

# ON ANCIENT MYTHS, RELIGION AND MODERNITY *WITH FOCUS ON THE FILIPINO*<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

### A. Significance of the Study

Man is more than the sum of his parts. There is no single comprehensive definition of what he is. All definitions that exist are relative to a particular thought frame. Thus for Aristotle he is a political animal, “that animal which lives in a *polis* or city-state.”<sup>2</sup> For the taxonomist he is a *Homo sapiens sapiens*, modern man. For the Priestly writer, “They will be masters over all life – the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the livestock, wild animals, and small animals.”<sup>3</sup>

Today of the 6,396 million<sup>4</sup> human beings existing on Earth, the uncontested immediate concern, as it always has been, is the involuntary act of keeping the physical body functioning. In the biologist’s jargon, it is the “maintenance of internal metabolism.” Yet this most

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<sup>2</sup> P. Bock, *Modern Cultural Anthropology: An Introduction*, 1969, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 1:26b, New Living Translation.

<sup>4</sup> C. Haub: demographer, *2004 World Data Sheet*, data as of mid-2004.

scientifically precise characterization between living and inanimate objects is barely enough to answer the most profound of questions, "What is life?"

The study of ancient myths, religion and modernity starts off with the thought frame that a human being is "more than" an aggregate of energy-consuming macromolecules.<sup>5</sup> It is saying that a human being's existence has with it the dimensions presently labeled as biological, emotional, moral, spiritual, and social. This list may not be comprehensive, nor are they intended here to be in a particularly strict ordering. The fact is that *anthropology*, "the study of man," systematically takes into consideration all these labels, and more, in an attempt to have a comprehensive description of what a human being is.

Anthropology today, as a systematic study, uses among its bases that ever-controversial scientific theory of evolution. The qualifier *scientific* here is very important as it puts across the fact that this *theory* is not a *hypothesis*. That is, it has graduated from just being a *probable explanation*<sup>6</sup> into an explanation that no one today has presented substantial dispute against, as in a way as systematized as this field of study has become. Thus, *science* being "a way of looking at the world"<sup>7</sup> is just as legitimate as any other way, as far as looking at the *world* is concerned, where *world* includes the human beings. A defense for anthropology is not in warrant here, or for the theory of evolution either. The fact is that it is impossible to deal with the ideas of ancient myths, religion and modernity with relative objectivity unless the findings of anthropology are considered acceptable. To go about the question on what life is has been recognized to be within the domain of ancient myths and religion.

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<sup>5</sup> That is, the aggregates of molecules that makes up tissues and organs.

<sup>6</sup> One that generally needs 'intensive' testing yet.

<sup>7</sup> L. Nash, *The Nature of Natural Science*, 1963, 3.

“Modernity” within history is generally agreed to start with the Renaissance. It was then “the discovery of the world and of man.”<sup>8</sup> It was the start of the time of fast changes, the end of which, if there is one, is yet very much out of sight. Man today keeps on generating discoveries, and many value systems have evolved along with these discoveries. Not least is the undermining of long held traditional beliefs, with the simple reason that they are not rational.

As seen in the shocking amount of publications everyday in the entire world, it seems as if man keeps on finding new things to talk about, new things to explore. On what do all his explorations revolve around? On him, of course. He is both the subject and the object of these explorations. He creates the bomb and the concentration camp, and he is the victim of both. He generates actions, and the repercussion is that he has to react to the reactions. For it seems that man can only create what’s tangible, and to the likewise tangible reactions – to the grazed city and to the desecrated bodies – there are intangible reactions that can only be pinpointed as being generated from “within” him, in his psyche perhaps.

The poet Alexander Pope wrote, “Know then thyself, presume not God to scan; the proper study of mankind is man.” Without being too overly ambitious, I think it is worthwhile endeavor for humankind to try to understand himself. The Wisdom Literature writers of the Bible precisely have this objective in mind. Ecclesiastes and Job with their probing statements and questions are excellent examples. “While myths are neither reliable history nor science, they may have important things to say; their subject matter revolves around the deep and abiding concerns of human origins and destinies. In short, myth focuses on our position in the cosmos and

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<sup>8</sup> *Encyclopedia Americana*, vol. 23, *Renaissance*, 380. As the French historian Jules Michelet put it.

our understanding of who and what we are.”<sup>9</sup> The same can be said of religion.

With the looking at ancient myths, religion and modernity, it is hoped it can be made plain that man looks at the world “rationally “ as well as “nonrationally,” just as he is an integral whole of different components. Anthropologist Franz Boas said, “... even in our civilization, popular thought is primarily directed by emotion, not by reason; and that the reasoning injected into emotionally determined behavior depends upon a variety of conditions and is, therefore, in course of time, variable.”<sup>10</sup> Hence it is clear that man cannot especially boast of the superiority of rationality, as he himself does not subscribe to it first hand.

The contention between reason and intuition has invaded Christian theology, most notably during the Reformation, which was contemporaneous with the Renaissance. It is a point of interest for believers of the Christian faith to understand the extent of threat modernity poses for it. The foundation of this belief system belongs to the ancient era, and the literary expression of it, the Bible, has been said to be couched in mythical language. As such, its relevance to modern day society, as well as the belief system it espouses, is being extensively explored. A better understanding of the interplay between myth, religion, and modernity may enable us to have a clear reckoning as to where we are situated with regards to our perspectives. This, hopefully, will equip us more in our hopes to have continuous fruitful dialogue with other faiths and ideologies towards the *shalom*, or the kingdom of God, that we look forward to.

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<sup>9</sup> R. Schmidt, *Exploring Religion*, 1980, 128.

<sup>10</sup> F. Boas, *The Mind of Primitive Man*, revised ed, 1963, 210.

## B. Statement of the Problem

Again in our study of myths and religion, we come to an avenue of an overwhelming amount of generated literature. These span almost the entire history of literary man, most certainly including the oral precursors. Since the obvious purpose of language is communication, then it would not be difficult to find support for the idea that man's earliest conversations are for self-expression vis-à-vis for his survival. Since then his self-expressions have found other objects, but still basically centered on survival. Of these self-expressions in the ancient world, the most prominent belong to the domain of myths, which are incorporated into people's beliefs and practices.

Many beliefs and practices around the world today are labeled as superstitious, which is "resulting from ignorance, fear of the unknown, trust in magic or chance, or a false conception of causation."<sup>11</sup> This is a mouthful of description pointing to bodies of belief formations that have not passed through the rigors of scientific testing. Such are myths and religion. Having in mind therefore this shift of man's existence from the pre-scientific to the scientific now, it is interesting to put forth whether "modern man" today lives within value systems that have bearing with those held by the not yet "modern." Has the ardor of modernity done away with myths? What place does religion have in a technological society? Are these unscientific perspectives still with us and are as strong in influence as ever? To what extent do the concepts of myth and modernity threaten the Biblical form of expression?

