-se-sentent-pas-en-securite-et-doutent-sur-le-professionnalisme-des-forces-de-lordre/.
[53] Cf. "Insécurité et Violence à Madagascar," accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.afrobarometer.org/articles/insecurite-et-violence-madagascar/.

and 59% feared crime in their homes in the past year.[54] These realities reflect the moral malaise that has settled in many Malagasy people. The Malagasy way of living together based on *Fihavanana* needs to be recovered in order to rediscover a peaceful and harmonious society.

[54] Cf. "AD572."

CHAPTER 2: A FRESH LOOK AT THE MALAGASY CONCEPT OF *FIHAVANANA* AND ITS CHALLENGES

The previous chapter presented the current social and moral problems facing the nation. Madagascar is currently losing its traditional values of living together and experiencing increased violence that needs to be addressed by rediscovering its revered tradition of *Fihavanana*. The present chapter will examine the Malagasy concept of *Fihavanana* and present some of its challenges.

1. Review of *Fihavanana*

In Madagascar, *Fihavanana* is a reality of everyday life, in ordinary language, traditional songs, and sayings of Malagasy ancestral wisdom. Its manifestations are evident in every circumstance of Malagasy socio-cultural life. The daily acts and words of the Malagasy people seem curiously animated by a spirit and motivated by an ethic of their own encompassed by the single term *Fihavanana.*[55] These daily acts and words refer to interpersonal and family relationships, individual and collective behavior, respect for traditions, observance of ancestral customs, and customary greetings. In what follows, I will discuss the concept of *Fihavanana* using etymology, narratives, samples from Malagasy writers, rituals, and historical accounts.

1.1 *Fihavanana* from an Etymological Perspective

Etymologically, *Fihavanana* derives from the root "*havana*" (f-i-havana-ana). "*Havana*" means firstly "kindred." It includes parents, family, and even close friends. With the prefix "*fi*-" and the suffix "-*ana*," we get the substantive noun *Fihavanana*, which is generally translated as

[55] Raharilalao, *Eglise et Fihavanana à Madagascar*, 119.

kinship, friendship, and solidarity. Casey Woodling, Senior Lecturer of Philosophy at Coastal Carolina University, South Carolina, USA, literally translates *Fihavanana* as "the state of friendship or the state of being a family."[56] Descartes said, "I think; therefore, I am." In the Malagasy context, other people constitute one's existence.[57] The terms kinship and solidarity are not limited by blood relationships. *Fihavanana* goes beyond the family circle.

1.2 *Fihavanana* from a Narrative Perspective

Malagasy proverbs are the best portrayals of the Malagasy worldview. Lee Haring[58] suggests that proverbs offer a shortcut to understand the Malagasy mentality.[59] Proverbs function in intuitive thinking. Thus, a narrative approach helps us better understand the concept of *Fihavanana*. We will quote a sample of commonly used proverbs to grasp the meanings of the *Fihavanana* experience. They are organized according to the sense they convey.

The first set of proverbs, representative though limited, shows the importance of *Fihavanana* compared to other things.

Proverb	**Literal Translation**	**Interpretation**
1- *Aleo very tsikalakalan-karena, toy izay very tsikalakalam-pihavanana.*	It is better to lose the basis of wealth than the basis of *Fihavanana*.	*Fihavanana* is harder to restore than wealth.
2- *Tsy ny varotra no taloha, fa ny Fihavanana.*	Selling was not first, it was *Fihavanana*.	*Fihavanana* is more important than selling or commerce.

[56] Woodling, "The Malagasy Ideal of Fihavanana and Western Ethics," 94.
[57] Cf. Jzaovelo-Dzao, *La Sagesse Malgache* (Antsiranana, Madagascar : Institut Supérieur de Théologie et de Philosophie de Madagascar, 1991), 28.
[58] Lee Haring is an Emeritus Professor of English at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York. After doctoral study in seventeenth-century English poetry, he studied folklore, introduced several folklore courses, and helped produce two recordings of American folk music. In 1975-76 he served the University of Madagascar as a Fulbright Senior Lecturer in American Folklore and Civilization. There he conducted extensive library research on Malagasy culture, which led to the publication of his *Malagasy Tale Index*, a comprehensive analysis of folktales; *Ibonia, Epic of Madagascar*, and *Verbal Arts in Madagascar*, a study of four genres of oral literature (see Lee Haring, "Lee Haring," *John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation*, accessed December 18, 2022, https://www.gf.org/fellows/all-fellows/lee-haring/).
[59] Cf. Lee Haring, "Proverbs: Dialogue in Monologue," in *Verbal Arts in Madagascar*, Performance in Historical Perspective (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 63, accessed December 18, 2022, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv512sd8.6.

3- *Tsy ny fanambadiana no taloha, fa ny Fihavanana.*	Marriage was not first, it was *Fihavanana.*	*Fihavanana* is more important than marriage.
4- *Ny Fihavanana tsy azo vidina.*	*Fihavanana* cannot be bought.	*Fivahanana* is so valuable that it has no price.
5- *Ny hevitra tsy azo tsy amin'olombelona*	Knowledge is not attained without the help of others.	Human flourishing inevitably happens in collaboration with others.[60]

Fihavanana is more precious than any material and institutional goods. "*Aleo very tsikalakalan-karena, toy izay very tsikalakalam-pihavanana*" is a crucial proverb to explain the concept of *Fihavanana.* It reveals the foundation of Malagasy thought. Money can easily damage *Fihavanana*. *Fihavanana* is more valuable than material goods. *Fihavanana* prioritizes peace and harmony between people living together, greater than financial institutions or other social institutions, including marriage. Human relationships are crucial. In harmonious and peaceful relationships with others, humans can move forward together for the benefit of all. Acquiring knowledge is more fruitful if one works with others. Woodling says, "history has its geniuses, but nearly all of them had teachers and responded to the work of others."[61] Thus, the proverbs in this section convey the unique importance of *Fihavanana* for a better human, harmonious, and fraternal society.

These examples share advice about cultivating *Fihavanana*:

Proverb	**Literal Translation**	**Interpretation**
1- *Ny vola no mosavin'ny Fihavanana indrindra.*	*Fihavanana* is poisoned by money.	Do not put money before *Fihavanana*.
2- *Ny Fihavanana hoatra ny landy: maty isika, ifonosana; velona itafiana. ka ny madilana arahimpanondro.*	*Fihavanana* is like silk: if we are dead, it is wrapped around us living, we wear it; and the thin part is followed by the forefinger.	*Fihavanana* protects us even after death and ought to be nurtured in life.
3- *Fitia mifamaly mahatsara Fihavanana.*	Love returned promotes *Fihavanana*.	You should show affection to others to grow *Fihavanana*.

[60] Casey Woodling, "The Malagasy Ideal of *Fihavanana* and Western Ethics," *Comparative Philosophy* 13, no. 2 (July 30, 2022): 96–97, https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/comparativephilosophy/vol13/iss2/11.
[61] Ibid., 97.

4- *Ataovy fitia landihazo: ka ny madilana tentenana, ary ny maito tohiana.*	Love me as you do cotton: add to the thing and re-join the broken.	Be patient and careful with friendships to maintain *Fihavanana*. Mend what is broken.
5- *Aza atao fihavanam-bato, ka raha tapaka, tsy azo atohy; fa ataovy fihavan-dandy, ka raha madilana, azo tohizana.*	Do not look at a friendship like a rock because if it breaks, you can't rejoin it. Have friendship like silk, so that if it becomes too slender, you can add to it.	Do not be overly hard and firm in your dealings with friends. Allow for some slack and room for forgiveness.[62]

Fihavanana is an ongoing process that we need to create and re-create every day to foster authentic and permanent relationships in this earthly life and the afterlife. Woodling points out that "the bonds of *Fihavanana* cover both the living and the dead."[63] These proverbs advise cultivating *Fihavanana* to maintain a good relationship with others because "*izao isika izao maty iray fasana, velona iray trano*" (We will share the same grave as we share the same house). *Fihavanana* implies that the bonds of family and friendship will always unite them, even after death.

To maintain healthy and lasting relationships of *Fihavanana*, these proverbs offer three practical and concrete guidance. The first is flexibility in our relationships with others. The proverb in which *Fihavanana* is compared to a tissue reminds us that problems are part of human life. They influence our relationships with others. Woodling notes, "if relationships are too firm or too rigid, then they will crack or break. However, if they are like the fabric of the cloth, they can bend and stretch. If there is a tear, they can be mended."[64] This metaphor suggests that we keep our relationships with others active and permanent regardless of the circumstances. There is always room to strengthen, repair, and expand the scope of our human relationships.

[62] Cf. Ibid., 98-99.
[63] Ibid., 99.
[64] Ibid., 100.

Second, patience is essential in our relationships with others. The proverbs above urge us to be patient towards others by showing them affection and trust, and by sharing with them our joys and difficulties. Woodling argues that one should be patient in cultivating friendships to maintain the desired state of *Fihavanana.*[65]

Third, money should not be put before *Fihavanana*. The proverb "*Ny vola no mosavin'ny Fihavanana indrindra*" tells us that in the Malagasy worldview, *Fihavanana* is more effective than money to get oneself out of trouble. It helps us accomplish more than we otherwise could.

Proverbs expressing moral guidance related to *Fihavanana*:

Proverb	**Literal Translation**	**Interpretation**
1- *Raha revom-potaka, rano no manala; raha revon-teny, vava no manala; raha revon'alahelo, Havana no itarainana.*	If you are covered with mud, water will remove it; if you get into a war of words, the mouth can fix it; if you are overtaken by sorrow, you can appeal to your friends.	Friends are there to help when we are sad.
2- *Misy rony, miaramisotro; misy ventiny, miara-mitsako.*	If there is juice to the thing, then we drink together; if there is meat to it, then we chew together.	Share with others.
3- *Ny iray tsy tia mafana, ary ny iray tsy tia mangatsiaka; ka ataovy marimaritra hiraisana.*	One does not like the heat and one does not like the cold: find a consensus.	Find a middle ground when dealing with friends.
4- *Aza asiana anga-potsy sy anga-mainty, fa ataovy angana iray ihany.*	Do not put in a white dye and black dye, but let there be one dye only.	Be unified and seek harmony in relationships and society at large.
5- *Trano atsimo sy avaratra: izay tsy mahalena ialofana.*	When it rains, one can shelter in any house of the neighborhood which does not leak.	Provide for others if they are in need, and seek out the help of others if you are in need.[66]

Fihavanana needs to be maintained and promoted through the search for a middle ground. Woodling rightly points out that "the search for a middle ground and compromise is

[65] Cf. Ibid.
[66] Cf. Ibid., 102–103.

essential for maintaining and promoting *Fihavanana*."[67] These Malagasy proverbs give three practical counsels for seeking the middle ground in order to maintain and promote *Fihavanana*.

The first is sharing with friends. The proverb "*Misy rony, miara-misotro; misy ventiny, miara-mitsako*" (If there is juice to the thing, then we drink together; if there is meat to it, then we chew together) emphasizes the importance of sharing with friends. Sharing with others helps us to step outside our own world to see their needs and share their "ground."

Second, mutual aid fosters the search for a middle ground that maintains and promotes *Fihavanana.* Mutual aid is part of Malagasy ethics in general. The proverbs "*Trano atsimo sy avaratra: izay tsy mahalena ialofana*" (When it rains, one can shelter in any house of the neighborhood which does not leak.) and "*Raha revom-potaka, rano no manala; raha revon-teny, vava no manala; raha revon'alahelo, havana no itarainana,*" (If you are covered with mud, water will remove it; if you get into a war of words, the mouth can fix it; if you are overtaken by sorrow, you can appeal to your friends) encourage us to be always ready to help our friends in need and also to ask and accept the help from others when we need it.

Flexibility is the third practical counsel to help us search for a middle ground in order to maintain and promote *Fihavanana*. The proverb "*Ny iray tsy tia mafana, ary ny iray tsy tia mangatsiaka; ka ataovy marimaritra hiraisana.*" (One doesn't like the heat and one doesn't like the cold: find a consensus) emphasizes flexibility and a sense of compromise. The proverb suggests that flexibility and boldness to seek compromise are necessary conditions to find common ground in friendship, not to satisfy one's interests but to seek the common good. This moral advice related to *Fihavanana,* Woodling notes, should be extended to our interactions with all people.[68]

[67] Cf. Ibid., 103.
[68] Cf. Ibid.

Nowadays, the notices of marriage, death, or other family events generally adopt the introductory formula: "*Noho ny Fihavanana dia mampandre anareo izahay fa…*" (In the name of *Fihavanana*, we announce to you that...) to maintain healthy relationships. When Malagasy people feel compelled to act at the risk of displeasing others, they will not fail to warn and apologize in advance, saying: "*Azafady indrindra amin'ny fihavanana*" (Please excuse me because of our *Fihavanana*). All Malagasy socio-cultural events motivate the people to exemplify *Fihavanana* as relationships, solidarity, and unity.

In sum, these Malagasy proverbs emphasize three main characteristics of *Fihavanana*, supported by practical and concrete guidance. First, *Fihavanana* is more valuable than material and institutional goods because its first preoccupation is seeking peace and harmony among the members of society. Second, *Fihavanana* is a specific way of living, an ongoing process in a human relationship, that we need to create and re-create constantly. To maintain and promote such relationships, one needs flexibility and patience and to prioritize *Fihavanana* before money. Third, *Fihavanana* is maintained and promoted through the search for a middle ground. This search is fostered by sharing with friends, mutual aid, and flexibility.

1.3 *Fihavanana* Considered from Samples of Malagasy Writers

Even though the Malagasy worldview is best portrayed by oral tradition, namely proverbs, *Fihavanana* has also been the subject of abundant literature spanning the spectrum of Malagasy society. We will review some of these works to see how these authors, through different perspectives, have elucidated the meaning of *Fihavanana*.

> *Le Fihavanana, écrit Jacques Rabemananjara, est un terme intraduisible en français mais dont le sens évoquerait, pour tout être humain, l'impérieuse obligation morale de considérer son voisin, de quelque origine qu'il soit, comme son parent (havana) comme son frère*.[69]
>
> [*Fihavanana*, writes Jacques Rabemananjara (a Malagasy politician, playwright, and poet), is a term that cannot be translated into French, but whose meaning evokes, for every human being, the imperious moral obligation to consider his/her neighbor, of whatever origin, as his/her relative (*havana*).]
>
> *Le Fihavanana se définit comme 'une attitude d'affection et d'amour qui porte les membres d'une certaine qualité de relations, de rapports, d'échanges entre des personnes vivant dans une même société, dans un même groupe et par extension avec d'autres groupes de la même race ou non*.[70]

[*Fihavanana* is defined as an attitude of affection and love that brings a certain quality to the relations, relationships and exchanges between members of the same group in society, and by extension with other groups, of the same race or not], for Adolph Razafintsalama, a Malagasy Jesuit anthropologist and philosopher.

Le Fihavanana est harmonie des vivants qui s'entretiennent et se respectent. C'est donc une leçon riche du savoir-vivre malgache et en même temps une conscience lucide de sa propre valeur vis-à-vis des membres de sa communauté.[71]

[*Fihavanana* is a harmonious relationship and mutual respect of the living. It is thus a rich lesson of the Malagasy way of living and, at the same time, gives clear awareness of its value to community members.]

From these writings, we can deduce the nature of *Fihavanana* as a kinship, an attitude, harmony, and a relationship. *Fihavanana* stipulates the value of life, which is given and protected by good relationships with others. In short, three central ideas emerge from these writings. First, *Fihavanana* brings together community members through affection. Second, it

[69] Rabemanjara, J. cité par Ralibera R., in *Rôle du prêtre dans le développement de la culture malgache*, ACM t. VIII, (1962), 337.
[70] Adolph Razafintsalama, "Réflexion Théologique," *JCAM*, Questionnaire et Esquisse (1976): 8.
[71] R. Razafindrabe, "Discours Inaugural Du Seminaire National de l'Enseignement Catholique" (Antananarivo, September 1983), 4.

exhibits a harmony arising from mutual respect. Third, those bound by *Fihavanana* might be united by blood or affection but definitely live in proximity.

1.4 *Fihavanana* from a Ritual Perspective

Fihavanana is expressed in rituals, proverbs, history, and literary, and philosophical works. For example, a ritual called *fafy*, taken from the work of Robert Dubois, a French Jesuit anthropologist, helps us to gain insight into the meaning of *Fihavanana* for restoration and reconciliation. It consists of the sprinkling of zebu's blood on those guilty of incest. Many cultures consider incest one of the most serious wounds to any human community's social and spiritual life. Incest often divides families and, at worst, isolates or even leads to the death of those found guilty of it. In such critical situations, Malagasy *Fihavanana* still intends to give the Malagasy community and those guilty of incest a chance to reconcile and restore their relationship through the *fafy* ritual.

