

Fordham University

Looking Over The Horizon: An Analysis on the Personal Perspective of Social and Moral  
Responsibility

Sophia Anderson

Gabelli School of Business, Class of 2021, Business Administration

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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“Tener confianza en Dios es todo. We’ll always be okay, Sophie.”

I have always grown up with my mom speaking affirming words through the hardest moments or consoling me in times of doubt.

Growing up with a Mexican mother, who moved to Texas when she was seven years old, and an African American father who was born in the United States, I have not always been entirely aware, until very recently, of what strongholds my parents faced to ensure that I lived a decent life. It was not until we, as a family, experienced homelessness that my parents’ strength became more intensified as I watched and learned the intricacies or hardships that life kindly bestows on people from time to time. I remember this one night we sat at a Taqueria near the motel that we lived at and ate tacos because we did not have a kitchen. Pulling the covers over me that night, in a 300 square foot motel room with my parents sleeping in the bed next to me, and my sister by my side, I just remember thinking I wanted to do big things. I was fourteen.

As the youngest child of five siblings, I have had the privilege of watching everything happen before my own eyes. This is something that I will never take for granted as I believe it has taught me to watch and listen effectively. When I first moved to the Bronx to attend Fordham University in 2018, I was taken aback by the tumultuous and bustling life that the people in New York lived in every day of their lives. As someone who was not financially stable growing up, my heart feels for the individuals that I encounter every day while walking down Fordham Road. I always see it in the eyes of the women who carry various grocery bags with scarves covering their mouth in the cold or the men who shout in a microphone about the saving power of Jesus Christ; their eyes disclose to me that they know hardships just as they know the value of being alive. This became especially evident when I was on the train one evening,

coming back from Manhattan, and I saw a middle-aged man riding the bus---going home I suppose. I watched him on the train that night, his eyes tired, dried paint sticking to the hem of his jeans, and thick construction boots resting so languidly on the train floor. I felt connected to him, I knew him, and I knew that I felt somewhat responsible for what the world has become.

It is fascinating to think about the cycle of life; the moment when individuals wake up for work, their rush for a coffee, and their sacrifice of time for whatever it is that they want to achieve in their lives. For my parents, that sacrifice meant their own dreams, at least for a certain time, in order to provide for myself and four other siblings. For many others, especially the hardworking people I see in the Bronx every day, I know that story is shared and the sacrifice is mutual. This has always been disheartening for me, especially when I think about the hardships that my own parents have went through. Furthermore, there is one question that sticks with me--it always gets jumbled up in the big scope of things, which is: "How does one balance personal and social moral responsibilities?" The answer is found in how my parents have always exhibited their love for my siblings and me. Through their actions, I have learned the importance of serving those around you; this is something that everyone should try to do regardless of political affiliation, religious beliefs, or social surroundings.

Life is tough, and it takes guts to wake up and declare to yourself, in a world of about 8 billion, that you mean something or that you can make possible what you thought impossible. It is for this reason that I decided in 2018 I wanted to begin volunteering with The Center for Community Engaged Learning at Fordham University. Through some schedule changing, I finally reached out to Roxanne De La Torre, the Director for Campus and Community Leadership. Thankfully, she provided me with a tutoring opportunity at Cardinal Hayes High

School in the Bronx. I wanted to somehow show the students, just through showing up as a visitor from a well-known university, that they could do even better than me. Subsequently, after a few visits to the school and realizing the perseverance that the students exhibited to stay in school, I was reminded of the beauty of diligence despite hardships. As a result of my parents instruction, I make an effort to serve students that may have had a similar upbringing to me. It is this idea of “diligence” that holds my life together because it gives me hope---hope that one day, I can even fulfill a few dreams for my parents that they may have left behind somewhere along the way and in the same instance remind those with similar backgrounds to me that they can achieve their own goals.

When I undertake my dreams, I undertake them for my family, my heritage, and the path that I lead for my own children someday. I hope that one day, if I am to be so lucky, I will have the same opportunity to show my children the love and passion that my parents invested into my four siblings--through all things, they trusted in God. I know this is never truly as easy as it seems, but there was a peace in the unknown for them--as if they kept their eyes on the bigger picture. This similar theme is found in the book *Man's Search for Meaning*, by Viktor E. Frankl; he writes:

No matter what happened, he retained the freedom to choose how to respond to his suffering. He saw this not merely as an option but as his and every person's responsibility to choose 'the way in which he bears his burden.'(158)

I cannot help but think that in the end, when we stand on the threshold of uncertainty, in a world filled with despair, there will always be a reminder in our hearts and souls that there was meaning in choosing how to respond to circumstances. There is a simple correlation in how you

handle hurt and how you handle other people's hurt; this is one of the biggest obstacles to leading a moral life. Since we live in a time that readily ridicules others for differing beliefs, varying opinions, and dissimilar ideas, it is essential that this idea be retained. I do not know what the future holds but I do know that who I am, and who I am becoming, is all dependent on how I choose to treat those around me regardless of circumstance. I am drawn to the great words of C.S. Lewis, in his book *A Grief Observed*, where he writes:

Reality the iconoclast once more. Heaven will solve our problems, but not, I think by showing us subtle reconciliations between all our apparently contradictory notions. The notions will all be knocked from under our feet. We shall see that there never was any problem. (71)

This text is astounding because it reminds me that reality is truly nothing in comparison to the beauty of existence. I have come to a place in my life where I do realize that being alive is fascinating; the intricacies of who we are is something so much bigger than our minds could comprehend.

Just a few days ago, I was filled with expectation as I looked out the window of my taxi driving down Henry Hudson Parkway, thinking about everything I was going to write for this submission. I was humbled as I watched the horizon dim with the daylight quickly fading, contemplating how one of the toughest tasks is attempting to understand all that is and all that could be. Yet, regardless of this, I have learned that if we can put forth an effort towards relinquishing our pain in an understanding that God is something so much bigger than us, then maybe we have a shot at this thing we call life--to me, this is one of the greatest characteristics to leading any life worth living.

### Works Cited

Frankl, Viktor E. *Man's Search for Meaning*. Beacon Press, 2006

Lewis, C.S. *A Grief Observed*. 1st ed., Harper One, 1994. Print.