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<sup>11</sup> Merriam Webster, Inc., *Webster's Ninth Collegiate Dictionary: Private Library Edition*, 1986.

## C. Objectives

Ancient myths, religion and modernity spoken within the context of sociology and anthropology will primarily disable the inclusion of the Christian tenets within the preliminary discussions. This inclusion will be done on the Reflection part at the end, as I feel appropriate.

This paper will prominently feature the Filipino. He lives in the twenty-first century of the Common Era and has undergone about four hundred years of relatively abrupt cultural movements. No better justification can be given in choosing this special point of focus other than as one of them. This should help in the understanding of my society better, be a small contribution to my countrymen's concerted efforts at trying to understand our non-monotonous national psyche, and from thus be active participants in the taking care of humanity and of the world. God has appointed us as stewards of His creation.

The Filipino makes a fascinating subject in that he is a manifestation of the meeting of the so-called East and West, and of the so-called primitive and modern. This paper will try to present characteristics of the Filipino that qualify him as mentioned. In so doing, his belief system will be looked at, hence, the focus will be made on his religion and mythology. Thus, in attempting to describe modern man, especially the modern Filipino, from a particular perspective, it is hoped here that a picture will be presented on where he gets his beliefs from and the strength of the influence these beliefs have on him as he moves on toward the future.

In presenting the Filipino in this light, attention will be drawn on the fact that there is no reason at all to consider his heritage inferior to any other people, whether from the anthropological sense or from Christianity's perception.

## **D. Scope and Limitation of the Study**

Any of these three areas: ancient myths, religion, and modernity, is by itself a broad subject. The quantity of materials on each of these is gargantuan. This paper is more of a synthesis of readings than a study. It tries to put together into one picture the connectedness between the three named areas. The general descriptions therefore are neither exhaustive nor in-depth. The description of the Filipino against these backgrounds is taken from monographs authored mostly by prominent Filipino sociologists. Therefore, this is a humble attempt to bridge a gap between the infrequently accessed works and the theology student.

At the last part, the Reflection, is where features of the natural world are sometimes cited as “parallel expressions” of some ideas couched in Biblical language.

## **Discussion**

### **A. Ancient Myths**

To someone who has not gone into the nuances of the term *myth* what comes to mind at the mention of it is the mythology of the Greeks. Thus, superficially, it is about gods and goddesses and their affairs, and the origins of certain things or phenomena in nature. The word *myth* is also used as a jargon in the context of *something popularly believed* but has in fact been found out not to be true, either partly or entirely. For instance, “boys are smarter than girls in mathematics.” There are such myths in our societies that denouncing them seems to be one of the triumphs of science.

Although science<sup>12</sup> and myths cannot come together, it does not necessarily imply that myths connote falsity. On the contrary, myths reflect “the experience of the sacred and hence implies the notion of *being*, of *meaning*, and of *truth*.”<sup>13</sup> Mercado said, “It is the truth of experience, of the real, of life, of the holy, of the sacred.”<sup>14</sup> Thus although myths seem to sound just like stories, they in fact tell of sacred beliefs.

*Myth* is from the Greek word *mythos*, meaning, “that which is spoken.” Myths are “stories told as symbols of fundamental truths within societies having a strong oral tradition.”<sup>15</sup> Roger Schmidt says of myth as a “tale or story...dealing with cosmic and exemplary time”; the subject matter of which is “primeval origins, ancestral models, and paradigmatic lives, or expectations about the future and the end of time.”<sup>16</sup>

As one opens for the first time an encyclopedia on myths of the world, one would surely be amazed of the richness in diversity and the complexity of the plots. What should not come as surprising is the presence of common human aspirations, emotions, and desires, though in different contexts, and usually in fantastic settings. It has been said, “Myths are attempts to give significance to any situation that man has considered important.”<sup>17</sup> Students of mythology have been able to present generalized classifications of myths because, amazingly, common themes occur among the diverse cultures of the world despite their vast geographical

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<sup>12</sup> Science as that way of investigating knowledge in procedures that are reproducible, and that which involves observation of physical properties.

<sup>13</sup> M. Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas: From the Stone Age to the Eleusinian Mysteries*, Volume 1, 1978, Preface.

<sup>14</sup> F. R. Demetrio, *Myths and Symbols: Philippines*, revised ed, 1990, 4.

<sup>15</sup> *Encyclopedia Americana*, *Mythology*, vol. 19, 699.

<sup>16</sup> R. Schmidt, 1980, 126.

<sup>17</sup> *Encyclopedia Americana*, *Mythology*, vol. 19, 700.



distances and differences in histories. One instance is the world-flood theme that can be found in the mythologies of Ireland, Greece, Egypt, Persia, India, Indo-China, Korea, Siberia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Melanesia, Polynesia, Australia, North American Indians, South American Indians, Latin America, and Africa.<sup>18</sup>

Classifications of Myth<sup>19</sup>:

1. Cosmological myths, which is concerned with the creation of the cosmos;
2. Life-crisis myths, which is concerned with crucial events in the human life such as birth, puberty, marriage, and death;
3. Hunting and agricultural myths, which is concerned with animals, the hunt, planting and harvesting;
4. and myths about extraordinary individuals.

Myths have also been thought of in terms of these “theories”<sup>20</sup>:

1. Rational myth theory, which states that myths were created to explain natural events and forces happening in nature;
2. Functional myth theory, which says that there are those that were created as a type of social control, to teach morality and social behavior;
3. Structural myth theory, which says that myths were patterned after human mind and human nature;

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<sup>18</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Ancient Myths and Culture*, 2003, 135-6.

<sup>19</sup> *Encyclopedia Americana, Mythology*, vol. 19, 700.

<sup>20</sup> Digital Papers. November 2004.