The *fafy* ritual is performed in the Malagasy community for a man and a woman guilty of incest. In Malagasy culture, incest brings shame to the family and the community. The *fafy* ritual depicts the process of moving from shame to the forgiveness of *Zanahary* – a Malagasy word for God the Creator – and to the recognition of the community. To perform the ritual, the guilty man offers a zebu to the community. The zebu takes the place of the guilty people. The elder of the family assigns certain community members to slaughter the zebu. Then, the master of the ritual takes a bowl of the zebu's blood and explains to the community the purpose of the ritual. After saying a traditional prayer addressed to *Zanahary*, the performer of the ritual pours the zebu's blood on the heads of the man and woman guilty of incest. He finishes by giving them a blessing.

This final blessing signifies the recognition of the community.[72] In the *fafy* ritual, *Fihavanana* reflects harmony, unity, solidarity, relationship, and reconciliation.

Moreover, the ritual also builds new relationships. By sharing and eating the meat of the sacrificed zebu, the community stands in solidarity with the new couple. This is described by the proverb "*Iray vatsy iray aina*" (Sharing the same meal shares life). *Fihavanana* is not meant to isolate people even in such a serious case as incest. Instead, it provides an opportunity for unity, peace, and harmony since the community aims at the good of all its members.

In short, *Fihavanana* is expressed ritually to exemplify reconciliation and restoration. *Fihavanana*, seen from the perspective of the *fafy* ritual, illustrates the collective determination to restore different types of distorted relationships, even in complex situations, such as incest.

1.5 *Fihavanana* from a Historical Perspective

Fihavanana is not an abstract form of solidarity. The Malagasy people frequently refer to *Fihavanana* in their daily activities and ceremonies. The 2019 Africa Cup of Nations (CAN 2019) allows us to see *Fihavanana* in a historical event. All the Malagasy people certainly remember this unique and positive event in Madagascar's recent history.

After 72 years of existence, the Malagasy national soccer team, Barea, made the quarter finals of CAN for the first time in 2019. That event provided an unprecedented lesson for the Malagasy people. It was a lesson of the power against all odds of, specific collective values, which are the foundation of human relations and life together as Malagasy. During CAN 2019, the nation experienced a historic moment. The event involved rich and poor, women and men, children and adults, young and older people, employers and employees, believers and non-

[72] Cf. Robert Dubois, *L 'Identité Malgache* (Paris : Edition Karthala, 2002), 96–97.

believers; all the regions of the island lived and shared the unparalleled victory of the Barea. Families stayed up until dawn, united in celebration of this precious gift from Cairo, where the game was played. Lights shone through the night, cries of joy echoed everywhere, arms and fists were raised to encourage and support the national team.

As I argued above, *Fihavanana* does not depend on genealogy, possessions, knowledge, or being a man or a woman, but on living together in a society. Dubois argues that *Fihavanana* results from the concept of integration.[73] For Dubois, the integration of the people in the community is accomplished in their co-participation in the same *aina*[74] or, more concretely, in their unity and solidarity. This unity formed by the co-participation of community members in the same *aina* is the keystone of all family or community relationships. Moreover, it ensures a characteristic community called *Fihavanana*, in which the Malagasy people recognize an essential component of their cultural personality: unity as one people.[75] An aspiration to improve their community life is a value shared by Malagasy people whether they are of the north, the south, the east, and the west.

One retains from this unique historical event that *Fihavanana* was clearly understood as solidarity and unity of the people expressed through kindness, mutuality, and respect. It creates relationships between individuals and their fellow human beings; it is not limited to family members, close friends, and colleagues but includes strangers who happen to reside in the same community or village.

[73] Cf. Ibid., 85.
[74] *Aina*: is a key term in *Fihavanana*. Robert Dubois, a French Jesuit anthropologist, translated *aina* into French as flux vital, vie; corps animé par le flux vital; ma personne visible (vital flux, life; body animated by vital flux; my visible person) (see Robert Dubois, *L'identité Malgache* (Paris: Edition Karthala, 2002), 18) but he left the meaning of the term *aina* untranslated throughout his writing.
[75] Cf. Robert Dubois, *Olombelona: Essai Sur l'Existence Personnelle et Collective à Madagascar*, L'Harmattan. (Paris, 1978), 70.

In summary, *Fihavanana* has clearly been understood as solidarity and unity of the people expressed through kindness, mutuality, and respect. The fundamental subject of *Fihavanana* is human relationships. *Fihavanana* wants these human relationships to be present, active, healthy, and permanent to help humans succeed and live fully. *Fihavanana* is a constant search for unity, peace, and harmony.

2. Some Challenges in Understanding *Fihavanana*

2.1 Hilaire Raharilalao: Existence of *Fihavanana* Regional Variants

The existence of regional variants of *Fihavanana* represents the first challenge in understanding its meaning on the national level. *Fihavanana*, at first sight, can be described as a state of being in peace and harmony, of love and solidarity with others by sharing life in the same community. However, it is more than that. Hilaire Raharilalao, a Malagasy scholar who has done a detailed study on *Fihavanana*, emphasizes its emotionality and describes *Fihavanana* as "mutual love" *(fifankatiavana).*[76] He admits that *Fihavanana* does not have a precise equivalent in European or other languages. It cannot be translated in a few words in French or explained in a few words in Malagasy.[77] Raharilalao noted that in Madagascar, the term *Fihavanana* has its own stamps, depending on region and ethnic group.[78] Randriamarolaza Louis pointed out the coexistence of the terms *Fihavanana* and *Filongoa*[79] (which also means unity and solidarity) which we will look at below. He was followed by Ottino Paul, who clarified the meanings of

[76] Raharilalao, *Eglise et Fihavanana à Madagascar*, 432.
[77] Ibid., 126.
[78] Ibid., 119.
[79] Gannon et al., *Fihavanana - La Vision d'une Société Paisible à Madagascar (2e Édition Corrigée)*, 21.

Fihavanana and *Filongoa* according to their regional appearance. The two scholars testify to *Fihavanana'*s regional variants, a point of confusion for many Malagasy people.[80]

2.2 Robert Dubois: Existence of Two Types of *Fihavanana* – *Fihavanana* by Genealogy and *Fihavanana* by Place of Residence[81]

The existence of *Fihavanana* by genealogy and *Fihavanana* by place of residence is the second challenge in understanding *Fihavanana* on the national level. Robert Dubois, a French Jesuit anthropologist and missionary, spent almost thirty years in Madagascar to investigate how the Malagasy people relate to God, others, and the world. He argued that *Fihavanana* binds them in their relationships with the visible and the invisible worlds. Odon Evariste Rakotondrazanany, a Malagasy scholar who wrote a doctoral thesis on conversion and *Fihavanana* suggests that one of the great achievements of Dubois lies in his novel notions of the *moi de Malgache* (Malagasy self) and the *personne de Malgache* (Malagasy person).[82] The *moi de Malgache* makes the Malagasy people feel united with God and others. The *personne de Malgache*, on the other hand, helps them realize that they are different from God and others. Rakotondrazanany points out that "at the heart of Dubois' thesis, then, lies an identifiable pattern of thinking that perceives one's unity with different realities."[83] Using the two notions – the *moi de Malgache* and the *personne de Malgache* – in explaining the historical events of 1991-1992 and 2001-2002 mentioned in chapter 1 of this work, Dubois concludes that the *moi de Malgache* prevailed over the *personne*

[80] Cf. Ibid., 21–22.
[81] Cf. Dubois, *Olombelona: Essai Sur l'Existence Personnelle et Collective à Madagascar*, 52–100.
[82] Odon Evariste Rakotondrazanany, "A Theology of Conversion Rooted in a Pragmatistic Aesthetics of Fihavanana (Unity) in Madagascar" (Berkeley, 2007), 149.
[83] Ibid.

de Malgache.[84] That is, the unity among the Malagasy people is more substantial than what makes them different from one another.

Dubois believes that this culture of unity and solidarity has led all popular movements in Madagascar to reach their goals, primarily peaceful change of political regime. Dubois characterizes this collective consciousness as participative or synthetic thinking, according to which Malagasy people tend to perceive realities as part of themselves. Then he contrasts this participative thinking with analytical thinking, which he describes as the patterns of Western thinking that tend to analyze, distinguish the object from the subject, and use abstract concepts.[85] Dubois concludes that participatory thinking is much stronger than analytical thinking in the Malagasy people's experience of *Fihavanana*,

From this perspective, Dubois establishes the difference between ancestor-related *Fihavanana* or *Fihavanana* defined by genealogy, and residence-related *Fihavanana* or *Fihavanana* defined by place of residence. For him, the experience of *Fihavanana* is based on the concept of *aina*, a Malagasy word for vital force and life. In ancestor-related *Fihavanana*, the Malagasy individual considers his or her ancestors, parents, siblings, and spouse as extensions of his or her *aina*. These realities which encompass human beings, ancestors, God, and the land (especially of the ancestors) constitute parts of his or her life. The *moi de Malgache* makes someone feel united with another by sharing the same *aina*.[86] Some Malagasy people rely only on this mode of unity and are limited to it in living out *Fihavanana*.

In *Fihavanana* defined by place of residence, the community of neighbors, the ecological environment, and the nation constitute what Dubois calls the extension of one's *aina*. In this

[84] Cf. Dubois, *Fihavanana Malagasy sy ny Heriny [Malagasy Fihavanana and its strengths]*.
[85] Cf. Dubois, *L 'Identité Malgache*, 32–33.
[86] Cf. Ibid., 47–50.

residence-related *Fihavanana*, a Malagasy individual shares the same *aina* with his or her land, cohabitants, and traditional local chief. The *moi de Malgache* makes the individual feel tied to all these realities that constitute parts of his or her life because they share the same *aina*. On the other hand, the *personne de Malgache* differentiates these realities from the individual's self. Nevertheless, Dubois observed that the Malagasy people understand and are convinced that all these realities come from God. They believe that God constitutes and is part of their lives. Therefore, "in Dubois's view, one's relation to each of these realities constitutes a different type and degree of *Fihavanana* according to circumstances."[87] The political movements in Madagascar in 1972, 1991-1992, 2001-2002, and 2009, and the historical event of CAN 2019, for example, depict a more nation-related *Fihavanana* rather than a family-related *Fihavanana*. Exhumation, circumcision, and *fafy* ritual, on the other hand, present a type of *Fihavanana* more related to the family.

2.3 Peter Kneitz[88]: Existence of Nuances of *Fihavanana* between Local *Fihavanana*, Gasy (Malagasy) *Fihavanana*, Christian *Fihavanana*, and *Fihavanana* as a Malagasy Highlands Language

Peter Kneitz, an anthropologist, has developed Dubois's view and pointed out that the Malagasy *Fihavanana* is still limited to family, ethnic or clan, regional, and provincial spheres. He, in turn, elaborated some nuances of *Fihavanana*, distinguishing the terms *Fihavanana* and

[87] Odon Evariste Rakotondrazanany, "A Theology of Conversion Rooted in a Pragmatistic Aesthetics of *Fihavanana* (Unity) in Madagascar," 151.

[88] Peter Kneitz is a researcher at the Department of Social Anthropology (Seminar für Ethnologie) at Martin Luther University in Halle-Wittenberg. He conducts anthropological and ethno-historical research on the institutions on the west coast Madagascar, Sakalava region (Die 'Kirche der Sakalava'). His current work focuses on the analysis of the postcolonial state and democratic development in Madagascar, with a particular focus on the ways of conflict resolution and the impact of the normativity of *Fihavanana*. (Cf. Frederic Gannon et al., *Fihavanana - La Vision d'une Société Paisible à Madagascar (2eme Édition Corrigée)*, 2016, v).

Filongoa, *Fihavanana gasy* (Malagasy), Christian *Fihavanana*, and *Fihavanana* as a language of the Malagasy Highlands. We will look at each of these in the following paragraphs.

Fihavanana and *Filongoa* are two terms that express the solidarity of kinship and blood relation. They are generally understood as local *Fihavanana* within the blood kinship group. Dubois calls this concept ancestor-related *Fihavanana*. In *Fihavanana* and *Filongoa*, the community members know each other, live closely, and share the same family grave and a locality of ritual encounters. The lived relationships and emotions binding the members of these basic social units define *Fihavanana* as "mutual love" (*fifankatiavana*), "sympathy" (*fifankahazoana*), "mutual aid" (*fifanampiana*) and "union, being-one" (*firaisana*).[89] Kneitz calls this basic form of *Fihavanana* "first order *Fihavanana*."[90]

Fihavanana and *Filongoa* refer to the fundamental variant of *Fihavanana* or "first order *Fihavanana*." The word *Fihavanana* is preferred in the Highlands, the probable place of its origin, and on the east coast. In these places, *Fihavanana* generally expresses solidarity. Its differentiated use according to place of origin and family lineage has existed for a long time, at least from before the colonial era (1894-1960). The term *Filongoa*, on the other hand, dominates in the south, west, and northwest of Madagascar.[91] However, *Filongoa* remains almost invisible in the Malagasy literature. In post-independence Madagascar, the differentiated use of these two terms – *Fihavanana* and *Filongoa* – in distinct places is no longer as pronounced as it once was, because of significant internal migration and the rotation of government.[92]

Fihavanana and *Filongoa* are often used by many Malagasy people as synonyms. Nevertheless, their meaning can differ according to various circumstances such as ancestry, place

[89] Ibid., 20.
[90] Ibid., 21.
[91] Cf. Ibid.
[92] Cf. Ibid., 21–22.

of origin, identity, politics, and local culture of the people. For example, when a migrant from the Highlands speaks of *Fihavanana* in a village on the west coast, the local population will undoubtedly understand the general meaning of *Fihavanana* as solidarity. Nevertheless, given the historical context, the local population still clings to the subterranean nuance of a *Fihavanana* whose ambition is rather national, for the benefit of those seen as close to the State power (*Fihavanana* users), which is quite distinct from *Filongoa*, based on kinship in the region.[93] Kneitz makes us aware of these nuances related to place and identity when speaking of *Fihavanana* and *Filongoa* in Madagascar.

The second form of *Fihavanana* that Kneitz brings to light is the *Fihavanana gasy*. *Fihavanana gasy* expresses the unity and national solidarity of all Malagasy citizens. Kneitz considers this second variant to be *Fihavanana* of the second order.[94] *Fihavanana gasy* is primarily used in morality, solidarity, and consent. It is common for the Malagasy people to say "*Ataovy raharaham-pihavanana*" [Let us handle the problem in *Fihavanana*] to solve any social issue. That is, they will not summon the parties to court. Instead, they will solve the problem by searching for the "*marimaritra iraisana*" which is "the equivalent of 'consensus' or 'consensus decision-making.'"[95] Rakotosolofo notes some differences between the general understanding of consensus and the Malagasy "*marimaritra iraisana.*" For him, the Malagasy "*marimaritra iraisana*" includes the literal meaning of consensus – Latin *con* (with) and *sentire* (to feel, to think) –, "to feel or think together." However, "it also happens that a community reaches a "*marimaritra iraisana*" decision, not because this decision is necessarily the best, but because

[93] Cf. Ibid., 22.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Christian Nirina Rakotosolofo, "Madagascar: Church-State Fihavanana" (Sacred Theology Licentiate (STL), Weston Jesuit School of Theology, 2008), 92.

opting for that decision preserves *Fihavanana*."[96] In this case, rationality can be sacrificed for the sake of *Fihavanana*, which primarily spares some sensibilities that might affect the community bond. History shows that the Malagasy "*marimaritra iraisana*" saved the nation from division and violent conflicts. For example, the search for "*marimaritra iraisana*" between the "*Forces Vives*" and Ratsiraka's regime resulted to a transitional government that could organize free and peaceful elections. Such a case portrays what Kneitz means by *Fihavanana gasy*.

Moreover, *Fihavanana gasy* is a logical extension of *Fihavanana* of the first order or what Dubois calls ancestor-related *Fihavanana*. It is based on the notion of kinship and is seen as the extension of a local *Fihavanana*.[97] However, many Malagasy people only consider *Fihavanana gasy* as a shortcut to escape their immediate trouble. They understand it as a means to an end for one's personal interest, not a human relationship expressing solidarity and peaceful unity. Here, Kneitz helps us understand this nuance and emphasizes that the two levels of *Fihavanana* – first-order *Fihavanana* and second-order *Fihavanana* – merge.

Christian *Fihavanana* is with the third form of *Fihavanana*. Christian *Fihavanana* has a separate meaning from the *Fihavanana* of the first order and the *Fihavanana* of the second order. It originated and developed around the theology of Christian reconciliation, reflected in the word *Fihavanana*.[98] The evolution of the term *Fihavanana* from the 20th century onwards, as well as the development of a nationally oriented *Fihavanana*, was strongly influenced by Catholic priests.[99] Therefore, Christian *Fihavanana* is typically a Catholic expression. Many Malagasy consider it as a pure ecclesiastical matter even though the term reconciliation has previously been

[96] Ibid.
[97] Cf. Gannon et al., *Fihavanana - La Vision d'une Société Paisible à Madagascar (2e Édition Corrigée)*, 22.
[98] Cf. Raharilalao, *Eglise et Fihavanana à Madagascar*.
[99] Cf. Gannon et al., *Fihavanana - La Vision d'une Société Paisible à Madagascar (2eme Édition Corrigée)*, 23.

considered an attribute of *Fihavanana*. The ritual of *fafy* mentioned earlier exemplifies it. Still, it remains challenging for many Malagasy people to distinguish different forms of *Fihavanana*.

Finally, the use of *Fihavanana* in the Malagasy official language also presents a nuance in understanding *Fihavanana*. *Fihavanana* has become a term of reference to express Malagasy solidarity not only in a general way but also in regional variants with their meanings already presumed.[100] For example, a song writer from the west coast of Madagascar introduced the term *Fihavanana* into one of the best-known popular songs of the "*kilalaka*"[101] genre, in which the person of Foara is mentioned. Foara is a respected local authority because of his charisma and distinction as a medium of spirits. He used his power to pacify the region of the west coast of Madagascar, which is a victim of the *dahalo*. In doing so, Foara did not resort to the authorities and the State's power. He abandoned the law and the authority of the state in favor of *Fihavanana*, as the people of the west coast of Madagascar learned through this famous song. In this context, it is hard for many Malagasy people to distinguish the difference between *Fihavanana* as the solidarity of the community of west coast Madagascar and *Fihavanana* as reconciliation. Many understood and interpreted *Fihavanana* as a corrupt way for the local leaders of the west coast of Madagascar to cooperate with the *dahalo*. However, the song's author chose *Fihavanana* instead of the local term *Filongoa* in order to indicate the reconstruction of solidarity in the west coast region. In this context, *Fihavanana* stresses the idea of reintegrating the "converted" bandits into the local society, close to the Christian notion of reconciliation.

[100] Ibid.
[101] *Kilalaka* is known in Madagascar as the music of the zebu's thieves called *dahalo*.

3 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a fresh look at the Malagasy concept of *Fihavanana* from different perspectives and the challenges that Malagasy people face to understand it. It began with a review of *Fihavanana* from etymology, proverbs, writings, ritual, and historical perspectives. Three main characteristics of *Fihavanana* emerge from the review. First, *Fihavanana* is an ongoing process we need to create and re-create every day through flexibility in our relationships with others, patience with others, and consideration of the value of *Fihavanana* compared to money. Second, *Fihavanana* requires searching for a middle ground facilitated by sharing with others, mutual aid, and flexibility. Third, *Fihavanana* is a harmonious human relationship bonded by affection, love, and the consciousness of being one unified people. However, the same term, *Fihavanana*, may have different meanings depending on the people's place, circumstances, and local culture. *Fihavanana* can be understood as an expression of solidarity and national identity, and can also mean reconciliation in the context of the west coast of Madagascar. Faranirina Rajaonah notes that *Fihavanana* is a contextual notion that adapts to circumstances.[102] For Kneitz, *Fihavanana* encompasses four analytical meanings –local *Fihavanana, gasy* [Malagasy] *Fihavanana*, Christian *Fihavanana*, and *Fihavanana* defined by the official Malagasy language – with nuances that Malagasy people have difficulty distinguishing. These nuances in understanding the term *Fihavanana* often create a new inter-regional or inter-ethnic frustration that promotes disputes based on origin and ethnic group.

As we move forward, three central ideas need to be considered. First, *Fihavanan*a means an ongoing process of human relationship, bonded by mutual love, kindness, respect, support, and flexibility, that Malagasy people need to create and maintain every day. *Fihavanana* is not a

[102] Cf. Gannon et al., *Fihavanana - La Vision d'une Société Paisible à Madagascar (2eme Édition Corrigée)*, 24.

fixed reality of human relationships, but a relational way of living that needs to be constantly maintained in daily life and activities. Second, *Fihavanan*a, maintained primarily by the Malagasy verbal arts, such as proverbs, popular songs, and public speech, plays a crucial role in the Malagasy morality in order to establish a peaceful and harmonious society. Third, there are, however, nuances in *Fihavanana,* depending on the location and circumstances, which often lead the Malagasy people to a misunderstanding and, at worse, create frustrations among them.

With these nuances, difficulties, and challenges exposed, I conclude there is a dire need for "rationalizing" *Fihavanana. Fihavanana* must be understood on a national level and its value rediscovered in order to respond to the loss of a sense of togetherness and the deadly violence prevalent in the nation. To support this, I offer in the next chapter, a review of *Fihavanana* through the lens of Scriptural and Christian traditions on friendship.

CHAPTER 3: UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE AND CHRISTIAN TRADITION ON FRIENDSHIP

Malagasy society is deeply religious, and it was already so before the arrival of Christianity towards the end of the 18th century. The numerous proverbs evoking the name of God the Creator, *Andrimananitra* or *Zanahary*, testify to the Malagasy people's belief in one God. The proverbs "*Aza ny lohasaha mangina no jerena fa Andriamanitra ao antampon'ny loha*" (Do not look at the silent valley but at God who is at the top of your head) and "*Ny adala no tsy ambakaina, Andriamanitra no atahorana*" (We do not deceive fools because we fear God), for example, illustrate the Malagasy people's fear of God. Fear of God shapes the Malagasy moral life. Then, the proverb "*Andriamanitra tsy an'ny irery*" (God is not the God of one) illustrates the relational character of the Malagasy people bonded by their faith in one God.

The term *Fihavanana* began to develop in 1956, at the time of decolonization, under the impulse of Malagasy and Christian elites, in search of values that would define the national identity.[103] The culture of *Fihavanana,* therefore, inherits some aspects of the Christian tradition. The human relationship of *Fihavanana* is more complex than the one-on-one relationship. It implies human relationships with God and others. These links between *Fihavanana* and Christian traditions allow us to extend our understanding of the Christian tradition on friendship, as expressed in tradition and Scripture, in order to interpret *Fihavanana* more thoroughly.

This chapter seeks to understand the biblical perspective and Christian tradition on friendship. In doing so, it will first examine friendship in Scriptural tradition, using classic

[103] Jonas Razanadrakoto (Madagascar), "Le Fihavanana: Mythes et réalités d'une valeur garante de la paix sociale," *Observatoire Pharos*, October 16, 2020, accessed March 2, 2023, https://www.observatoirepharos.com/pays/madagascar/le-fihavanana-mythes-et-realites-dune-valeur-garante-de-la-paix-sociale/.

examples of friendship from the Old Testament (Ruth and Naomi, David and Jonathan, and Ben Sira and student) and samples of friendship from the New Testament (Jesus and the Beloved Disciple, Jesus and the Twelve Apostles, and Paul and the Philippians). Second, this chapter will review friendship in the Christian tradition, using Aquinas on the virtue of friendship, Paul Wadell on Christian friendship, and Pope Francis on social friendship. Third, the chapter will conclude by highlighting the relevance of friendship in today's Christian ethics.

1 Friendship in Scriptural Tradition

1.1 Classic Examples of Friendship from the Old Testament

The historical narratives in the Hebrew Scriptures contain various experiences of friendship. However, the Hebrew Bible does not provide an elaborate theology of friendship. Instead, it conveys its ideas through stories and proverbs. This section seeks to understand some ideas about friendship according to narratives in the biblical tradition. In doing so, I present classic examples of friendship between Ruth and Naomi and David and Jonathan, and consider Ben Sira's teaching on friendship.

1.1.1. The Friendship between Ruth and Naomi

The friendship between Ruth and Naomi represents a beautiful example of friendship between a Jewish widow and a young Moabite widow. Naomi had two sons, Mahlon and Kilyon, with her husband, Elimelech. Her family left Judah because of a famine and settled in Moab. In Moab, her sons married Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah. After the death of Elimelech, Mahlon and Kilyon also died without leaving any descendants. Thus, the three women, Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah, became widows. Once the famine in Judah ended, Naomi prepared to return to

Bethlehem without her two daughters-in-law. Naomi urged Ruth and Orpah to return to their respective homes and find husbands and a home in Moab to continue their lives. Orpah accepted her proposal, but Ruth was unwilling, resolutely "clinging" to Naomi (1:14). Thus, "the relationship of Ruth and Naomi [began] anew as a bond of choice."[104] Ruth insisted on accompanying Naomi as she returned to Judah (see 1:18-19).

The friendship between Ruth and Naomi is, firstly, manifested in their voluntary choice of staying next to each other. Olyan considers this new bond, free of family obligations but dependent entirely on the voluntary choice of the persons concerned, as a form of friendship.[105] To achieve this unique bond, Ruth would make a series of declarations of intent and adoption as a sign of commitment to Naomi. The adoption formulas function to create actual new relationships. The statements of intent affirm Ruth's firmness in her choice to be buried with Naomi despite the existing cultural barriers (1:16-18). Family relationships determine women's burial place in the Moabite cultures of the 4th century B.C.

Secondly, the friendship between Naomi and Ruth is motivated by their quest to move forward in life despite their social status. Naomi and Ruth are both widows. Naomi has no living children, and Ruth has none, living or dead. Their widowed status, on the one hand, underlines their vulnerability. On the other hand, it allows them to choose voluntarily to stay together and support each other materially and socially. The friendship between Naomi and Ruth implies they constantly search for each other's well-being and mutual appreciation. A few biblical references affirm this statement: Ruth 2:2; 2:22-23; 3:1-4; 3:6; 4:14-15. In Ruth 2: 22-23, for example, Naomi said to Ruth: "It is better, my daughter, that you go out with his (Boaz) young women;

[104] Saul M. Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible* (Yale University Press, 2017), 63, accessed July 12, 2022, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1jktqf0.
[105] Ibid.

otherwise, you might be bothered in another field. So, she stayed close to the young women of Boaz, gleaning until the end of the barley and wheat harvests, and she lived with her mother-in-law."

Finally, Naomi and Ruth's voluntary and reciprocal relationship is characterized by choice, mutual affection, and respect for each other's behavior. The author of the Book of Ruth repeatedly uses the verb "to cling to" (1:14; 2:8, 21 and 23) and family language, such as "my daughter" (2:2, 8, 22; 3:1, 10, 11, 16, 18), "daughter-in-law" and "mother-in-law," to emphasize the idea of voluntary choice and affection between Naomi and Ruth. According to the Book of Proverbs (18:24), "clinging" is an activity of loyalty, closeness, and affection to close friends and relatives. In Ruth1:14 and 2:8, 21, 23, the verb "to cling to" points to the ordinary physical locus implicit in the verb and the concrete benefits such a shared location might bestow.[106] Thus, Ruth clinging by free choice to Naomi means that she will always be physically present to Naomi and that Ruth and Naomi will support each other and benefit from this relationship. The frequent use of family language such as "my daughter" (2:2, 8, 22; 3:1, 10, 11, 16, 18), "mother-in-law," and "daughter-in-law" indicates not only the age difference but also the affection and mutual appreciation between Ruth and Naomi.

In short, the friendship story between Ruth and Naomi reveals unequal and personal relationships between persons. Their friendship is based on voluntary and reciprocal choice and is formalized by a covenant. This biblical aspect of reciprocity will help us later to interpret *Fihavanana* which is characterized by mutuality, kindness and respect.[107]

[106] Ibid., 66.
[107] Cf. Antoine Rahajarizafy, *Hanitra Nentin-DRazana (Perfume of the Ancestors)* (Fianarantsoa: Ambozontany, 1970), 22–30.

1.1.2. The Friendship between Jonathan and David

Important narrative accounts of the relationship between David and Jonathan are found in 1 Sam 18:1-4; 19:1-7; 20:1-21:1; and 23:14-18. Three of these four texts present David and Jonathan's relationship as a covenant. In 20:1-10, 18-22, 24-41 and 21:1, David plays a subordinate role; Jonathan is the vassal in 20:11-17, 23, 42, and 23:14-18. The fourth text, 19:1-7, suggests a treaty-like relationship between David and Jonathan, but it is unclear. The Hebrew word *rēa* for "friend" is not used in the Jonathan-David narrative.[108] However, their relationship is universally described as friendship. We will briefly describe this friendship between David and Jonathan in the next paragraph.

David and Jonathan are described as friends. Their relationship overcomes family relationships and thus lends strength to the beauty of interpersonal friendship. Jonathan experienced "love at first sight" when he saw David's victory over Goliath. "When David had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (1 Samuel 18:1-2 *NRSV*). This passage presents a notion of covenant, mentioning that Jonathan loved David as himself, and the two made a covenant. In their friendship pact, Jonathan gives David his coat and armor (1 Sam. 18:1-4). Here it is unclear whether Jonathan's love for David suggests the subordination of one to the other or a treaty of equals. The text (1 Sam. 18:3) only notes that Jonathan initiates the formalization of their relationship.

Moreover, an actual description of the type of relationship between Jonathan and David in 1 Sam. 18:1-4 appears in only one other place in the Hebrew Bible (Gen. 44:30-31).[109] Gen.

[108] Cf. Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, 69–70.
[109] Ibid., 70.

44:30-31 describes Jacob's relationship with his youngest son Benjamin. Gen. 44:20 also says that Jacob loves his son Benjamin. The wording expresses an emotional resonance between the father and his favorite son. The possibility of such emotion should be comparable to that in 1 Sam. 18:1. Thus, 1 Sam. 18:1-4 suggests that an emotional connection was also made between David and Jonathan.[110]

1 Sam. 19:1-7 is the second text depicting Jonathan and David's relationship. In 1 Sam 18:20, King Saul's daughter falls in love with David. Later in the story, she marries David; Saul exploits their marriage for his political ambitions. However, the friendship between Jonathan and David goes beyond the love of women and political calculations. David and Jonathan trusted and loved each other, warning and protecting each other in difficult times. Jonathan foils his father's plot to kill David. Jonathan tips off David to the plot to kill him and then facilitates his escape. Jonathan's "betrayal" of his family, as he breaks away from them to delve deeper and deeper into the mystery of friendship with David, who is from a different tribe, reveals more than a desperate need on Jonathan's part. Thus, the use of idioms such as "to delight in" in 1 Sam. 19:1-7 alludes to a treaty between Jonathan and David.[111] Jonathan took the risk to opt for a greater love of personal friendship that goes beyond family bonds and material gain.

Throughout the narrative, however, we do not see much reciprocity on David's part in this relationship. Given Jonathan's actions and the risks he took for David so that he could be king of Israel, Jonathan seems more attached to David than David to him. However, the social context of their relationship tells us that David could only express his love in a limited way. He only used expressions of subordination to describe his relationship with Jonathan (e.g., he refers

[110] Ibid., 71.
[111] Cf. Ibid., 71–72.

to himself as "your servant" in vv. 7 and 8), and he acts in a subordinate manner in Jonathan's presence (v. 41, where he bows three times).[112]

On the other hand, Jonathan already enjoyed economic and political influence because of his connection to the royal family. Therefore, the quality of David and Jonathan's friendship cannot be reduced to the material things they share but in their commitment. The reciprocal ritual acts of kissing and weeping narrated in 1 Sam. 20:41 suggest a personal and emotional bond between Jonathan and David that can be described as friendship.

In sum, some aspects of the relationship between Jonathan and David are complex. Thus, if we speak of friendship in the narratives of Jonathan and David, we should focus our attention on 18:1-4, 20:1-10, 18-22, 24-41, and 21:1, the larger narratives in which evidence of a friendship appears.[113] In any case, one can conclude that the relationship between David and Jonathan is unambiguously conceived as a friendship formalized by a covenant. This covenantal aspect of the friendship between Jonathan and David is relevant to us as we will later interpret *Fihavanana*, which is also expressed in rituals. The Malagasy rituals contain covenantal aspects between individuals, families, and clans, as highlighted in chapter 2 of the *fafy* rituals.