[http://www.digitaltermpapers.com/view.php?url=/Mythology/4\\_myth\\_theories.shtml](http://www.digitaltermpapers.com/view.php?url=/Mythology/4_myth_theories.shtml)

4. Psychological myth theory, which says that myths are based on human emotion.

On the other hand, it can be said that anthropologists and sociologists do handle beliefs in the sacred with the aid of science in the sense of systematized investigation. The names Emile Durkheim, Claude-Lévi Strauss and Mircea Eliade along with many others appear again and again on such discourses. They have extensively organized concepts on the field so that their works have become indispensable references for those interested in these topics. Durkheim was one of the earliest proponents of sociology as a science. It was him who put together a series of “model” steps for use to systematically study a particular sociological issue. These are the very same steps still used today in sociological research: defining the problem, reviewing literature, forming a hypothesis, choosing a research design, collecting data, analyzing data, and drawing conclusion.<sup>21</sup> For Durkheim, the word *sacred* in a particular community is, that which is set apart from everyday experience and inspires awe and reverence.<sup>22</sup> What is sacred to a person may not be to another. It may be the forest, or the deities, the spirits, the supernatural forces, or even moral principles. Usually there are rituals that may be done to exert influence over several of these objects, since the underlying belief was that “we are fashioned by external forces beyond our control.”<sup>23</sup> Eliade and Levi-Strauss may represent the spectrum of interpretations of what myths signify. Levi-Strauss treated myths from the standpoint of “what is local and particular to a given society,” whereas with Eliade, “to general human

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<sup>21</sup> D. Light et al, *Sociology*, fifth ed., 1989, 29.

<sup>22</sup> D. Light, 1989, 517. So that an object that is not *sacred* is *profane*.

<sup>23</sup> D. Light, 1989, 518.

religious interests and as far as possible divorce it from the local and particular.”<sup>24</sup>

To speak of myths is to speak of something ancient. Cornelius Van Peursen suggested three stages in the development of human thought, reflecting three ways of understanding reality.<sup>25</sup> The first stage of which is “The period of myth, where man and reality, subject and object, were linked together. This was not yet part of time, not yet part of history.” Giambattista Vico spoke of the period of *the age of the gods* at the beginnings of civilization. He said this when *families’ lives centered around religion, marriage, and the burial of the dead.*<sup>26</sup> But how ancient is ancient? And when were the beginnings of civilization?

Books tell us of the Paleolithic era as the earliest in human memory. The beginnings of which is not recorded of course, but it is supposed to have ended sometime 9,000 B.C. That’s about 11,000 years ago. The Paleanthropean<sup>27</sup> was a hunter (man) and a food gatherer (woman). There are burial sites thought to be as old as 70,000 years. Analysts have concluded that this practice point to the belief in the afterlife. Cave paintings of animals and the hunt in the Eurasian continent are estimated to be as old as 52,000 years. Their motifs and inaccessibility indicate an ideological system that Leroi-Gourhan has called “the religion of the caves.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Myth, vol. 4, 437.

<sup>25</sup> R. Tano, *Theology in the Philippine Setting: A Case in the Contextualization of Theology*, 1981, 117.

<sup>26</sup> *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Myth, vol. 4, 435. The other ages being the “age of heroes” with the rise of the aristocratic states, and the “age of men” of the democratic republics. This is according to G. Vico’s theory of history.

<sup>27</sup> M. Eliade, 1978, Preface.

<sup>28</sup> M. Eliade, 1978, 17. Rodney Stark writes also: “However there can be no doubt that our Neanderthal ancestors had religion at least 100,000 years ago, because evidence of their faith has been unearthed. The Neanderthal buried their dead with great care and provided them with gifts and food for use in the next world. And deep

The hunters and gatherers had to work around the conditions of their environment. They would have attributed human characteristics to objects around them, not having a systematized knowledge yet of the differences between themselves and the mountains, the rocks, plants, animals, the weather, seasons, etcetera. Their belief was *animistic*.<sup>29</sup> They may not have the concept of the *spirit* but they believed all the same that whatever humans have that animates them, all other things around them must have this also. Perhaps they understood that everything is basically interrelated.

Georges Dumézil said that the function of myths is “to express dramatically the ideology under which a society lives; not only to hold out to its conscience the values it recognizes and the ideals it pursues from generation to generation, but above all to express its very being and structure, the elements, the connections, the balances, the tensions that constitute it; to justify the rules and traditional practices without which everything within a society would disintegrate.”<sup>30</sup> Unlike fairy tales and legends, myths are understood to be true stories within their own societies. It is only from the point of view of outsiders, and of the advent of rationalism, that they have become to connote as stories that are not true. The concerns of myth as enumerated above are also concerns of religion, and it has been established that “the

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in their caves, the Neanderthal built small altars out of bear bones. These relics make it clear that the Neanderthal believed in life after death and conducted ceremonies to seek the aid of supernatural beings.” R. Stark, *Sociology*, 1989, 404.

<sup>29</sup> Schmidt defines animism as “a sense that the world is filled with personal spirits. Animals, plants, and other natural phenomena, such as, sun, moon, rivers, mountains, and fire, are spirit beings endowed with qualities of the human spirit – thinking, intending, feeling, hearing.” 357.

<sup>30</sup> G. Dumézil, *Destiny of the Warrior*, translated by A. Hildebeitel, 1969, 3.

line between them is often very thin.”<sup>31</sup> Religions are not tales or stories; religion uses stories. Myths are found within almost any religion.<sup>32</sup>

The question on how myths have come about has generated many answers, which are debatable. Freud suggested that myths are “distorted vestiges of the wishful fantasies of whole nations, the secular dreams of youthful humanity.” Euripides before him was on similar lines of thinking. Jung suggested the concept of the “collective unconsciousness,” that within man is a “second psychic system of collective, universal and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals. This collective unconsciousness does not develop individually but is inherited. It consists of pre-existent forms, the archetypes, which can only become consciousness secondarily, and which give definite form to certain psychic contents.”<sup>33</sup>

However myths have risen, whether from a single locality and spread, or independently among separate peoples, the fact remains that it is in the sense of the universality of these myths that bring home to us the unity of man. This idea is parallel to the scientific fact that the biological composition of human beings around the world is one.

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<sup>31</sup> A. Mercatante, *The Facts on File Encyclopedia of World Mythology and Legend*, 1988, Author's Preface.

<sup>32</sup> Schmidt fits myths within that dimension of religious expression he called the conceptual category; the other categories being ritualistic, personal, and social. Preface xii.

<sup>33</sup> A. Mercatante, 1988, Introduction.

## B. The Filipino Is A Cosmopolitan

The Filipino is Negroid, Mongoloid, and Caucasoid<sup>34</sup>, and everything else in between. That is, he<sup>35</sup> is predominantly Malay with strains of Chinese, Indian, and Spanish blood, and for some, of the Negrito, the American, the Japanese, the Egyptian, and any of the European blood, etcetera. While it is difficult to describe the typical Filipino's physical features, if indeed there is one, many books present lists of character traits that are supposedly inherent and collectively unique to him. A list will most likely appear as follows.