1.1.3. Ben Sira's Teaching on Friendship

The Book of Sirach provides the most extensive treatment of the concept of friendship in the Bible.[114] Ben Sira was convinced of the value of Jewish traditions and wrote to his Jewish contemporaries about their value. He did not define friendship. Instead, he offered practical wisdom about making friends, being faithful to them, and not threatening friendships.[115] In this

[112] Cf. Ibid., 73.
[113] Ibid., 75.
[114] Jeremy Corley, *Ben Sira's Teaching on Friendship*, Brown University., Brown Judaic Studies 316 (Providence, 1976), 1.
[115] Daniel J. Harrington, "Sage Advice about Friendship," *The Bible Today*, March (1994), 80.

section, we will look at some relevant passages of Ben Sira's practical wisdom on how to make and keep friends.

The first text of Ben Sira on friendship is found in 6: 5-17, emphasizing the need for testing and fidelity in friendship. The word *φίλος* ("friend") occurs nine times in this passage. Here, Ben Sira suggests a cautious attitude towards friends (6: 6-7, 13). He emphasizes the need to test a potential friend because false friends quickly move away in hard times. For him, a faithful friend is like a strong shelter, invaluable wealth, and a "bundle of the living" (6: 14-17). The person who acquires a faithful friend has gained "life" (6: 16). Ben Sira helps his student to strive to become wise and make friends with faithful ones by testing them because faithfulness, in his view, denotes faithfulness to God. He regards faithful human beings as reflecting the faithfulness of God.[116]

The second text of Sirach (Sir. 5: 9 – 6: 4) on friendship speaks about the control of one's speech to maintain healthy relationships. Ben Sira's first point in this passage emphasizes the attitude of being quick to hear and slow to respond (5: 11). Second, he points out that speech can bring honor and shame. Thus, he warns his students to avoid what Harrington calls being "double-tongued" (*diglosos*, 5: 9, 14; 6: 1) or a "slanderer."[117] Third, Ben Sira notes that uncontrolled language can overwhelm someone. Therefore, a person who wants to maintain and foster healthy relationships should follow the sage's instructions that connect one to others and God.

Sirach 22: 19-26 is the third text on friendship, aiming to point out both what destroys a friendship and what builds it up again. Ben Sira notes the fragility of friendship which can easily be destroyed by "emotional wounding (22: 19b), abusive or malicious talk (22: 20b, 24b), and

[116] Jeremy Corney, *Ben Sira's Teaching on Friendship*, 57.
[117] Daniel J. Harrington, *Jesus Ben Sira of Jerusalem*, 34.

also betraying confidences (22: 22c)."[118] Yet, he assures that a broken friendship also can be repaired if one has hope of reconciliation and strives to support a friend faithfully even in his poverty (22: 23, 25). The only exception: "clearly, for Ben Sira, [is] the exposure of confidential information [which] is an unforgivable failing in a friend"[119] (see also 22: 22c).

Fourth, Sirach 37: 1-6 parallels 6: 5-17, emphasizing the call for wise decisions in making friends. Both periscopes, using antithesis (loyalty of the faithful friend vs. disloyalty of the false friend), praise the loyalty of the good friend (6: 14-17; 37: 5-6).[120] A good friend to be pursued is one faithful not only in words but especially in action.

Lastly, Sirach 19: 13-17 and 27: 16-21 consider maintaining friendship through positive and negative teachings. The positive teaching in 19: 13-17 urges the reproof of a friend's misbehavior through judicious speech so that the friend may change yet remain a friend. The negative recommendation recounted in 27: 16-21 warns against betraying the confidence of a friend by misusing his speech.[121] These teachings suggest that only a wise person who can keep confidence can maintain friendship through proper use of the tongue.

Thus, Ben Sira's teachings on friendship encourage healthy and secure relationships with faithful friends. Faithful friends, for him, are those who lead one to life. Ben Sira intended to offer practical wisdom to make friends, maintain healthy friendships, and repair broken relationships. This practical wisdom includes testing a potential friend and his or her fidelity more in action than words in friendship, well-discerned speech to foster friendship and correct

[118] Ibid., 211.
[119] Saul M. Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible* (Yale University Press, 2017), 92, accessed July 12, 2022, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1jktqf0.
[120] Cf. Jeremy Corney, *Ben Sira's Teaching on Friendship*, 81.
[121] Cf. Ibid., 188.

friends, and finally, the possibility to repair broken relationships except for the case of betraying a confidence.

In sum, the classical story of friendship in the Hebrew Scriptures revolves around relationships between individuals, sometimes conceived in covenantal terms or "covenant faithfulness."[122] For such a friendship to be healthy and harmonious, the parties must remain faithful to one another and to the Torah. This Old Testament concept of friendship reaches its goal only when the parties respect God and integrate God into their relationships. Ben Sira's teaching on friendship deals in a deep way with making faithful and loyal friends who only lead to life. The above-mentioned classical stories of friendship in the Old Testament are helpful to interpret *Fihavanana* which is defined in chapter 2 as an ongoing process of human relationship, bonded by mutual love, kindness, respect, support, and flexibility, that Malagasy people need to create and maintain every day.

1.2 Friendship in the New Testament

In the New Testament, all four Gospel narratives tell how Jesus gathered many disciples around him. Each of these disciples followed him for various reasons: some admired his teachings, others wanted healing and miracles, and still others saw in him the profile of a new leader who might free them from the Roman oppressors. In this section, we will first look at the friendship between Jesus and the Beloved Disciple. Second, we will examine Jesus's friendship with the twelve apostles. Third, we will consider Paul's theology on friendship in his letter to the Philippians.

[122] Hock Ronald F., "Jesus, The Beloved Disciple, and Greco-Roman Friendship Conventions," in *Christian Origins and Greco-Roman Culture: Social and Literary Contexts for the New Testament*, Leiden., vol. 9, Texts and Editions for New Testament Study (Boston: Brill, 2013), 198.

1.2.1 The Friendship between Jesus and the Beloved Disciple

John's Gospel presents an unnamed person, "the one whom Jesus loved" (John 13: 23), at the Last Supper. The Beloved Disciple appears again under the Cross (John 19: 26), at the empty tomb (John 20: 2), and after the resurrection on the shore of the lake in Galilee (John 21: 7-20). Each appearance of the Beloved Disciple in these different scenes of the narrative manifests the character of his friendship with Jesus.

John 13: 23 describes the Last Supper event during which the Beloved Disciple reclined next to Jesus. From the beginning of his Gospel, John describes Jesus as having access to the innermost being of God. "In John 1: 18, Jesus's relationship with God is translated in several synonymous ways, any one of which conveys that he enjoys the deepest of intimacy: 'in closest relationship with the Father' or 'at the side of the Father' or, more poetically, 'in the bosom of the Father.'"[123] This picture of Jesus's relationship with the Father is reflected in his relationship with his friends. Thus, Jesus's friendship with the Beloved Disciple is shaped by his intimate relationship with the Father.

John 19: 26-27 reveals the reciprocal dimension of the friendship of Jesus and the Beloved Disciple. This passage tells of Jesus' last earthly action of entrusting the care of his mother to this Beloved Disciple, and the Beloved Disciple, in turn, receives her. This action of Jesus shows one of the duties of friendship in Greco-Roman culture: "a man readily assumed filial responsibilities in taking care of a deceased friend's relatives."[124] Jonathan Sammut, a member of the Society of Christian Doctrine in Malta, however, argues that the Fourth Gospel

[123] Jonathan Sammut, "Friendship with the Beloved Disciple as Type in a Theology of Friendship," *Church Life Journal*, last modified September 21, 2017, accessed February 8, 2023, https://churchlifejournal.nd.edu/articles/friendship-with-the-beloved-disciple-as-type-in-a-theology-of-friendship/.
[124] Ibid.

echoes the language of Jewish family law and becomes even more profound when it quotes Jesus using precise words such as "woman" and "son."[125] John 19: 26-27 says, "when Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour, the disciple took her into his own home." Jesus's final instruction on love was about fulfilling the duty of caring for one another. Fulfilling the responsibility of caring for another for the sake of a friend expresses a certain level of intimacy between closest friends. Thus, Jesus's trust in the Beloved Disciple and the Beloved Disciple's care for the mother of Jesus reveals the reciprocal and intimate dimension of their friendship.

John 20: 8 shows the absolute love of the Beloved Disciple for Jesus, manifested by his confession of faith in Jesus after seeing him. John 20: 1-10 talks about Peter and the Beloved Disciple running to the tomb after hearing from Mary Magdalene that Jesus was alive. Even though there is no explicit reference to what he believed either with regard to Jesus's resurrection or Mary Magdalene's report,[126] as Jonathan Sammut notes, the Beloved Disciple, out of love for Jesus, runs to the tomb, waits for Peter outside the tomb, enters in the tomb, sees, and believes in Jesus. The Beloved Disciple's friendship with Jesus, motivated by faith, allowed him to overcome human boundaries, run to the tomb, and see and believe in the risen Jesus.

The recurrent theme of the relationship between Jesus and the unnamed character known as the Beloved Disciple gives every human being the chance to be a beloved disciple of Jesus. Biblical scholars have been researching to identify the Beloved Disciple's identity in the Fourth Gospel, but it remains unclear. Werner Georg Kümmel, for example, notes that "the identity of

[125] Cf. Ibid.
[126] Cf. Ibid.

the Beloved Disciple remains unknown to us."[127] Ronald Hock says that other scholars have described the function of the Beloved Disciple as a way forward to understanding his identity. However, such an approach remains vague, at least in the context of the first century.[128] The recent studies of Sharon Ringe and Klaus Scholtissek on friendship in John's Gospel seem to provide greater clarity in understanding Jesus's friendship with the Beloved Disciple. Their studies of Greco-Roman (and Jewish) discussion of friendship and their conceptualization of the behavior and role of Jesus in John's Gospel in terms of friendship suggest that love for friends that can lead one even to the point of death for them is the basis of Jesus's friendship with the Beloved Disciple.[129] A personal and sublime friendship with Jesus is possible by loving and caring for one another based on faith in the risen Lord.

Two relevant ideas emerge from the account of Jesus's friendship with the Beloved Disciple to interpret *Fihavanana*. First, Jesus's friendship with the Beloved Disciple will help us later to purify the unity aspect of *Fihavanana* mentioned in chapter 2. Second, the basis of Jesus's friendship with the Beloved Disciple will later challenge and purify the self-love aspect of *Fihavanana,* which has been interpreted and understood as selfishness.

1.2.2 The Friendship between Jesus and the Twelve Apostles

Jesus chose and remained with a group of twelve with whom he shared a profound bond (see Mt. 10: 2-4; Mk. 3: 16-19; Lk. 6: 14-16). From the Gospel accounts, the twelve apostles came from different places and backgrounds. Like many friends, Jesus and his apostles also faced challenges in their friendship due mainly to the failure of the apostles to understand and

[127] Ronald F., "Jesus, The Beloved Disciple, and Greco-Roman Friendship Conventions," 197.
[128] Cf. Ibid.
[129] Cf. Ibid.

appreciate Jesus's mission (see Mk. 8: 17ff, Mk. 9: 19). Nevertheless, at other times, the twelve affirmed Jesus's identity and mission (see Mt. 16: 13-20, Lk. 9: 18-21) which helped him to grow in trust to perform his role as a Prophet and Messiah.

In John's Gospel, Jesus taught his disciples how to be faithful friends, and he recognized them not as servants but as friends (Jn. 15: 13-15). This shift of status from servants to friends shows that Jesus's teachings and lifestyle had taken shape and were embodied in the disciples' everyday lives and created in them a profound friendship with Jesus and among themselves. Jesus's friendship is understood as making himself available for and with others and ultimately laying down his life for his friends. This friendship that Jesus developed suggests to his followers that it would be good to consider and define him as a true and faithful friend. Jesus's teaching on how to show greater love will help us later to fill out the meaning of *Fihavanana*.

1.2.3 Paul's Theology on Friendship

Paul's letters undoubtedly contain the most sustained account of friendship traditions in the New Testament.[130] In this section, we will look at the letter of Paul to the Philippians, which "contains the most extensive and explicit density of friendship language and themes among all of the epistles."[131] Paul did not explicitly define but only conceptually described the word "friendship" in his writings. He uses the term *koinōnia*, which means brotherhood, partnership, or friendship, in Phil. 1: 5, 7; 3: 10; 4: 14, 15, and *phronesis*, which translates as like-mindedness, understanding, or caring, in Phil. 1: 7; 2: 2, 5; 3: 15, 19; 4: 2, 10.[132] David Briones notes the existence of a joyful fellowship of giving and enduring suffering for the sake of Christ

[130] Cf. Sean Winter, "Friendship Traditions in the New Testament: An Overview," *Pacifica* 29, no. 2 (June 1, 2016): 192–204, accessed January 21, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1177/1030570X17714497.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Cf. Briones David E., "Paul's Theology of Friendship," *Westminster Theological Seminary*, last modified October 21, 2019, accessed January 21, 2023, https://faculty.wts.edu/posts/pauls-theology-of-friendship/.

between Paul and the Philippians. The Pauline theology of friendship is characterized by two features, namely reciprocity of gifts (immaterial and material) and endurance in suffering on behalf of the other.[133]

First, the mutual exchange of gifts between Paul and the Philippians flows from Jesus' own way of acting (see Phil. 2: 5-11). Paul and the Philippians are inspired by the mutual *phronesis* – mutual understanding and care – experienced by Christ. Many passages in the letter to the Philippians testify to this experience. "In Philippians 1: 7, Paul says that it is right for him 'to feel' (*phronein*) confidently about the Philippians. Then, in Philippians 4: 10, the Philippians express their 'concern' (*phronein*) for Paul through their gift."[134] Moreover, their reciprocity of material and spiritual gifts was manifested through affection, service, and prayer.

Paul and the Philippians, in many passages of the letter, testify to this mutual affection which is inspired by the love of and for Jesus Christ. For example,

> Every time Paul recalls their fellowship, he thanks God and prays for the Philippians 'with joy' (Phil. 1: 3–5). He says, 'I hold you in my heart' and 'yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus' (Phil. 1: 7–8 ESV). And he desires to be with them for their good (1: 25–27; 2: 24). Imprisoned, he sends Timothy to learn of their progress in the faith in order that Paul's heart may be encouraged (Phil. 2: 19). […] In return, the Philippians express affectionate concern for Paul. They sent Epaphroditus to care for him spiritually and financially (Phil. 2: 25–30, 4: 18).[135]

The mutual service between Paul and the Philippians is also a manifestation of their reciprocity. This reciprocal service is lovingly rendered for the joy of the other. In Philippians 2: 17, Paul compares his ministry to a sacrificial service for the faith of the Philippians. Briones notes that this sacrificial ministry of Paul is directly connected to the Philippians' joy (Phil. 2: 17–18; cf. Phil. 1: 25).[136]

[133] Cf. Ibid.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Cf. Ibid.

The final manifestation of their mutuality is the mutual prayer for each other's salvation. Throughout his ministry to the Philippians, Paul constantly invites them to work on their salvation (Phil. 2: 12) and to pray that they become "pure and blameless for the day of Christ." (Phil. 1: 9-11).[137] Likewise, "Philippians will also pray for Paul's salvation, physically from prison and eschatologically from death (Phil. 1:19)."[138]

Second, the endurance of suffering for the sake of the other represents the hallmark of Paul's theology of friendship. Inspired and convinced by the life of Christ, who suffered, died, and rose again for the salvation of all, Paul was willing to undergo humiliation, suffering, and even death for the sake of Christ's Gospel. He bore witness to this mindset of Christ in his life and passed it on to the Philippians. "In Philippians 1: 12-18, Paul makes known the advancement of the gospel through his suffering (Phil. 1: 12)."[139] For the sake of Christ and the church in Philippi, Paul willingly accepted suffering because he knew God was actively working in him.

Likewise, the Philippians understood this spirit of Paul and sent him material gifts, likened to a sacrifice (Phil. 4: 18; 2: 17) and a service (Phil. 2: 17, 30).[140] For Christ's sake, they committed themselves to share the same conflict and suffering as Paul (Phil. 1: 29-30). They shared their suffering with those who are in communion with Christ and with those who are imprisoned for Christ's sake. "But the most interesting fact about the Philippians' participation with Paul in gift and suffering is that God is behind it all. He revived the Philippians' concern to send their gift to Paul (Phil. 4:10) and so share in his suffering (Phil. 4: 14)."[141]

[137] Cf. Ibid.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Cf. Ibid.
[141] Ibid.