The Filipino:

1. has the propensity for gambling;
2. is inveterately extravagant;
3. is fatalistic in his outlook in life;
4. tends to lack discipline and perseverance;
5. is proverbially hospitable;
6. has close family ties;
7. has a high sense of gratitude to those who have shown him favors;
8. is cooperative;
9. is among the bravest peoples on earth;
10. is passionately romantic and artistic;
11. is highly intelligent;
12. is adaptable, enduring, and resilient;
13. has a deep spiritual yearning and gift of faith.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *Encyclopedia Americana Centennial Edition*. vol. 23, 121. It must be noted, however, that *human "racial" classifications contain little genetic information, and from a biological standpoint, must be done away with*. The 'racial classifications' used here is for the purpose of a description based on external physical appearance, and no discrimination of whatever sort is implied.

<sup>35</sup> The use of *he* throughout is inclusive of everyone in the context, and therefore is not finicky about labels. There is only one Filipino equivalent to the third person *he* or *she*; it is *siya*, which is exactly how I think of the rendition *he*.

<sup>36</sup> S. M. Zaide, *The Philippines: A Unique Nation* With Gregorio F. Zaide's *History of the Republic of the Philippines*, second ed, 1999, 22-4.

Sweeping as the list sounds, nevertheless it is one that has been heard over and over again inside elementary and high school classrooms so much so that I for one, as a product of these classrooms, have only belatedly stopped on my tracks and thought of this question, "What is a Filipino?"

In elementary and high school classes the most popular reckoning of the earliest entry of the Filipino aborigines to this 7,107-island archipelago is about 30,000 years ago<sup>37</sup>, when ancestors of the modern-day Negritos were supposed to have traversed island bridges that were exposed during the last Ice Age<sup>38</sup>, when much of the oceans' waters were frozen near the polar regions. Then the Malays were supposed to have come next on rafts or canoes, called *barangays* or *balanghais*; then the Chinese and the Arabs in their merchant ships; and then the colonizers – Spanish, Americans, Japanese. Now it is not even needed for people to come to us for their influences to be felt. They are only a television button or a convenience store away.

Renato Constantino wrote an amusing article *The Filipinos in the Philippines* in the Manila Chronicle on October 4, 1959, hard-hitting the reality of who the Filipino is. He is "Brown and White; Blacks, Reds and Yellows; the largest minority group in the Philippines. The present native inhabitants are the survivors of that race which suffered the brutalization of the Spaniards, the

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<sup>37</sup> E. P. Patanñe, *The Philippines in the World of Southeast Asia: A Cultural History*, 1972, 81. Patanñe cites Beyer in stating this date. Even before the coming of these people there is archeological evidence that human beings were already found in parts of the archipelago. Speaking of the archeological find in the Cagayan Valley in 1971, "The tools of paleolithic workmanship and the fossilized bones were dated 150,000 years ago, a date which now definitely establishes the presence of early man in the Philippines."

<sup>38</sup> E. P. Patanñe, 1972, 98. This account has been challenged, though.

“extermination campaign” of the American troops during the Filipino-American War, and the mass executions of the Japanese.”<sup>39</sup> The minority bit is even more true now, almost half a decade later, as more and more South Koreans and other nationalities flock to our schools and perform in our business sectors, as well as enriching our religious arena with their missionary endeavors.

On the other hand, the Filipino is also among the minorities outside the Philippines. In 1998 there were 755,684 Filipino overseas contract workers found in more than 100 countries, mostly working in the Middle East, followed closely by others employed in neighboring Asian nations, followed distantly by the European Union and then the United States.<sup>40</sup> Today there are already 8 million of them, and the government says 1 million more will be heading in that direction this year. It was quoted that the Philippines is “the largest source of migrant labor in the world.”<sup>41</sup> Many of these overseas contract workers come from rural areas. It is inevitable that their families back home will be affected also by the foreign influences they are exposed to. The Filipino therefore, whether in the fast paced cities or in the rural areas, lives in a constantly evolving way of life that will only lead him, just as it had done in the past, to a lifestyle consequently affected by whatever current major factor toward his survival. As for today it has to be monetary provisions, for the family’s food, for the children’s education, for eventual retirement’s savings.

He is everywhere. He is a cosmopolitan. In his centers of activities, in his cities, he lives in a society that has done its best to cater to the caprices of two major

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<sup>39</sup> R. Constantino, *Neocolonial Identity And Counter-Consciousness: Essays on Cultural Decolonization*, edited with an introduction by István Mészáros, 1978, 95-6.

<sup>40</sup> P. Rodell, *Culture and Customs of the Philippines*, Hanchao Lu: Series Editor, 2002, 208.

<sup>41</sup> *Newsweek*, Vol. CXLIV, No. 14, October 4, 2004, G. Wehrfritz and M. Vitug, article: *Workers For the World*.



powers of the day: materialism and consumerism. His roadside billboards advertise merchandize of international renown. It is even said that he prefers these foreign things to those of his industry. Yet the Filipino has retained his brand of distinction so much so that “the visitor who stays for more than a brief visit soon discovers that even Western foods do not taste quite like they do back home, and that Filipinos really prefer their own foods to imported dishes.<sup>42</sup> Soon, this comfortable Westernized Asian country becomes remarkably odd and difficult to understand in fundamental ways. Just as I have belatedly realized myself, the complexity of being a Filipino will elude a boxed simplification for a long time to come.

### **C. The Filipino Is Religious**

Filipino as a cosmopolitan reflects the movements of the innovative cities of the world. Cable television, mobile cellular phones and main-street Internet stations are sine qua nons of many of his major cities. He has commercial districts patterned after those found in the First World. Shoes, fabric and fashion are highly regarded exports, just as his cinema has decades ago reached a standard comparable to the best in the world’s film industry.<sup>43</sup> He is mentor to many of his Asian neighbors in the speaking of the English language. Yet this upbeat veneer is only a show to present to the world that the Filipino does not quail from the strange and the new. This propensity of the Filipino to adapt himself to the strange and the new must have been with him for a long time now. This is the

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<sup>42</sup> P. Rodell, 2002, 1-2.

<sup>43</sup> Lino Brocka was praised at the Cannes Film Festival in 1976. His films were prominently featured in a 1998 film festival at the Lincoln Center in New York. Also in 1998 Marilou Diaz-Abaya’s *Sa Pusod ng Dagat* was shown at the Berlin Film Festival before going on an international tour.

natural consequence of having to live on the crossroads – as where the Philippines is geographically, among island groups at the edges of a continent and of a vast ocean – where people of differing ways of life will have to pass by at one time or another. Each agent of the strange and the new must have had transforming effects on the “natives,” depending on either the degree of non-hostility shown or the length of time the strangeness was synonymous with power.

Adaptability is, indeed, a rule of life. The human body has an internal maintenance system, which in the process called *homeostasis*, ensures the normality of its organs’ functions all throughout outside conditional changes. For the Filipino amidst the strange and the new, it is his religiosity that ensures his propensity to adapt.

The Filipino’s religiosity is a foregone conclusion.<sup>44</sup> If it is not enough to point out that almost everyone in the Philippines “has” a religion, that is, that atheism has never become a trend, then it must be pointed out that the Filipino is an Asian, and that for the world to be an Asian is to be with a strong sense of the spiritual. All the major religions of the world – Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism – came from Asia. For the Filipino, it is his religiosity that is his homeostasis. Yet for him religion is not just a tool to be used for the benefit of his psyche, but is also the arena on which he moves about in his daily dealings.

Filipinos can either be a Roman Catholic, a Protestant, an Iglesia Ni Cristo, an Aglipayan, a Muslim, a Buddhist, or a believer of other religious classification, which were introduced recently. Filipino are religious, but not strict conformist to their brand of religion. What is

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<sup>44</sup> “Three international surveys have shown that the Filipinos are among the most religious people on earth.” *Roots of Filipino Spirituality*. T. B. Obusan, editor, 1998, 241. Furthermore, there has been no strong movement toward the proving of the existence of God, much as the West has been doing for centuries now. God’s existence is an unquestioned fact for the Filipino.

inherent among Filipinos is their strong sense of the numinous.<sup>45</sup> All authors I have come across with on this topic agree on this observation. Author Chester L. Hunt sums it up and very neatly described this religiosity. He wrote, “Religion holds a central place in the life of most Filipinos, including Catholics, Muslims, Buddhists, Protestants, and animists. It is central not as an abstract belief system, but rather as a host of experiences, rituals, ceremonies, and adjurations that provide continuity in life, cohesion in the community, and moral purpose for existence.”<sup>46</sup>

For the Filipino, religion is inseparable from his daily acts of existence. Emmanuel Lantin concluded that, “Participation in these colorful community celebrations afforded the common folk with a religious “feeling for the supernatural” and a sense of communal belonging, thereby satisfying the most fundamental need of man for a dialogical encounter.”<sup>47</sup> This is also in agreement with Leonardo N. Mercado when he said, “For the Filipino, the sacred and the profane are intertwined ... Both the profane and the sacred are so blended that some anthropologists do not know where to draw the line between the social and the religious.”<sup>48</sup>

Man’s religion cannot be discussed in terms of the origin of its being since it is among the assumptions of being human. Mircea Eliade says, “... the “sacred” is an element in the structure of consciousness and not a stage in the history of consciousness. On the most archaic levels of culture, *living, considered as being human*, is in itself a *religious act*, for food-getting, sexual life, and work have a sacramental value. In other words,

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<sup>45</sup> The numinous is the “nonrational or nonordinary quality of the sacred.” Schmidt, 361.

<sup>46</sup> R. E. Dolan: editor, *Philippines: A Country Study* (Area Handbook Series). 4<sup>th</sup> ed, 1993, 98.

<sup>47</sup> J. A. Belita: editor, and *GOD said: HALA!: Studies in Popular Religiosity in the Philippines*, 1991, 184.

<sup>48</sup> L. N. Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Theology*, 1975, 25.

to be – or, rather, to become – a *man* signifies “religion”.<sup>49</sup> To be human means to have religion, or to be religious.

Six of the nine characteristic features of religion enumerated in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* touch directly on the sacred: beliefs in, and rituals focused on, the supernatural; a contrast between the sacred and the profane; a gods-sanctioned morality; feelings of awe towards all these; and some form of communication. Of the three left, two touch on the individual’s concerns: of where the individual fits in all these, and on acting correspondingly. The ninth speaks of the function of religion in binding together persons into one social group.<sup>50</sup> Though it has been said that,

“Religion is the not the only way to give meaning to life, but it does represent an ambitious attempt to give the universe significance. In this respect, the fundamental religious posture, whether it embraces or flees from the physical world, is at its core affirmative. Religion affirms that the cosmos has meaning; human life is ultimately significant.”<sup>51</sup>

Religion, then, can be defined as

“any person’s reliance upon a pivotal value in which that person finds essential wholeness as an individual and as a person-in-community. For that person all other values are subordinate to this central value, which is authentic to the individual and his community though it may not be meaningful to others.”<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> M. Eliade, 1978, Preface.

<sup>50</sup> *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Religion, vol. 7, 141.

<sup>51</sup> Schmidt, 9-10.

<sup>52</sup> R. C. Monk et al, *Exploring Religious Meaning*, third ed, 1987, 4–12.

## D. The Filipino Lives In His Myths

The discussion has come this far with the bearing that of the 83.7 million<sup>53</sup> Filipinos today, more than 80% are Roman Catholics. More than two decades ago, the anthropologist F. Landa Jocano did research and wrote a book on religion and religious change in the Philippines. On his Preface appeared the thesis of the monograph:

The indigenous religion appears to maintain its fundamental structures and characteristics since the Spanish contact while the introduced religion (Christianity) has been tremendously modified to suit local ways of thinking, believing and doing things. Many cultural communities still practice similar religious rituals and ceremonies as recorded four centuries ago. The traditional magico-religious rituals and beliefs have remained intact and have continued to form part of ritual lifeways. In contrast, Christian doctrines, outside the portals of churches and cathedrals, have been dramatically indigenized such that what evolved is the popular version of Christian belief system which we call folk Christianity.<sup>54</sup>

As vital to Jocano's discussions he enumerated and described about a hundred gods, goddesses, and beliefs of the pre-colonial Philippines all throughout the Luzon, the Visayas, and the Mindanao regions. Predominant among these beliefs were the beliefs in the afterlife, the domain of which was "divided into layers" that were inhabited by powerful spirits, some good, some evil, many of which were involved in human affairs. The contact with Roman Catholicism caused the discredit and loss from memory of these spirits from the daily affairs.

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<sup>53</sup> C. Haub, data as of mid-2004.

<sup>54</sup> F. L. Jocano, *Folk Christianity: A Preliminary Study of Conversion and Patterning of Christian Experience in the Philippines* (Monograph Series No. 1), 1981, iii.