Thus, Paul's theology on friendship brings to mind the Aristotelian definition of friendship as "a reciprocity of goodwill and a mutual concern to seek the good of the other person for their sake, with a shared awareness."[142] However, since a significant purpose of the letter to the Philippians is to transform the experience of fellowship in the light of Christ's life, Paul's description of friendship includes the Christian Triune God – Father, Son, and Spirit – as a third party and be the source and motivation for those applying reciprocity concern and enduring suffering for others' salvation. Paul's theology of friendship is crucial to help us later purify the mutuality aspect of *Fihavanana* and to include God's love as its motivation and foundation.

All in all, the narratives of friendship in the New Testament revolve around the person of Jesus Christ. He is the perfect model of a true and faithful friend and the source and motivation to anyone who wants to build relationships in the Christian friendship tradition. During his earthly life, Jesus was in constant relationship with his heavenly Father. He affirms the mutual interdependence of human beings. Love and care for one another exemplify such mutual human interdependence. Jesus's friendship differs from ordinary friendship by accomplishing in his life what the philosophers and thinkers only thought. Jesus laid down his life for his friends (John 15: 13). Gail O'Day, a professor of the New Testament at Candler School of Theology, rightly said, "Jesus does not merely talk the language of friendship; he lives out his life and death as a friend."[143] Christian friendship invites one to embrace this Jesus's teaching and testimony to create a loving and caring society of humans.

[142] Ibid.
[143] O'Day Gail R., "Jesus as Friend in the Gospel of John," 151, last modified April 2004, accessed February 9, 2023, https://journals-sagepub-com.proxy.bc.edu/doi/epdf/10.1177/002096430405800204.

2 Friendship in the Christian Tradition

Friendship plays an essential role in Christian ethics. This section will describe the Christian meaning of the virtue of "friendship that begins, and is only possible, because God has first befriended us, and that grows as our friendship with God unfolds in love and friendship with others."[144] In doing so, we will use the works of Thomas Aquinas, Paul Wadell, and Pope Francis, three figures who will help us interpret *Fihavanana*, which we defined in chapter 2, as an ongoing human relationship marked by mutual love and care, respect, unity and solidarity. We will also use James Keenan's works that comment and expand Aquinas's thoughts, mostly in chapter 4. Now, we first draw on Thomas Aquinas' work since it develops a substantial discourse on the virtue of friendship. Second, we examine Paul Wadell's Christian friendship. Third, we discuss Pope Francis's views on social friendship.

2.1 Thomas Aquinas on the Virtue of Friendship

Thomas Aquinas' work includes a substantial discourse on the virtue of friendship. James Keenan argues that Aquinas's work is a relevant source for ethics in our time because "Aquinas captured an understanding of the moral life that is enormously helpful in forming a vision of the type of people we ought to become."[145] Aquinas is positive about human capacity. He is interested in a theology that explains how a person can have virtue so that he/she acts virtuously to reach his/her end. The Thomistic virtue of charity, defined as human friendship with God, is crucial to help us interpret *Fihavanana* defined as an ongoing process of human relationship that seeks unity and solidarity with God and all others.

[144] Paul J. Wadell, "The Place of Friendship in Christian Ethics—A Response Written in Gratitude," *Journal of Moral Theology* 10, no. 1 (2021): 200.
[145] James F. Keenan, *A History of Catholic Theological Ethics* (New York, NY; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2022), 143.

Aquinas constructed his concept of friendship using the Aristotelian and Augustinian concepts of friendship. Then he turned to the virtue of charity to achieve his own goal. Aquinas thus "develops four major characteristics of true friendship in his discussion of charity: well-wishing, mutuality, communion, and communication."[146] Friendship as a desire for well-wishing consists in seeking not one's good but the good of someone other than oneself. Friendship, in this sense, is not to be understood within the concept of love which is limited to the search for personal happiness. Friendship always leads us outside of ourselves and wishes for the good of others. Aquinas made it clear that only love goes hand in hand with benevolence which has the character of friendship.[147] True friendship leads the agent to seek and defend the friend's good untiringly. Aquinas also made it clear that wishing good to a friend does not have to be based on personal utility or pleasure for friendship to be true.[148]

Aquinas adds, "good wishes are not enough for friendship either, for a certain mutual love is necessary, for [...] friendship is between friend and friend."[149] In other words, one-sided good wishes do not create friendship. The fruit of true friendship is always directed toward another person and not toward an object. The friendship advocated by Aquinas recommends mutual love between individuals. The purpose of friendship is thus to bind human persons and not inanimate objects.

Communion is the third characteristic of true friendship, according to Aquinas. Goodwill and reciprocity of love alone do not meet the requirements of friendship. Friendship finds its fulfillment in the Thomistic interpretation of the concept of *communicatio* in the light of the

[146] Lenow Evan*, "The Forgotten Virtue of Friendship: Thomistic Friendship and Contemporary Christian Ethics*" 63rd, no. San Francisco, CA (November 17, 2011): 2.
[147] Cf. Aquinas, *ST*, II- II, q. 23, a. 1.
[148] Cf. Aquinas, *ST*, I-II, q. 26, a. 4.
[149] Aquinas, *ST*, II–II, q. 23, a. 1.

Christian conception of God. God longs for intimate communion and dynamic exchange with human beings.[150] The friendship of human beings with God is mysteriously born and effective in the mystery of the Incarnation, when God became man, one with human beings. In all movements of communication and exchange, divine grace transforms the human being within. It then helps him or her to actively self-communicate to bring about a new quality or a permanently given form.

Thus, for Aquinas, the communion of a human being with other humans is essential because humans need each other to do good. The Angelic Doctor advocates that

> the happy man needs friends for the purpose of a good operation, viz., that he may do good to them; that he may delight in seeing them do good; and again, that he may be helped by them in his good work. For in order that man may do well, whether in the works of the active life or in those of the contemplative life, he needs the fellowship of friends (*ST*, I-II.4.8).[151]

In short, friendship expressed through communion is essential for the life of every human being because it manifests his or her *raison d'être*: to be for others and in union with others. Thanks to divine initiative, human friendship with God becomes possible even if the person is not equal to God.

The last characteristic of friendship is communication. Aquinas considers the unique existence of communication between individuals, human beings, and God. Human communication is easy to understand as human beings communicate with each other in their daily lives. However, communication or friendship is not limited to humans. Aquinas

> acknowledges the existence of communication in the relationship between God and man —Accordingly, since there is a communication [*communicatio*] between man and God, since He communicates His happiness to us, some kind of friendship must needs be based on this same communication, of which it is written (1 Cor. 1: 9): God is faithful: by Whom you are called unto the fellowship of His Son. The love based on this communication is charity: wherefore it is evident that charity is the friendship of man for God (ST, II-II. 23.1).[152]

[150] Eberhard Schockenhoff, "The Theological Virtue of Charity (IIa IIae, Qq. 23-46)," in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, Georgetown University Press. (Washington, D.C, 2002), 248.
[151] Evan, "*The Forgotten Virtue of Friendship: Thomistic Friendship and Contemporary Christian Ethics*," 6.
[152] Ibid., 7.

The incarnation of Jesus made communication between God and humans possible. In sum, for Aquinas, true friendship finds its source in God. It is always animated by the desire to be with and give oneself to others, especially those who are poor, abandoned, neglected, and scorned, in following the example of Jesus Christ.

2.2 Paul Wadell on Christian Friendship

Undertaking an exegesis of Aquinas's "friendship with God," Paul Wadell, a theologian, professor of religious studies, understands charity as a whole way of life oriented toward an intimate union of human beings with God. For him, human beings attain this union or intimate communion with God by cultivating relationships with others. Wadell's central idea, that human relationships with others lead us to a union with God, is a relevant insight to interpret *Fihavanana*. Such a connection allows us, later on, to use Wadell's concept of Christian friendship to fill out the meaning of *Fihavanana*.

Wadell poses the question, "A friendship for what?"[153] This must be the first question we ask if we want to understand friendship. We want to understand a friendship open to the entire human family for a harmonious and peaceful society. Wadell's understanding of Christian friendship, shaped by his exegesis of Aquinas's view on charity as a friendship with God, helps us to reach this purpose. Wadell starts his argument by acknowledging the compatibility of friendship (*philia*) and Christian charity (*agape*). He says, "*philia* and *agape* are not only compatible but also internally connected. […] With *agape*, we come, like God, to make friends with the world."[154] That is, we can learn Christian friendship from our ordinary friendship to

[153] Paul J. Wadell, *Friendship and the Moral Life* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 72, accessed September 25, 2022, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvpg83s6.
[154] Ibid., 74.

make friends with the entire human family. This section will try to understand Wadell's Christian friendship by examining his arguments on how to be God's friend, learning from our ordinary friendship, which is marked by benevolence, reciprocity, and the capacity to look upon the friend as another self.[155]

On the basis of his study of Aquinas, Wadell claims that to be God's friend, our relationship with God must be first marked by benevolence. Benevolence seeks the good of others. One who seeks to be a friend of God does not only search for personal happiness but also actively works for the welfare of his or her friends, supports their interests, and seeks their property. Wadell notes that God's friend does this "not for the pleasure or usefulness he/she finds in the friendship" but because he/she "loves them for their own sake."[156] To be a true friend of God, we need to seek and defend the friend's good untiringly and "see his/her participation in the friendship to be this active, genuine working for their good."[157] For Wadell, the joy of God's friend is his or her ability to do what is good for his or her beloved friend.

The happiness and well-being of a friend are the concerns of Wadell's friendship. Friendship discovers these goods by devoting itself to seeking the good of the friend. In this way, our happiness constantly pursues our friend's happiness while our own good is our friend's good. Every good friendship seeks to work for the happiness and good of the friend because we also want that same good for ourselves. To say it differently, "friendship is the love whose whole trust, whose total energy, toils for the good of the other, not because the one who loves has no good of his own, but because what he loves and sees as his good is the good of his friend."[158]

[155] Cf. Ibid., 130.
[156] Ibid., 131.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid.

The implication of benevolence is to love one's friend for his or her own sake and to motivate the lover to seek the friend's good actively. Wadell says, "friendship is the activity where each works for the other's well-being, the activity in which each is dedicated to prospering the other's good."[159] From this perspective, sharing the same good in a friendship helps us understand a certain union between two friends. Applied to the friendship with God, benevolence allows the friend of God to seek God's good for the sake of God and to make God's will his own. Thus, Christian friendship, for Wadell, consists in wanting what God wants as he wants it and making God's good his or her own.

Second, our friendship with God must be marked by reciprocity. Wadell continues, "friendships are relationships in which each person knows the good he wishes for the other is also the good the other wishes for him."[160] The intrinsic good of friendship is the foundation of reciprocity. It is the good that both friends want for themselves that each of them seeks for their friend. The shared good ensures the life of friendship in the sense that it allows each friend to seek that good and return it to the other. This reciprocity makes a life of friendship possible and productive. Friendship is alive when the love offered meets another love. Therefore, "friends are those who recognize each other's love, exchange it, and whose sharing in that love keeps the friendship alive."[161]

Friendship is an ongoing relationship where we maintain our love with our friends and exchange common goods and values with them. It constitutes our way of life and identity. Wadell notes, "every friendship constitutes a way of life, a special way of being a self."[162] Friendship requires a community life where friends spend time in each other's company and

[159] Ibid., 132.
[160] Ibid., 132–33.
[161] Ibid., 135.
[162] Ibid., 133.

share goods with love for each other. Yet, we are with friends not only to share with them common goods and values "but more crucially because it is through them that we are endowed with our good."[163] We are in contact with goods through generous and reciprocal offerings between our friends and us.

Applied to friendship with God, the life of God's friend is complete by the divine love he or she encounters in their friendship with God. Wadell, quoting Aquinas's *Scriptum Super Sententiis Magistri Petri Lombardi*, says, "Aquinas speaks of friendship as a certain society of lover and beloved in love, and then refers specifically to charity as a friendship we have with God in which God loves us, and we love God."[164] A society of friendship comes from this mutual exchange of love between God and us. Christian friendship is born in a society where God shares the same love with us and vice versa.

Wadell continues by arguing, "if every friendship is the society we have with others based upon goods friends share, charity is the society we have with God based upon the happiness of God from which the friendship begins."[165] Charity, defined as a certain friendship with God, makes possible our activity of embodying the good that God offers us through the outpouring of his Spirit in our hearts. The Spirit of God sent into our hearts transfigures us and makes us a self. It represents the good of God that we want but cannot offer ourselves. We desire this good, but only God can offer it to us. Our friendship with God provides the opportunity for this exchange and is even nourished by this Spirit of love exchanged between God and us. Christian friendship grows with our personal friendship with God, in which God offers his Spirit of love and makes our life complete.

[163] Ibid., 134.
[164] Ibid., 135.
[165] Ibid., 134.

Third, the capacity to look upon the friend as another self is the last mark of friendship with God. Wadell, quoting Henri Noble, argues, "to be someone's friend is to be another self to them, to be so alike not just in tastes and interests, but in character, in goodness and virtue, that they come to look upon as a reflection of themselves."[166] Such a claim remains relevant to friendship with God because no friend of God remains the same. Instead, God's friend accepts to be formed and remade by the Spirit of love to become what God wants him or her to be. This transformation is radical in charity. Wadell notes, "charity fosters vulnerability to God, an openness so exhaustive that we ultimately become defenseless before the love that is our life."[167] To be vulnerable to God in charity is to be transformed by God's love. Such a transformation makes us another self to God.

However, Wadell clarifies that "to become another self to God does not mean we become God, nor that there is no longer any difference between God and ourselves."[168] The other self to God means being impregnated by the goodness of God. The self is brought to its ultimate perfection by the love of God. Thus, the love of God does not destroy the self; on the contrary, God's friend is the one who becomes defenseless before the love of God. This is the possibility that charity offers to one who seeks good and wishes for perfect happiness. "Charity works for the union of hearts that is every friendship's perfection."[169]

In charity, we become another self to God, and God can be considered another self. Becoming another self to God means "the more we become like God, the more we become someone other than God, namely ourselves."[170] Our self, impregnated by God's goodness,

[166] Ibid., 137.
[167] Ibid., 138.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Ibid., 139.
[170] Ibid.

becomes authentic. To speak of God as another self, on the other hand, means that we cannot be ourselves without God. If God's friend remains defenseless before the divine love, he or she manifests his or her need to be impregnated by the goodness of God. Wadell says, "to call God another self is a confession of need, a frank awareness that we need God in order to be."[171] Our need for God as another self manifests our recognition that our "self" is realized insofar as we share God's life. Sharing God's life, however, means entering into a friendship with God, becoming his friend, and recognizing that he is the one through whom we are. Thus, God's friends share God's life in Christian friendship. Through Christian friendship, we can attain the likeness of God, which is measured by our happiness.

In sum, Wadell has made clear that fullness of human life is always received along with friendship with others and God. Such a claim agrees with the Malagasy context of *Fihavanana,* stating that other people constitute one's existence[172] and fills out its meaning. For Wadell, Christian friendship makes us want what God wants and make God's good our own. Christian friendship is where God shares the same love with us to help us flourish and be transformed so that God's vision for humanity can fully come into being. Christian friendship is a gift and a calling where God offers his Spirit of love to help us complete our life, to reach happiness.

2.3 *Fratelli Tutti* of Pope Francis on Social Friendship

We have mentioned earlier that, in the Malagasy context, other people constitute one's existence. *Fratelli Tutti* shares similar ideas that reiterate the values of *Fihavanana*. In paragraph 182, for example, Pope Francis says, "each of us is fully a person when we are part of a people;

[171] Ibid.
[172] Cf. Jzaovelo-Dzao, *La Sagesse Malgache* (Antsiranana, Madagascar : Institut Supérieur de Théologie et de Philosophie de Madagascar, 1991), 28.

at the same time, there are no peoples without respect for the individuality of each person."[173] Put differently, we are brothers and sisters of all.[174] These similarities in point of view on community life and solidarity allow us to deepen our understanding of *Fratelli Tutti'*s social friendship in order to give a better context to *Fihavanana*.

In *Fratelli Tutti,* Pope Francis underlines the need for fraternity and social friendships in our world and societies plagued by individualism and violence. The encyclical is addressed to all humanity as an invitation to dialogue. It aims to create a new vision of fraternity and social friendship in our world.[175] The notion of fraternity has been developed by theologians but not social friendship. This section will try to understand Pope Francis's notion of social friendships that leads to peace and harmony.

Pope Francis's social friendship is shaped by the context of Latin America, where the expression began to emerge in the 1980s. Pablo Sudar, a priest and theologian from Argentina, was one of the first to use social friendship in his article titled "*The face of the poor*," published in 1983 in *Teologia*.[176] Two of his arguments resonate in *Fratelli Tutti*: First, "a person's dignity is a work of social justice, which must be realized in 'social friendship,' directing all their efforts towards the realization of every person, that is, towards the common good of society."[177] Second, "in the Christian vision, 'social friendship,' based on love between people, finds its ultimate foundation in 'fraternity,' since we are all children of the same father, who brings men and women together in equality and out of love."[178] In 2006, the future Pope Francis spoke of "the

[173] Francis, "Fratelli Tutti," October 3, 2020, # 182, accessed October 7, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html.
[174] Cf. Ibid., # 8.
[175] Cf. Ibid., # 1-6.
[176] Cf. Gerry, "Social Friendship According to Pope Francis," *Society of African Missions*, November 18, 2020, accessed January 18, 2023, https://sma.ie/social-friendship-according-to-pope-francis/.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid.

transformative power of social friendship to condemn the constant exclusion of those we believe to be against us and the unfortunate attitudes that lock us into the vicious circle of endless confrontation."[179] He insisted that social friendship is a condition for common coexistence.

To help us understand the meaning of the term "social friendship" in *Fratelli Tutti,* Pope Francis gives indications, such as love, fraternity, common work, common good, and action. First, Pope Francis describes social friendship as based on "a love capable of transcending borders."[180] An authentic social friendship allows us to open ourselves authentically to the world, not to avoid living with our own people but to establish a more extensive and diverse human society where the dignity and rights of all people are respected. Love that transcends borders, Pope Francis continues, does not suggest a planned and global universalism aiming at plundering or dominating others. Instead, it is a love that goes beyond our comfort zone and promotes unity in diversity. Thus, social friendship teaches us "to live together in harmony and peace, without all of us having to be the same."[181] It is about collectively implementing each individual's quality out of love.

Second, social friendship is where everybody in diversity comes together and works for the common good.[182] Antonio Spadaro, an Italian Jesuit who is editor of *La Civiltà Cattolica,* noted that the Pope developed the term social friendship in 2015 during a meeting with youth in Cuba. He reported:

> Pope Francis, speaking in Havana in 2015, recalled that he had once visited an impoverished area of Buenos Aires. The parish priest of the neighborhood had introduced him to a group of young people who were putting up a few buildings: 'This is the architect; he is Jewish; he is Communist; he is a practicing Catholic; he is…' The Pope commented: 'They were all different, but they were all working together for the common good.' Francis calls this attitude 'social friendship,' which

[179] Ibid.
[180] Francis, "Fratelli Tutti," # 99.
[181] Ibid., # 100.
[182] Cf. Gerry, "Social Friendship According to Pope Francis."

> knows how to combine rights with responsibility for the common good and diversity with the recognition of a radical fraternity.[183]

Spadaro highlighted that "it is precisely this common work beyond differences that the Pope calls social friendship."[184] Thus, social friendship is a harmonious combination of human rights, responsibility for the common good, and respect for diversity.

Third, social friendship is more than solidarity because it always includes action. François Euvé, a Jesuit priest and director of the review *Études*, insisted that Pope Francis's notion of social friendship "is much more than solidarity in the juridical sense of the term."[185] For him, the Good Samaritan account, to which Pope Francis dedicates a significant passage in the encyclical, exemplifies social friendship expressed through action. The details about the story in paragraphs 80 – 83 of the encyclical show that "the inter-human relationship takes precedence over differences of conviction, theology, social class and so forth"[186] and leads the good Samaritan to act by rescuing the wounded Judean by the side of the road. The Samaritan, who was a pagan and therefore was considered impure, "became a neighbor to the wounded Judean."[187] Jesus, in the parable, helps his listeners to understand the sense of "neighbor," which includes everyone, regardless of their differences, and he concludes by saying, "go and do likewise" (Lk. 10: 37). Pope Francis responds to Jesus's invitation and notes "we can start from below and, case by case, act at the most concrete and local levels, and then expand to the farthest reaches of our countries and our world, with the same care and concern that the Samaritan showed for each of the wounded man's injuries."[188]

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[183] Antonio Spadaro, "Fraternity and Social Friendship," *La Civiltà Cattolica*, last modified October 14, 2020, accessed January 18, 2023, https://www.laciviltacattolica.com/fraternity-and-social-friendship/.
[184] Gerry, "Social Friendship According to Pope Francis."
[185] Ibid.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Francis, "Fratelli Tutti," # 81.
[188] Ibid., # 78.

Lastly, Pope Francis states that social friendship is only possible if we cultivate a way of relating to one another and do not exclude anyone but promote a fraternity open to all.[189] He underscores that every person is valuable and has the right to live with dignity. Human beings develop through their encounter with others. They are made for sharing life with others in love. "Love, by its very nature, calls for growth in openness and the ability to accept others as part of a continuing adventure that makes every periphery converge in a greater sense of mutual belonging."[190] Love draws us out of ourselves and our comfort zone to meet and embrace others. This love creates bonds of existence that promote life. Pope Francis notes, "life exists where there is bonding, communion, fraternity; and life is stronger than death when it is built on true relationships and bonds of fidelity."[191] That is, human beings are made for a community and fraternity life. We should move beyond ourselves to find a fuller existence in another.[192] Thus, "the social friendship of which we are speaking here is only possible when it is driven by love."[193]

Three central ideas differentiate social friendship from regular friendship. First, social friendship is born and shaped in a particular context, Latin America, where social injustice and violation of human rights and dignity are highly present. Social friendship helps direct all human efforts in the community to seek and work for the common good. Second, social friendship is a "transformative power" that teaches human beings to live together in harmony, respect one another, and work together to build a just and peaceful society by overcoming human boundaries and implementing each individual's qualities for the good of all. Social friendship helps

[189] Cf. Ibid., # 94.
[190] Ibid., # 95.
[191] Ibid., # 87.
[192] Cf. Ibid., # 88.
[193] Huebsch Bill, *On Fraternity and Social Friendship: Group Reading Guide to Pope Francis' Fratelli Tutii*, New London. (Toronto, ON: Novalis, 2020), 17.

transform the human vision of diversity as a condition for common existence. Third, social friendship directly responds to Jesus's invitation to love and care for one another, especially the poor, the marginalized, the oppressed, and the sick. Social friendship is inspired by the story of the Good Samaritan and actively manifests a response to Jesus's invitation, "go and do likewise" (Lk. 10: 37).

3 The Relevance of Friendship in Christian Ethics

Friendship is crucial for Christian ethics because it is one of the core concepts of the Bible. From the beginning, God created human beings for the sake of friendship (see Gen. 2: 18-23). Genesis 2: 18 says, "then the Lord God said, 'it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner'" (Genesis 2: 18 *NRSV*). In John 15: 13-17, Jesus's salvation is about restoring human beings to the possibility of friendship with God. John 15: 13-15 says, "no one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I have called you friends because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father" (John 15: 13-15 *NRSV*). Friendship is part of the divine plan to shape humans' love and direct them to union with God in following and living Jesus's teachings.

Paul Wadell is among the theologians concerned with the relevance of friendship in Christian ethics. Before identifying some essential aspects of friendship in Christian ethics, he emphasized that "our" problem is that "morality today does not ask enough of us."[194] Human beings have become more and more self-centered and, therefore, unaccustomed to addressing the fundamental question: what will make a human person "whole?" Referring to the Second

[194] Wadell, *Friendship and the Moral Life*, 13.

Vatican Council's challenge to "Catholic moralists to reformulate their whole understanding of the moral life," Wadell poses the question, "how should we take our life as a whole?"[195] For him, "friendship is a fitting model of the moral life because it respects [sic] that the change of self necessary for wholeness is impossible apart from those relationships in which love for that wholeness can be shared."[196] That is, the fullness of life is always received along with friendship with others and God.

Throughout his academic journey, Wadell has understood the relevance of this friendship and taught, firstly, that friendships are essential for the good life.[197] Quoting Aristotle, Wadell notes that "when persons approve of each other without seeking such other's society, this seems to be goodwill rather than friendship. Nothing is more characteristic of friends than that they seek each other's society."[198] Friends must spend time in each other's company to maintain a friendship because, through friendship, they can realize their life project of actively seeking goods and sharing these goods and values with each other.

Second, "friendships orient us toward and form us in goodness and truth as we acquire and grow in the virtues through them."[199] A human wants to know himself or herself and reach an honest evaluation of who he or she is. Aristotle, however, had the insight that this self-knowledge comes through our friends. Wadell notes, "in virtue friendships, each person is attracted to the other because they sense in one another a similarity of character, a kinship in goodness."[200] The compatibility of values and principles we feel in a person attracts us to that

[195] Ibid., 11.
[196] Ibid., 25.
[197] Cf. Ibid., 199.
[198] Jeffrey Henderson, "Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics: Book VIII: Chapter III," *Loeb Classical Library*, # 1157b 18-19, accessed September 25, 2022, https://www-loebclassics-com.proxy.bc.edu/view/aristotle-nicomachean_ethics/1926/pb_LCL073.461.xml.
[199] Wadell, *Friendship and the Moral Life*, 199.
[200] Ibid., 58.

person. This like of goodness we find in the other allows us to know ourselves. If we know that we are similar to that particular person, for example, in kindness, we get to know ourselves by knowing him or her.

Third, friendships are schools of Christian love where "friends are God's gift to us, providential blessings for the journey to beatitude, and thus evoke gratitude."[201] For Wadell, friendships are a sanctifying way of life. He agrees with Augustine that "friends are gifts given to us by God for providential purposes. They are channels of God's grace because it is through them that God watches over us, blesses and provides for us, guides and supports us, and most of all, loves us."[202] For Wadell, friends are God's gifts entrusted to us so that, as they come into our lives, our love for God and others grows, and the boundaries of our world extend.[203]

4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has sought to understand the scriptural and Christian traditions on friendship and has concluded that friendship is vital in all human cultures and traditions. Three central ideas emerge from the scriptural tradition. First, although the Hebrew Scripture does not provide an elaborate theology of friendship, the historical accounts of friendship present the image of a relational God. God is always in a relationship of friendship with humans. Second, the narrative of friendship between individuals in the Old Testament emphasizes its covenantal aspect, which is reinforced by the parties' faithfulness to God. Third, friendship in the New Testament is initiated by Jesus and shaped by his life and action, which, motivated by his constant relationship with the Father, always seeks to love and care for his friends, even unto death. Two key ideas

[201] Ibid., 200.
[202] Paul J. Wadell, "Friendship," *Christian Reflection: A Series in Faith and Ethics* 27, The Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University (Spring 2008): 30.
[203] Cf. Ibid., 35.

emerge from the Christian tradition's perspective on friendship. First, Christian friendship is a way of life through which human beings reach their fullness of life – happiness – by relating to God and others, opening themselves to God's Spirit of love, and sharing God's love with one another. Second, Christian friendship is a human response to God's call to human beings to be faithful, just, loving, and caring friends, as depicted in the parable of the Good Samaritan. It makes us want what God wants us to be.

As we move forward, I conclude that Christian friendship is a human relationship rooted in charity as a friendship with God; it is maintained by constant communication and communion with God and mutual love and care for others; Christian friendship is lived out by desiring and doing the good for the other. With such an understanding of Christian friendship, we are now ready to interpret *Fihavanana* through the lens of Christian friendship.

CHAPTER 4: ETHICAL DIMENSION OF *FIHAVANANA* UNDERSTOOD AS *FIHAVANANA*-FRIENDSHIP

This chapter will interpret *Fihavanana* through the lens of Christian friendship, which we call in this work *Fihavanana*-Friendship. In doing so, the chapter will first briefly summarize the concept of *Fihavanana* and then the concept of Christian friendship. Second, it will show how Christian friendship, understood as charity, gives a distinct context of *Fihavanana* for Malagasy Christians for assessing and guiding action. The third section of the chapter will show how *Fihavanana*-Friendship addresses the nuances in *Fihavanana*. The fourth section will give a summary.

1. A Review of the Two Concepts of *Fihavanana* and Christian Friendship

1.1. *Fihavanana* and Some Challenges that Make It Unclear at the National Level

Chapter 2 argued that *Fihavanana* is a reality and an ongoing process that governs the Malagasy people's moral life. Antoine Rahajarizafy, a Jesuit anthropologist and philosopher, is convinced that the Malagasy people cannot live without *Fihavanana.*[204] *Fihavanan*a means an ongoing process of human relationship, bonded by mutual love, kindness, respect, support, and flexibility, that Malagasy people need to create and maintain every day. *Fihavanana* is not a fixed reality of human relationships, but a relational way of living that needs to be constantly maintained in daily life and activities. The Malagasy verbal arts, used in proverbs, public and religious speeches, popular songs, and rituals, aim to activate and strengthen human relationships in order to establish and maintain a peaceful and harmonious society and remind its members of

[204] Cf. Rahajarizafy, *Hanitra Nentin-DRazana (Perfume of the Ancestors)*, 6.

their relational character. *Fihavanana* seeks to connect the Malagasy people with each other as one family regardless of origin, ethnicity, religion, gender, and social status.

The practice of *Fihavanana*, however, has been interpreted as limited to the family, community, ethnic and regional levels. A few scholars argue the existence of nuances between the various types of *Fihavanana* depending on the location and circumstances of the people. Robert Dubois indicates the existence of *Fihavanana* by genealogy and *Fihavanana* by place of residence.[205] For Dubois, the meaning of *Fihavanana* varies according to the realities a person faces. Political movements, for example, illustrate a more nation-related *Fihavanana*. Cultural activities like exhumation and circumcision exemplify a type of *Fihavanana* more related and limited to the family sphere. Peter Kneitz presents some nuances in *Fihavanana* according to the circumstances. For Kneitz, the meaning of *Fihavanana* varies according to ancestry, place of origin, identity, politics, religion, and local culture of the people. He presents four variant types of *Fihavanana*. Local *Fihavanana* refers to the family/clan-related *Fihavanana*. *Gasy Fihavanana* expresses the national unity and solidarity of the Malagasy people. Christian *Fihavanana* is developed around the theology of Christian reconciliation. *Fihavanana* defined in the official Malagasy language is used as a term of reference to express Malagasy solidarity in a general way and in its regional variants.[206] Because of the open discussion of these nuances, *Fihavanana* is nebulous for many Malagasy people. Often a new inter-regional frustration results regarding *Fihavanana* when it is used at the national level.

[205] Cf. Dubois, *Olombelona: Essai Sur l'Existence Personnelle et Collective à Madagascar*, 52–100.
[206] Cf. Gannon et al., *Fihavanana - La Vision d'une Société Paisible à Madagascar (2e Édition Corrigée)*, 21–22.

1.2. Christian Friendship

Chapter 3 highlighted the relevance of friendship in scriptural and Christian traditions. Both scriptural and Christian traditions emphasize that Christian friendship is shaped by the relational character of God, who wants to befriend us in a communion of love. The love based on this communication between God and human beings is called charity.[207] Christian friendship, therefore, is a human relationship rooted in charity, maintained by constant communication with God and mutual love and lived out by desiring and doing good for the other. Aquinas asserts that the kind of love that qualifies as friendship is characterized by three things: goodwill that desires the good of the other; mutual love that accepts and rejoices in the other for what he or she is; and a sharing in life and fellowship of both friends.[208] Charity unites us in divine friendship. Friendship of God with humans becomes effective through the mystery of the Incarnation in which the Son of God became human and dwelt among humans. Jesus Christ is the perfect model of a friend and the source of Christian friendship.

Moreover, for Aquinas, "it is clear that to love is more proper to charity than to be loved."[209] Charity is nothing other than our loving response to the friendship that God offers to us. Thus, Christian friendship is marked by the human response to Jesus's call to "go and do likewise" (Lk. 10: 37) what Christ has done. It is the Christian way to happiness – a union with God – by maintaining a faithful and just relationship with God and others.

[207] Cf. Aquinas, *ST*, II-II q. 23. a. 1.
[208] Cf. Ibid.
[209] Aquinas, *ST*, II-II q. 27, a. 1.

2. How Does Christian Friendship, Especially Charity, Give a Different Context to *Fihavanana*?

Christian friendship gives a different context to *Fihavanana* in three ways. First, Christian friendship gives a different understanding of *Fihavanana* by considering God's initiative to befriend human beings through Jesus Christ as a starting point of the human relationship of friendship. This friendship of God with humans is an essential theme for Thomas Aquinas.