Of whichever was left in the memory, the *engkanto* is the generic name applied to their kind. Jocano mentioned *Bathala* or *Abba* as the Tagalog's chief deity, creator of all things, living in the *kaluwalhatian*, or sky. The gods and goddesses were mostly nature deities, guardians or bestowers of specific phenomena and objects of the environment – of crops, winds, hunters, pregnant women, war, language, families, hillsides, mountains, feasts, households, sickness, lovers, lost things, rain, etcetera. Underlying the different powers attributed to these spirits was the Filipino's belief that, "Man enjoyed good luck for as long as he had the favors of the gods; he suffered from misfortunes if such favors were removed."<sup>55</sup> It was in this context of good luck and misfortune, depending on the spirits, that Roman Catholicism entered the Philippines.

Folk Protestantism is also a reality. Evangelical Rodney L. Henry writes, "So at the level of ultimate concerns, folk Catholicism and folk Protestantism share the same similarities and differences which exist between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. At the animistic level, folk Catholicism and folk Protestantism differ in their external practices but share virtually the same spirit worldview."<sup>56</sup>

It is curious to note that 1521 and 1565, the years Spaniards first came and returned to the Philippines, was just about the beginning of the European Renaissance. The expeditionists Magellan and Legaspi had just come from what the humanists called the Dark Ages, the Medieval. It was a Medieval Christianity that first came to the Philippines, which was among the ways of thinking that have not yet undergone "enlightenment," implying that it was a belief system that has not put into the forefront "the dignity of man." It was this that a fear-ridden

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<sup>55</sup> F. L. Jocano, 1981, 16.

<sup>56</sup> R. L. Henry, *Filipino Spirit World: A Challenge to the Church*, 1986, 16.

and obedience-oriented faith came to a people already deep in a culture of reward and retribution.

The student of theology will find it easy to appreciate what a crucial event this introduction of a new belief system was. Thought patterns of the foreign missionaries and of the mission field were not the same. The differing languages did not allow the clearest communication, most especially of the abstract ideas. Gray areas remained, since already for the Filipino, the sense of the spiritual was very much part of his life. Thus "Christianity and Islam have been superimposed on ancient traditions and acculturated."<sup>57</sup>

Jaime A. Belita noted that the word *hala* is derived from the word *Allah*. It is not incongruous therefore that *hala!* is the Filipino's popular expletive for almost anything at all that has gone awry, as if something has been grossly violated. It is spoken to truant children, of burnt rice, of broken china, of unceasing torrents of rain, to misbehaving adults. *Hala!* is actually "a word of warning about the dire consequences he will encounter for having alienated the spirits, believed to be the sources of well-being."<sup>58</sup>

The reason why the Filipino's myths were played down against the popular religious belief systems is very easy. Her Spanish and American colonizers came with the assumption, and the intent to make clear to her, that whatever she had was inferior. I think this is also the reason why one can hardly find a consistent classification of the Filipino myths in my university library. Even their

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<sup>57</sup> P. Rodell, 2002, 98. Again on page 106, "Muslim in the Philippines has absorbed indigenous elements, much as has Catholicism. [They] make offerings to spirits (diwatas), malevolent or benign, believing that such spirits can and will have an effect on one's health, family, and crops. They also include pre-Islamic customs in ceremonies making rites of passage – birth, marriage, and death ... they share the essentials of Islam, but specific properties vary from one group to another."

<sup>58</sup> J. A. Belita, 1991, Introduction.

worth as literary genre has been devaluated and neglected. If there exists such a classification among experts then it certainly is not yet in wide circulation. Usually what is there is a collection of folktales and legends, where the myths are thrown in among them as though they're of the same level of consideration.<sup>59</sup>

In one of his more comprehensive books on myths, F. Demetrio,<sup>60</sup> after the preliminaries, starts off with an account of the pre-colonial Filipino's beliefs involving the sky. In his wonder of its inaccessibility, despite appearing near as touching the earth in the horizon, the Filipino articulated accounts of this perception of the connectedness of earth and sky.<sup>61</sup> These accounts speak of the Filipino's origin and destination ("first people", "to pick up the rest of the men") and of his utmost concerns ("life and death"). F. Demetrio ends this chapter with a question that implies that the Filipino's strong belief in the Christian God or in the Muslim Allah, who is of "heaven," is strongly connected to the ancient belief of the necessity of the sky to his existence.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Folktales were obviously invented and are told for entertainment; legends are not necessarily believed in as true but are supposed to happen in historical times. A. Mercatante, 1988, Author's Preface.

<sup>60</sup> In F. R. Demetrio, 1990.

<sup>61</sup> F. R. Demetrio, 1990, 34. "This connection was somehow severed long ago either through the earth people's harsh words at the sky, or because the strings which lowered the first people to the earth from the sky snapped soon after they set foot on the earth and they were deprived of a means of climbing up again. Or when the first shaman who went unbidden to the heavens to discover the secrets of life and death was punished for his arrogance. His powers were curtailed so that he could now no longer bodily go up there except in spirit, that is, through ecstasy. Or that the heavenly boat which brought the earthlings to the heavens has never returned to pick up the rest of the men. Even the motif of the swan maiden in a veiled manner seems to connote the same hope or nostalgia of earthlings for heaven. If she could go up there, why cannot the children that she had brought forth by a human father?"

<sup>62</sup> F. R. Demetrio, 1990, 26, endnote 24. Though of course not all creation myths involve the sky. "The act of creation can be an act of



His next chapter puts forth not less than twenty creation myths of various localities. He identifies recognized motifs among them such that it can be seen that elements of Filipino mythology, of the creation myths at least, that is, are not different from those found in other cultures'. Elsewhere, Leonardo Mercado tabulated nine regional creation myths<sup>63</sup> with the corresponding divinities involved, the situation on earth prior to the creation act, and the particular creation acts themselves. It can be seen from the tabulation that these divinities generally created from something, so that for the Filipinos, it appears that it was not a *creatio ex nihilo* event. Demetrio writes that according to Eliade, myths such as these were of those "who were yet on the level of food-gatherers,"<sup>64</sup> that is, of the Paleanthropesans.

The study on myths today is a far cry from the treatment of them as just stories for entertainment. The misconception that mythology is a theology caused it to become a defeated rival of Christianity, and so its decline in importance.<sup>65</sup> But starting from Vico's time, the seventeenth century, serious attempts at considering myths as "clue to the primitive history of thought"

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thought (Winnebago and Omaha Indians), or the act of uttering a word (Hebrew and Maori) or the churning of the primeval ocean (Vedic India and Japanese), or the breaking of the shell of the primordial egg (Vedic Indian, Greek, Hawaiian); or it can be the act of diving for a piece of dirt or mud from the bottom of the primordial waters (Vedic India, Maidu of South Central California; Iroquoi and Boholano in the Philippines); or the fetching of soil from a far away country (Bagobo, Tausug in the Philippines), or the retching of the creator god (Boshongo); or the dismembering of the body of the primordial being or giant or god (Sumerian or Babylonian, Indian, Chinese), or the gradual ordering of the cosmos from an original chaos as in Hesiod's *Theogony*. The various myths of creation may embody one or more of these motifs or symbols. Cf. Eliade, *From Primitive to Zen; a Thematic Sourcebook of the History of Religions* (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1967)."