Christian friendship starts from God and is lived in the fellowship of love with one another. Aquinas took an essential step beyond Aristotle to argue for the possibility of friendship between God and human beings. He links the theological friendship described by the evangelist John with charity. The passage in St. John's Gospel where Jesus begins to call the disciples his friends and not his servants (Jn.15: 15) is an important starting point for Aquinas's first question on charity. Here Aquinas has made a real and substantial development of the traditions that preceded him. Eberhard Schockenhoff notes, "for Aquinas, divine charity falls under the concept of friendship defined in this way, so that God and human beings mutually love each other, and, according to the First Letter of John: 'we have an abiding union' (1 Jn 1: 7) - that is people live in 'community' or 'fellowship' with one another."[210] Christian friendship primarily requires us to recognize God's love in our relationship with others. The love we offer others will be much more authentic if we have previously felt loved by God and recognized in our daily lives that God is love.

[210] Eberhard Schockenhoff, "The Theological Virtue of Charity (IIa IIae, Qq. 23-46)," in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, Georgetown University Press. (Washington, D.C, 2002), 246.

As we mentioned earlier, *Fihavanana* is a specific relationship of friendship that Malagasy people need to create and re-create constantly through mutual affection, kindness, respect, and support in order to create and maintain a peaceful and loving community. However, once different opinions regarding *Fihavanana* are publicized, many Malagasy people quickly forget the proverb "*Aza ny lohasaha mangina no jerena fa Andriamanitra ao antampon'ny loha*" (do not look at the silent valley but God who is at the top of your head) which informs the Malagasy moral life. The Malagasy people have begun to build human relationships understanding *Fihavanana* exclusively according to their own places and circumstances. Their actions are often guided by their superego, which only seeks the goods and interests of their family, clan, and ethnic group.[211] James Keenan notes, "the superego was not, however, a moral guide. It was simply meant to restrain us, to keep us safe, healthy, and well."[212] The love of God goes with the love of neighbor. Christian friendship rooted in God's love gives a new meaning to *Fihavanana*. *Fihavanana,* understood through the lens of Christian friendship, means an ongoing process of conscious human relationship rooted in God's initiative to love and befriend human beings. This *Fihavanana* is constantly created and recreated by mutual affection and support, kindness, and respect, motivated by human response to this love of God. God's initiative in loving and making us his friends should be the prerequisite of the Malagasy bond of *Fihavanana*.

Second, Christian friendship that is motivated by Jesus's way of life and teachings gives clearer meaning to *Fihavanana*. Christian friendship is a way to live out Jesus's teaching on how to show greater love for friends. Jesus invites us to walk in the way of the Lord. To follow Jesus's way, one needs to live in constant conversion. That is, one needs to be in a constant

[211] Cf. Gannon et al., *Fihavanana - La Vision d'une Société Paisible à Madagascar (2e Édition Corrigée)*.
[212] James F. Keenan, *Moral Wisdom: Lessons and Texts from the Catholic Tradition*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 32.

relationship with God and others and put love before everything as the foundation of one's moral life. Even though the Malagasy people did not know the Bible prior to the 18th century, their moral responsiveness was prompted by a human inclination to the good and the neighbor.[213]

However, growing insecurity and violence in Madagascar indicate a failure of many Malagasy people "to bother to respond *in the first place*. (Like) the Priest and Levite passing by the man on the road in Luke 10: 30-37 […] none of them respond […] they have not even started to use their consciences."[214] *Fihavanana* limited only to family, ethnic, and regional spheres is the result of the failure to respond to the needs of others and a lack of initiative to love and to go outside one's comfort zone. Thus, the human relationship of *Fihavanana* needs God's grace to help the Malagasy people to love and care for others with the divine love that is capable of transcending human boundaries.[215] Put differently, *Fihavanana* understood through Christian friendship means the human relationship of friendship where every member of the community is always ready to deny one's personal interest to love and care for others regardless of human differences, following the example of Christ.

Third, Christian friendship gives a new context to *Fihavanana* by adding moral responsibilities to the self-love aspect of *Fihavanana*. Many Malagasy people often consider the self-love aspect of *Fihavanana* as a reason to limit the scope of their human relationship of friendship to themselves, their family, and their ethnic group. In difficult situations, many Malagasy people overstate the proverbs "*Aleo ho faty apitso toy izay ho faty anio*" (It is better to die tomorrow than today) and "*Raha ho faty aho, matesa rahavana; raha ho faty rahavana, matesa ny omby*" (If I should die, let my parent die [in my place]; and if my parent should die, let

[213] Cf. James F. Keenan, "Grieving in the Upper Room: Vulnerability, Recognition, Conscience and the Holy Spirit" (n.d.): 14.
[214] Ibid.
[215] Cf. Francis, "Fratelli Tutti," # 99.

the ox die [in his place]). These proverbs illustrate the self-love aspect of *Fihavanana,* which exemplifies one's responsibility to care for oneself. Though the self-love aspect of *Fihavanana* should reflect the Christian aspect of self-love in charity, it is often used as an argument to neglect others and not address what Keenan calls "the pre-condition to the conscience act"[216]: vulnerability and recognition. He notes that vulnerability is our "willingness to enter into the chaos of another," as God himself does, in order to recognize them as human beings. It "entails an elective suffering for the sake of others."[217]

Christian friendship which includes the Christian aspect of self-love helps many Malagasy people, at least Malagasy Christians and those who believe in the value of love taught by Jesus, see a new context of *Fihavanana*. Love plays a crucial role in the Thomistic understanding of the person's social nature. Stephen Pope notes that in Aquinas' view, "love must be understood in all cases as profoundly teleological, as an affective response elicited or aroused in the will by the good."[218] In the case of love of oneself, this implies in each individual a fundamental tendency to seek his or her good and perfection, to love the self. For Aquinas, Pope highlights, "self-love is neither a virtue nor a vice but simply an expression of human passion and therefore is capable of displaying either adherence to or departure from right reason, of being either ordered to the good or disordered, of being properly or improperly expressed."[219] The human being's perfection is realized in his/her desire for God. This Thomistic view of the path to perfection joins with Augustine's view that the true happiness of the self is to rest in God.

[216] Keenan, "Grieving in the Upper Room: Vulnerability, Recognition, Conscience and the Holy Spirit," 15.
[217] Keenan, *Moral Wisdom*, 62.
[218] Pope, *The Ethics of Aquinas*, 386.
[219] Ibid., 387.

Pope notes, "for both Augustine and Aquinas, proper self-love consists in love for the self 'in God,' and improper self-love entails loving God as a secondary good."[220]

Moreover, Pope says, "Aquinas maintains that the order of charity requires the self to love itself before the neighbor."[221] This Thomistic perspective advocates that we love ourselves before our neighbors in charity. "In charity, the self loves itself above neighbor, and therefore it comes as no surprise that Thomas interprets the 'as' in 'love your neighbor as yourself' (Matt. 22: 39) to involve not strict equality but likeness [...], that is, treat the neighbor as you would like yourself to be treated, and treat your neighbor's good as if it were your own good."[222] True self-love, in Aquinas' account, is to be understood in its theological, not anthropological, context. Thus, all commitment to and relationships with others would be motivated by the love of God that transcends individual satisfaction. In short, the faithful Christian can love himself or herself and his/her neighbor in charity since "we only truly love ourselves when we love ourselves in God."[223]

The primacy of the love of God in charity, for Aquinas, does not eradicate in human nature all traces of self-love. For him, natural self-love is taken up in the life of charity. Charity is the form of the virtues because it directs all other virtues to the last end.[224] For St. Paul, charity is the highest form of love (1 Cor. 13: 13). Keenan avoids calling the virtue "self-love." Instead, he focuses on the moral task of self-care. For him, self-care can include self-esteem and the promotion of one's health.[225] Keenan outlines anthropological development that emphasizes the relational character of humans. By proposing the virtue of self-care, he emphasizes that "we all

[220] Ibid.
[221] Ibid., 394.
[222] Ibid., 395.
[223] Ibid., 397.
[224] Cf. Aquinas, *ST*, II- II, q. 23, a. 8.
[225] Cf. James F. Keenan, "Proposing Cardinal Virtues," *Theological Studies* 56 (n.d.): 727.

have a unique responsibility to care for ourselves, emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually."[226] From this perspective, *Fihavanana*, understood through the lens of Christian friendship, also means a responsible human relationship which considers the value of one's life, out of God's love, in order to be able to "enter into the chaos of another" to recognize them as friends.

In sum, three central ideas emerge from *Fihavanana* when understood through the lens of Christian friendship, which we call in this work *Fihavanana*-Friendship. First, *Fihavanana*-Friendship fills out the content of *Fihavanana* by attending to a conscious and responsible human relationship of friendship rooted in the awareness of God's desire to be a friend of humans. Second, *Fihavanana*-Friendship provides new motivation for the Malagasy people to constantly create and maintain *Fihavanana* through mutual affection and support, kindness, respect, self-care, and solidarity, motivated by their response to God's initiative to love and care for human beings. Third, *Fihavanana*-Friendship is a Malagasy way of living charity by responding to Jesus's call to "go and do likewise" (Lk. 10: 37) what he has done: to love and care for all others.

3. How Does *Fihavanana* as Interpreted through Christian Friendship Address the Nuances in *Fihavanana*?

Fihavanana-Friendship, addresses the conceptual issues and nuances in *Fihavanana* in three ways. First, *Fihavanana*-Friendship addresses nuances in *Fihavanana* described in chapter 2 by focusing on the practice and implication of mutual love, the love of God, which is inseparable from the love of neighbor. Mutuality is one of the characteristics of *Fihavanana*,

[226] Ibid.

along with kindness and respect.[227] Mutuality takes many forms in the Malagasy context. Mutual service is an ordinary opportunity for the Malagasy people to share their love and help each other freely and honestly. For example, the Malagasy tradition of "*ateron-kalao*" (I give you something today so that you will give it to me next time) exemplifies mutual love. In a hard time in a person's life, Malagasy people show love and care for the one in need by providing him/her what he/she might need. Having felt such love, the person cared for and supported by others is also eager to do the same to another person in need next time. This tradition of "*ateron-kalao*" has been well appreciated as long as the ideal of mutual love guides those who practice it. Unfortunately, the conceptual issues and nuances in *Fihavanana*, highlighted by the Malagasy and foreign scholars we mentioned earlier, have limited the practice of "*ateron-kalao*" to family or a particular group of people.[228] At worst, "*ateron-kalao*" has become mechanical and utilitarian. Some people have started abusing this tradition and taking advantage of it for their own benefit. They will give something to others so that they will get more from them next time. In such case, *Fihavanana*-Friendship purifies the nuances in *Fihavanana* by bringing an element of selflessness, of wanting good for others.

Aquinas clarifies the necessity of mutual love to create friendship between friend and friend.[229] Christian friendship requires mutual love between individuals. Christian love, for Aquinas, goes with benevolence that desires and does good for the other.[230] Love is the foundation of the moral life; as such, it is a human response to the experience of God's love for us. Christian friendship emphasizes that our human relationship with others should be driven by the mutual love we experience with God. Keenan says, "God loves us; we love God; we are

[227] Cf. Rahajarizafy, *Hanitra Nentin-DRazana (Perfume of the Ancestors)*, 22–30.
[228] Cf. Gannon et al., *Fihavanana - La Vision d'une Société Paisible à Madagascar (2e Édition Corrigée)*.
[229] Cf. Aquinas, *ST*, II–II, q. 23, a. 1.
[230] Cf. Ibid.

called to morality as a response to that love."[231] Love of neighbor flows from the heart of every human being who loves God, without considering human boundaries or differences. Therefore, *Fihavanana*-Friendship, which focuses on mutual love, makes us love whom God loves and makes God's plan our own. God's plan for humanity is summarized in the commandment of love: love of God and love of neighbors which is expressed by desiring and doing the good for them.

Moreover, in Christian friendship God shares his love with us to help us flourish and be transformed so that God's vision to make friends with humanity can be fully realized. This mutual love exemplifies God's initiative to befriend human beings through the mystery of the Incarnation when the Son of God became man and dwelt among us. Eberhard Schockenhoff says, "human life is given new dignity in the mystery of the Incarnation that renders it (human life) worthy of the love and friendship of God."[232] God longs for intimate communion with human beings. Human beings, through divine grace, are transformed inwardly to enjoy friendship with God and with other humans, regardless of the differences and boundaries that separate them. Christian friendship is universal and goes beyond particular and limited relationships of individuals. Thus, *Fihavanana*-Friendship, which emphasizes the importance of mutual love in human relationships with God and others, clarifies the nuances in *Fihavanana* that limit human relationships to family, ethnic, and regional spheres.

Second, *Fihavanana*-Friendship emphasizes the virtue of charity, which is at the core of Christian friendship. Christian friendship rooted in charity clarifies the nuances in *Fihavanana* by motivating the Malagasy people to long for divine communion in the friendship of love, share God's life with all others, cooperate with God, and embrace God's plan for humanity.

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[231] Keenan, *Moral Wisdom*, 14.
[232] Schockenhoff, "The Theological Virtue of Charity (IIa IIae, Qq. 23-46)," 248.

The virtue of charity aims to lead human beings to an unbroken communion of friendship with God. For Aquinas, charity – defined as a friendship with God – begins with a divine offer of the happiness of the one invited. Wadell, in his exegesis of Aquinas's work, says, "God's happiness is God's very life, and God lives as the everlasting communion of friendship love we call Trinity."[233] The loving friendship between the Father and the Son and the Spirit is God's own activity and, therefore, God's happiness. Charity integrates human beings into this trinitarian life, even incompletely during this earthly life, so that humans can also participate in the love and happiness that is God in the afterlife. In other words, charity is more about a whole way of life oriented toward an intimate union of human beings with God, which is made possible by God's will to be our friend. From this perspective, Christian friendship rooted in charity shapes the Malagasy people's hearts to long for this divine life of friendship marked by communion of love. Seeing love as participation in the trinitarian life helps one clarify the nuances in *Fihavanana* by showing that it is a striving for union with God and all others.

God wants the highest good for human beings: to participate in and dwell as fully as possible in the *communio* of friendship with God. Wadell notes, "the gift from which charity begins is the outpouring of God's own happiness into our hearts, a divine happiness that is the divine friendship, the divine friendship that is the divine life."[234] God's diffusion of his happiness in the human heart marks the beginning of the friendship of the human with God. Christian friendship rooted in charity addresses the above nuances in *Fihavanana* by recognizing the gift of God's spirit of love in the human heart, which integrates each individual into God's life. In charity, every human being participates in the communion of friendship with God. Charity is not

[233] Paul J. Wadell, "Charity: How Friendship with God Unfolds in Love for Others," in *Virtues and Their Vices* (Oxford, UK; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 379.
[234] Ibid.

just any love but a love of friendship. Wadell says, "what distinguishes charity from other friendship is the shared good or 'communication' on which it is based."[235] Charity is about God inviting us to participate in his happiness and sharing everything that is God's. In short, Christian friendship rooted in charity that seeks to share God's life transforms Malagasy people's hearts to be open, to receive, and to share God's happiness with all others. Such communication between God and human beings and between humans themselves expands the human relationships of *Fihavanana*, limited by the above-mentioned nuances.

Given the nuances between local *Fihavanana* or *Filongoa, gasy Fihavanana*, Christian *Fihavanana*, and *Fihavanana* defined as the language of Malagasy Highlands, Aquinas is helpful when he explains that when the Holy Spirit pours charity into us, our will receives perfection that allows us to love and cooperate with God. With the gift of the Holy Spirit, we do not act merely like inanimate instruments. Instead, we act freely, collaborating with this impulse of the Holy Spirit to love God and consequently to love all those whom God loves. In charity, this act to love is both of us and of the Holy Spirit. It is a human act but has a divine effect, which is the very life of God communicated to us. From this perspective, charity opens the heart of the Malagasy people to God's Spirit of love. It motivates them to cooperate with God by loving him and one another in order to accomplish God's plan for humanity: union with God in eternal happiness.[236] Infused charity, a form from God that allows us to participate in and hence resemble God, configures human beings to cooperate with God and love as God loves.