<sup>63</sup> L. N. Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy*, 1974, 168-70.

<sup>64</sup> F. R. Demetrio, 1990, 37.

<sup>65</sup> *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Myth, vol. 4, 434.

started.<sup>66</sup> For Levi-Strauss, “myth is a form in which society both understands and misunderstands its own structure.” For Mircea Eliade, “shamanism<sup>67</sup> is part of the central religious tradition of mankind, stretching from primitive African myths to Christian theology, and that it is therefore not, as it first appears to be, an irrational phenomenon.”<sup>68</sup> Jaime Belita, along with several others, generally agrees with them. He says of myths, “They, in fact, are the clues to the mythic and the rational in the Filipino self.”<sup>69</sup>

Belita took hold of the myths of *Malakas* and *Maganda*<sup>70</sup> and of *Juan Tamad*<sup>71</sup> as working representatives of the many Filipino myths. He pointed out features in these two myths that are supposed to be reflections of what the Filipino self is. The Filipino self is characterized by “...its unity and rhythm with nature or cosmos, its struggle to remain nonsalient with its peers, its capacity to see “more” beyond space and time, its forward thrust to a Greater or extended self.”<sup>72</sup>; where at

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<sup>66</sup> *Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Myth*, vol. 4, 434-5.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. F. R. Demetrio, 1990, 12. Shamanism is the institution in which the person called the *shaman* has access to the Center, where the “gods are operative and their divine power is pervasive.” Demetrio cites shamanism and the motif of the center, which is usually connected with origin myths, as the two most evident phenomena whereby we could examine myths today.

<sup>68</sup> *Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Myth*, vol. 4, 437.

<sup>69</sup> J. A. Belita, *The Way of Greater Self: Constructing a Theology Around a Filipino Mythos*, 1991, 38.

<sup>70</sup> *Malakas* (meaning, strong) and *Maganda* (meaning, beautiful) were the first man and woman who simultaneously came out of a bamboo stem split by a bird. This is among the most popular creation myths of the Tagalogs. Various interpretations have been applied to this myth, one that is notable takes note of the simultaneous emergence of “power and of grace,” and drawing implications from this.

<sup>71</sup> *Juan Tamad* (*tamad* means *lazy*) is a very popular character. He is usually pictured lying down beneath a guava tree with one of its ripe fruits directly above his opened mouth. He supposedly prefers waiting for it to fall to him rather than pick it himself.

<sup>72</sup> J. A. Belita, *The Way of...* 1991, 50.

the end of the book he concludes, "... the envisioned Greater Self, the penultimate concern of the Filipino people<sup>73</sup> ... is the pivot or the basis for an attempt to do systematic theology in the context of two existential structures in the Filipino psyche: gratuity (*bahala-na*) and reciprocity (*utang-na-loob*).<sup>74</sup> This is how he relates these two structures:

"Its *Bahala-na* attitude which is first of all an experience of life's gratuity and the *utang-na-loob* spirit, an inward reciprocity for the gratuitous. But *utang-na-loob* (reciprocity) has to be unceasing and endless, otherwise it would lack a structure of existence necessary for its being in continuous relatedness; that is why the source of gratuitous existence should never exhaust its capacity for gratuitousness. The dynamism that results from the endless spiral becomes the moving force in a world of interdependence, intersubjectivity and interrelatedness that presuppose only a Greater Self. Man is always left in a quandary, though: if there is the given and the gratuitous, which, far from being his creation, are overwhelming, who or which is the source? The believers believe that it is God."<sup>75</sup>

Looking at the Filipino from a non-mythic angle, L. Mercado arrives at a similar synthesis. The Filipino's worldview, he said, is holistic or non-compartmentalized. As with the Hebrews where man-soul-heart-flesh "imply each other", the *buot* (Ilonggo) or the *loob* (Tagalog) is translated as either intellect, mind, reason, judgment, decision, desire, will, human-heartedness or man from

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<sup>73</sup> Insert here: "... it is a dynamic equivalent of the envisioned kingdom of God ..."

<sup>74</sup> J. A. Belita, *The Way of ...*, 1991, 127.

<sup>75</sup> J. A. Belita, *The Way of ...*, 1991, 50.

the ethical angle.<sup>76</sup> No single English word is equivalent to them. As a man the Filipino does not “separate” his body from his soul, unlike the Greeks, they are individualistic to the extent of jeopardizing their being members of the group. The Filipino “wants all his faculties to be in harmony ... Non-dualism between the individual and others urges the individual to be harmonious in his relations with his *sakop*<sup>77</sup>... harmony-with-nature orientation ... non-dichotomy between the profane and the sacred.”<sup>78</sup>

## E. Modernity

It was the humanists who were responsible for the label “modern” as pertaining to that part of history where the world is in now. They assigned history into three general divisions: the ancient, the dark ages or medieval that was between Rome’s fall and their time, and the modern that starts with them.<sup>79</sup>

Humanism was the mark of the Renaissance. Renaissance, the “rebirth,” happened about the years 1350 to 1600. It was part of the European history that saw concurrent changes in almost all areas of life. The humanists rediscovered the classical Greek writers and thinkers, who believed it was the individual’s duty to pursue excellence in life.<sup>80</sup> So, they rejected the medieval outlook that was stiflingly regulated by the beliefs and practices aimed for the salvation of the soul in the afterlife.

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<sup>76</sup> L. N. Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Theology*, 1975, 51.

<sup>77</sup> *Sakop* can be translated as *territory* or *group*. This is a sociologically rich term connoting that the Filipino is non-individualistic.

<sup>78</sup> L. N. Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy*, 1974, 192. The author used what he called the metalinguistic approach and the phenomenological method in this study.

<sup>79</sup> *Encyclopedia Americana, Renaissance*, vol. 23, 379.

<sup>80</sup> M. Perry et al, *Western Civilization: Ideas, Politics and Society, Volume I to 1789*, second ed, 1985, 278.