In Aquinas's view, the goal of the moral life is union with God in friendship with Him. Eberhard Schockenhoff notes, "in charity, God becomes the person's friend, and the person,

[235] Ibid.
[236] Cf. Aquinas, *ST*, II-II, q. 25, a. 2, ad. 2.

separated by an infinite distance from God, becomes God's friend."[237] Charity unites us in divine friendship. However, Wadell argues, "it is a union achieved not so much through our efforts to love, but through our surrender to love, a union wrought from the Spirit freely at work in our lives."[238] In grace, God gives us this Spirit of love that allows us to participate in the divine life. Still, through charity, we actively and fully participate in the friendship of God and become one with this divine friendship. Participating in friendship with God requires us to work actively for the welfare of our friends and accept being formed and remade by the Spirit of love to become what God wants us to be. Therefore, Christian friendship rooted in the virtue of charity clarifies the nuances in *Fihavanana* because charity transforms the heart of every person to embrace God's plan for humanity: to love God and all neighbors.

Third, *Fihavanana*-Friendship clarifies the conceptual issues and nuances in *Fihavanana* by emphasizing Jesus's invitation to each of his disciples to be a neighbor to all others, as depicted in the parable of the Good Samaritan. We mentioned earlier that Christian friendship is the human response to Jesus's invitation. The issue of ethnicity characterized the historico-religious context of Palestine at the time of Jesus. Samaritans and Jews lived separate lives even though they shared a monotheistic religion and used the Torah. They were continuously in conflict. Stephen Harris notes that in Jesus' time, "true" Jews of Judea despised the Samaritans and considered them foreigners and corrupters of the Jewish faith.[239] Within this context, Jesus proposed the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10: 25-37) to answer the scribe's question: "Who is my neighbor?" At first glance, the response to the question "Who is my neighbor?" in this parable is the wounded Judean lying on the road. Keenan interestingly notes that "in the

[237] Schockenhoff, "The Theological Virtue of Charity (IIa IIae, Qq. 23-46)," 246.
[238] Wadell, *Friendship and the Moral Life*, 128.
[239] Cf. Harris Stephen L., *Understading the Bible*, 6th ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2003), 200.

beginning, we think the parable is about whom we should assist. But the end is really about who we are called to be. We are called to be like the Good Samaritan – that is, to be a neighbor."[240]

During Jesus' time, the word "neighbor" usually meant those nearest us in the community.[241] Love and care were confined to those who belonged to that circle. The Good Samaritan story portrays Jesus overturning the ethnic prejudice of Jews and Samaritans, expanding human relationships with love and compassion, and requiring a change of values that transcends all religious, racial, and cultural boundaries. The parable of the Good Samaritan is meant to awaken those who neglect others by pursuing injustice, hatred, revenge, and violence. *Fihavanana*-Friendship, which focuses on responding to the call of Christ to do what he has done, should help Malagasy Christians and those who believe in the commandment of love taught by Jesus Christ to clarify the nuances in *Fihavanana*. It should encourage them to be neighbors to others by stepping out of their comfort zone and expanding their human relationship of friendship to show mercy, love, compassion, and care for others regardless of their origin, ethnic group, and religion.

In sum, tackling the conceptual issues and nuances in *Fihavanana, Fihavanana*-Friendship revolves around three central points. First, *Fihavanana*-Friendship focuses on Christian mutual love, which helps the Malagasy people experience God's love in their daily lives and see it as a prerequisite for their relationships with God and others. Second, *Fihavanana*-Friendship rooted in the virtue of charity enables the Malagasy people to will and do good for others as they desire and do for themselves. Third, *Fihavanana*-Friendship invites each Malagasy person to obey Jesus's commandment of love by making each one available to be a neighbor to all others.

[240] Keenan, *Moral Wisdom*, 92.
[241] Cf. Francis, "Fratelli Tutti," # 80.

4. Chapter Summary

This chapter has interpreted *Fihavanana* through the lens of Christian friendship to develop the ethical dimension of the term. After a brief recapitulation of the two accounts of *Fihavanana* and Christian friendship, we highlighted the fact that *Fihavanana* still needs to be clarified for the Malagasy people at the national level. Moreover, different nuances emerge from the term *Fihavanana* when it is used in different places and circumstances in the nation. *Fihavanana*-Friendship, however, gives a more precise understanding of *Fihavanana*, giving it capacity to assess and guide Malagasy moral action. It provides two sets of ethical concepts to clarify the nuances in *Fihavanana*. *Fihavanana*-Friendship is an ongoing human relationship rooted in charity that is constantly created, expanded, and maintained through mutual love, communication, and benevolence. *Fihavanana*-Friendship is an invitation to act Jesus' commandment of love by offering oneself to be a neighbor to all others and living in solidarity with them. These two sets of ethical concepts allow us now to guide a positive Malagasy moral response to the loss of the sense of living together and increase in deadly violence in Madagascar.

CHAPTER 5: HOW CAN *FIHAVANANA*-FRIENDSHIP ASSESS AND GUIDE ACTION REGARDING THE LOSS OF SOCIAL FRIENDSHIP AND INCREASE IN DEADLY VIOLENCE IN MADAGASCAR?

This concluding chapter will assess the Malagasy moral response to the loss of social friendship and increase in deadly violence in the nation and offer proposed actions guided by the ethical concepts and virtues highlighted in chapter 4, namely mutual love, communication, benevolence, self-care, and solidarity. The chapter will advance in three sections: the first section will briefly recall the moral problem in Madagascar; the second section will recall how virtues correctly order human beings in life; and the third section will assess and guide the Malagasy response to these moral issues through the ethical concepts from *Fihavanana*-Friendship.

1. A Review of the Moral Problem in Madagascar

Chapter 1 argued that post-independence Malagasy society has shown signs of deterioration in its peaceful and harmonious social living conditions. Though the people of post-independence Madagascar aspire to unite in a peaceful and harmonious society through *Fihavanana*, Malagasy society has become more violent. As mentioned earlier, in 2017 Madagascar was 44th out of 163 countries in the world ranking of least violent countries.[242] In 2022, Madagascar ranked 88th.[243] The Malagasy tradition of consensus and solidarity to preserve harmony and protect human life is now visibly deteriorating. Many Malagasy people have become vindictive. The practice of mob justice is approved by four Malagasy out of ten, according to the Afrobarometer survey.[244]

[242] Cf. "Global Peace Index 2017 - World | ReliefWeb," 18.
[243] Cf. "Institute for Economics & Peace. Global Peace Index 2022: Measuring Peace in a Complex World," 11.
[244] Cf. "AD294: Se Faire Justice Soi-Même, Une Solution Par Défaut à Madagascar?" accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.afrobarometer.org/publication/ad294-se-faire-justice-soi-meme-une-solution-par-defaut-madagascar/.

The Malagasy Council of the Christian Churches (FFKM) highlighted that the increased violence in the nation is primarily due to corruption in different state institutions, which leads the Malagasy people to a lack of confidence in the criminal justice system and the police. This reality has modified the Malagasy culture, previously marked by a concern for others, a peaceful common life, and solidarity. As described earlier, the dramatic massacre of villagers caused by a dispute, kidnapping, and killing of albino people, murderous attacks by bandits, and the choice of many Malagasy people to apply mob justice to criminals and even to suspected individuals, exemplify the current moral malaise of the Malagasy society to which we want to offer guidance for action. The following sections will apply the ethical concepts and virtues of *Fihavanana*-Friendship to the context of Malagasy society to assess and guide the moral response to the above-mentioned moral issues.

2. How Do Virtues Correctly Order Human Beings in Life?

Virtues aim at correctly ordering human beings in the essential domain of life. Commenting on Aquinas's work on cardinal virtues, Keenan highlights that these virtues are "fundamental to attaining the 'rectitude of appetite' of virtuous living."[245] This "rectitude" is essential to order the "appetitive" and intellectual powers that allow us to act. Aquinas says, "prudence orders our practical reason; justice orders the will or our intellectual appetite; temperance and fortitude perfect the passions."[246] It is a function of the practical reason that one comes to know how he/she should act. For Daniel Daly, "to understand action guidance in a virtue framework, we must examine how the virtue of prudence enables one to discover the

[245] Keenan, James F., "*Proposing Cardinal Virtues*," 717.
[246] Aquinas, *ST*, I-II, q. 61, a. 2 and 3.

morally good action in a given set of circumstances."[247] The examination of prudence leads one to look at its role in the process of moral discernment and its way of proceeding, which Aquinas refers to as "taking counsel."

For Aquinas, taking advice is done in two ways: from Jesus as the exemplar par excellence (see *Tertia pars*) and from the virtues (see *Secunda secundae partis*). Apart from this, there is also another way of taking advice from moral exemplars, which Daniel Daly calls the modes of dialogue, emulation, and substituted judgment.[248] Here, I will use this contextualized Thomistic approach of "taking counsel" in offering guidance for Malagasy action with regard to the above-mentioned moral issues. In order to do so, we will use the ethical concepts highlighted in chapter 4.

3. How Can Mutual Love, Communication, and Benevolence Assess and Guide the Malagasy Response to the Loss of Social Friendship and Increase in Deadly Violence in the Nation?

Mutual love, communication, and benevolence guide the Malagasy response to the loss of social friendship and increase in deadly violence in the nation by creating a true human friendship, ensuring a permanent human relationship with God, and encouraging humans to work for the welfare of others through healthy dialogues and debates.

Engaging in dialogues that the Malagasy people call "*dinidinika ambany tafon-trano*" (which is literally translated "conversations/dialogues under the roof") to enhance relationships in the community is part of Malagasy tradition. "*Dinidinika ambany tafon-trano*" aims at

[247] Daniel J. Daly, "Virtue Ethics and Action Guidance," *Theological Studies* 82, no. 4 (December 1, 2021): 568, accessed December 13, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1177/00405639211055177.
[248] Ibid., 571.

maintaining relationships within the community, sharing good advice for the flourishing of all, and searching for truth and "*marimaritra iraisana*," which is "consensus" or "consensus decision-making," highlighted in chapter 2. Therefore, "*dinidinika ambany tafon-trano*" can be a process of taking counsel, a jurisdiction to resolve conflicts between members of a society, or an assembly convened in search of a consensus to guarantee unity and harmony in the community. This practice of the Malagasy community needs to be rediscovered and centered on charity in order to guide the moral response to the above-mentioned moral issues. Any Malagasy leader who holds the ethical values of mutuality, communication, and benevolence should foster "*dinidinika ambany tafon-trano*," rooted in charity, in Malagasy society.

The practice of "*dinidinika ambany tafon-trano*," rooted in charity, helps the Malagasy people rediscover what Paul Ricoeur calls "care of the institution." The institution is a structure that ensures the living together of a human community. This institution must be just so that people can live peacefully in it. In order to do so, Malagasy political leaders should embody the above ethical values and appeal to *Fihavanana*-Friendship to motivate the Malagasy people to rediscover this revered tradition of "*dinidinika ambany tafon-trano*" rooted in charity in order to care for the institution, commit themselves to justice, and reconcile with one another.

If political leaders hold these ethical values, they should commit themselves to justice and peace by ensuring the value and independence of the judicial system in the nation. Political leaders should stop influencing or even ordering judges to make unfair decisions in their sake favor. The Malagasy government also should support the mission and respect the independence of BIANCO (*Bureau Indépendant Anti-Corruption*), which is the anti-corruption agency of Madagascar. BIANCO's charge is to implement the national anti-corruption strategy. Ensuring and respecting the independence of BIANCO and the judicial system in their respective missions

is essential to repairing the loss of confidence of the people in the state institutions, which has been the primary source of increased violence in the nation.

Lastly, local leaders who hold the above ethical values should foster a climate of dialogue in their respective places, allowing the local people to express themselves, listening to them, and responding to their needs for social justice through "*marimaritra iraisana*" or through a judicial system which is fair and independent. Lack of communication and dialogue creates disorder in human society. The lack of trust and absence of communication between the local leaders of the state institutions (judges, police) and the local people have led many Malagasy people (four Malagasy out of ten, according to the data mentioned above) to apply mob justice to criminals and suspected individuals. In this case, communication and dialogue, rooted in the *Fihavanana*-Friendship and expressed in the "*dinidinika ambany tafon-trano*" and the search for "*marimaritra iraisana*," are crucial in the Malagasy context.

Thus, the Malagasy people who live *Fihavanana*-Friendship should act out of charity when engaging in social relationships with others. Put differently, whatever circumstances they face, Malagasy people should treat others as friends of God. They should be aware that they are always in union with God and should love and act like God. God loves all humankind, shares his happiness with them, and desires and works for their good. Looking at Jesus, who is in permanent communion and communication with his Father through prayer (John 17), whose ministry is motivated by the love that proceeds from this union, is an excellent motivation for Malagasy Christians to desire to be in a communion of love with all others and do good for them.

4. How Can the Virtues of Self-Care and Solidarity Guide the Malagasy Response to the Loss of Social Friendship and Increase in Deadly Violence in the Nation?

The virtues of self-care and solidarity guide the Malagasy response to the loss of social friendship and increase in deadly violence by offering a moral task to care for oneself in God and motivation to be a neighbor to others. In the Malagasy context, self-love as expressed in the Malagasy proverbs is limited in addressing the above-mentioned moral issues in the nation. Often, self-love makes many Malagasy people passive members of society in the face of the social injustices and violence the nation faces. They prefer to remain silent when they witness wrongdoing and misuse of the common good by the authorities for their own benefit and career.

The virtue of self-care clarifies the human moral task to care for oneself emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually,[249] out of charity, in order to become a responsible member of society like the Good Samaritan in Luke's gospel. Such an understanding of self-care helps the Malagasy people, at least those who are Christian, to respond to the above-mentioned moral issues.

Madagascar is a country with great human and natural resources, which could be used to develop its people. Despite these advantages, however, the socio-economic indicators for Madagascar are declining, as highlighted in chapter 1. Governance that favors individuals' interests over the country's general interest explains this poor economic performance and increased violence in the country. Three main areas need to be improved in Madagascar: the concentration of political and economic power, the misappropriation of natural resources, and the lack of moral responsibility of many leaders and many Malagasy citizens. In order to make these improvements, political leaders (most are Christians) who live the ethical values of self-care and

[249] Cf. Keenan, "Proposing Cardinal Virtues," 727.

solidarity should first foster economic policies that respect human dignity and promote the common good. They should create and promote local industries for the welfare of all, not close those that already exist for personal and political reasons. Just wage should be applied to all workers in private and public companies. Second, political leaders should ensure that the law's implementation is equal for everybody regardless of origin, religion, and social status. Again, established organizations like BIANCO and the *Service des Renseignements Financiers* (SAMFIN), an agency responsible for combating financial fraud and money laundering in the country, should be given total independence in doing their respective missions. Third, the virtue of solidarity, which Daniel Daly defines "as virtuous membership in organizations that promote the common good,"[250] should bring all the Malagasy people together and reshape Malagasy social life by inspiring them to offer themselves to be neighbors to all others in their families, communities, schools, places of work, and the churches.

The Malagasy people who live *Fihavanana*-Friendship should show mercy and compassion in their relationships with all others. With the virtues of self-care and solidarity, the Malagasy response to the loss of social friendship and deadly violence should imitate God's way of showing mercy and compassion by entering into the chaos of another in order to tend to his/her wounds. Put differently, Malagasy people should address the mentioned moral initiatives to love, not to be loved, and constantly create relationships with others out of charity. The story of the Good Samaritan, who was considered impure and a stranger but did not fail to love and show mercy to the wounded Judean, therefore, should be a relevant motivation to Malagasy Christians and all people of goodwill to act charitably for a reconciled and peaceful human society.

[250] Daniel J. Daly, *The Structures of Virtue and Vice* (Georgetown University Press, 2021), 210, accessed September 25, 2022, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1gm00rq.

CONCLUSION

The preceding pages recognize the value of the Malagasy tradition of *Fihavanana* and the tremendous value of the Scriptural and Christian traditions on friendship. In the Malagasy tradition, the promotion of life in its fullness characterizes Malagasy morality. This essay intentionally interprets *Fihavanana* through Christian friendship, to obtain a framework to promote a better of living and maintain a peaceful and harmonious human society in Madagascar. Having described the Malagasy moral problems, reviewed the concept of *Fihavanana*, gathered ethical concepts and virtues in order to interpret *Fihavanana* more thoroughly, and applied the interpreted *Fihavanana* to assess and guide the Malagasy response to the above-mentioned moral issues, I propose *Fihavanana*-Friendship as a norm of Christian ethics for life in Madagascar. This thesis has shown that *Fihavanana*-Friendship can be used to assess and guide the Malagasy moral life, empowering people to embody and live out the core message of the Gospel: to love God and God's friends with affection and action.

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