The humanist teachers thought that “the Scholastic logic was too arid and irrelevant to the practical concerns of life.”<sup>81</sup> The humanities – art, literature, history, philosophy, etc., but not theology – were emphasized instead. They thought these “were meant to make (their) students [women were not included here] virtuous and prepare them for contributing best to the public function of the state.”<sup>82</sup> “They valued the full development of human talent and expressed a new excitement about the possibilities of life in this world.”<sup>83</sup> The importance and the potential of man were stressed, in contrast with the medieval belief that “men and women were not only capable of attaining excellence thru their own efforts and talents, but it was wrong and sinful for them even to try.”<sup>84</sup>

Secularism arose:

“The challenge and pleasure of living well in this world seemed more exciting than the promise of heaven.” “... individuals in all endeavors are free of a given destiny imposed by God from the outside – free to make their own destiny guided only by the example of the past, the force of the present circumstances, and the drives of their own inner nature. Individuals, set free from theology, are seen to be products, and in turn the shapers, of history. Their future is not wholly determined by providence, but is partly the work of their own free will.”<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> E. M. Burns et al, *World Civilization: Their History and Their Culture*, vol. 1, sixth ed, 1982, 565.

<sup>82</sup> E. M. Burns, 1982, 565.

<sup>83</sup> M. Perry, 1985, 270.

<sup>84</sup> M. Perry, 1985, 278. It must be noted though that, “Concurrently, in the sixteenth century a religious upheaval, known as the Protestant revolution, began in Germany and spread to many other countries. This upheaval contributed to the beginnings of the modern era by ending the religious uniformity of the Middle Ages and fostering an upsurge of individualism and rational consciousness.” E. M. Burns, 1982, 557.

<sup>85</sup> M. Perry, 1985, 289.

Individualism arose:

“It valued what was distinctive and superior in an individual, *but* not what was common to all men – the urban elite sought to assert their own personalities, to discover and to express their own peculiar feeling, to demonstrate their unique talents, to win fame and glory, and to fulfill their ambitions.”<sup>86</sup> “Individualism became embedded in the Western soul, and was expressed in artists who sought to capture individual character, in explorers who carved out empires in the New World, and in merchant-capitalists who amassed fortunes.”<sup>87</sup>

Man strove to understand the universe and his place in it *by the use of his reason alone*, which is actually the major underlying force beneath all this upheaval. Along with this Rationalism came modern science, sifted now of unacceptable explanations for natural phenomena, and seeking to accept only those that can be quantitatively verified by anyone at all who has the capability.

As science became more prominent in popular thinking, the philosophical implications of science formulated in the Enlightenment<sup>88</sup> spread to broad sections of the population. Natural processes appeared to be determined by rigid laws, leaving little room for either divine

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<sup>86</sup> M. Perry, 270 and 276.

<sup>87</sup> M. Perry, 1985, 276; Alvin Toffler referred to the coming of the modern era as the Second Wave: “The coming of the Second Wave, for example, was accompanied by the spread of the Protestant Ethic with its emphasis on thrift, unremitting toil, and the deferral of gratification – traits which channeled enormous energies into the tasks of economic development. The Second Wave also brought changes in objectivity-subjectivity, individualism, attitudes toward authority, and the ability to think abstractly, to emphasize and to imagine.”

<sup>88</sup> The Enlightenment, or the enthronement of reason, is the culmination of the intellectual revolution that happened from 1600 to 1789 in Europe. E. M. Burns, 1982, 557.

intervention or of human will. Yet scientific and technical advances had also felt the Enlightenment's optimistic faith in human progress, which now appeared endless and automatic to many middle-class minds. ... Finally the methods of science acquired unrivaled prestige after 1850. For many, the union of careful experiment and abstract theory was the only reliable route to truth and objective reality.<sup>89</sup>

Sociologists also use the term "modernization" to mean the state of affairs that results from the application of the sense of modernity as described, and the process toward these results. Modernization as a state of affairs "denotes those goals to which virtually all modernizing nations aspire: economic well-being, political autonomy, and social equality; a set of beliefs that envisions a better, more just, and more honorable life." As a process, it "refers to the actual attempts at economic, political, and social transformation now underway within the new nations of Asia, Africa, and Latin America: programs such as industrialization, agricultural development, the expansion of public education, and the achievement of internal political stability."<sup>90</sup> These new nations are generally those that have emerged from colonialism, so that whatever their backgrounds, and willingly or not, all peoples in the twentieth century are caught up in the process of modernization or "development," which usually turns out to mean acquiring some of the skills and powers first exhibited by Europeans.<sup>91</sup>

Modernity is therefore a mode of existence manifested in abstract ideologies, and in the expression of such, in the society: the nation-state, industrialism,

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<sup>89</sup> J. P. McKay et al, *A History of Western Society*, vol. C: *From the Revolutionary Era to the Present*, third ed, 1987, 788.

<sup>90</sup> R. L. Roe: publisher, *Society Today*, 1971, 521.

<sup>91</sup> R. R. Palmer and J. Colton, *A History of Modern World*, 1995, 9.

science and modern technology, and world-spanning organizations for business and international cooperation.<sup>92</sup> It is a supposed breakaway from the “traditional,” it has been even called a “secular religion,”<sup>93</sup> and for many it connotes progress. Yet right now the traditional and the modern do exist side by side in many societies so that what is there is “... a uniform modern civilization which overlies or penetrates the traditional cultures of the world.”<sup>94</sup>

Thus the presence of the traditional ways of doing things is a sort of a setback for modernity. It is in this context that has put ancient myths and religion at odds with modernity. Science has become the standard of looking at reality so that the ““unscientific” intuitions of poets and revelations of saints seemed hopelessly inferior.”<sup>95</sup>

## **F. Synthesis**

Man everywhere had the propensity to think in a “mythical” manner. This way of thinking still prevails.

Myth is characteristic of all societies, including that of the contemporary West. Myth is not simply the content of a narrative but is equally a universal mode of apprehension of reality. ... Scholars have found that an understanding of the mythical mode of thinking is necessary for a correct understanding of modern human consciousness. They believe that myth is not simply an earlier historical expression of human meaning but is equally a pervasive, structural form of consciousness itself. While it may have

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<sup>92</sup> M. Perry, *Volume II From the 1600s*, second ed, 1985, 864.

<sup>93</sup> R. L. Roe, 1971, 521.

<sup>94</sup> R. R. Palmer and J. Colton, 1995, 9.

<sup>95</sup> J. P. McKay, 1987, 788.



found its fullest expression in past cultures, it still exists in a fragmentary manner as both content and modality in present-day societies.<sup>96</sup>

Man first came to exist in an environment he understood he could not control. Torrential rains overwhelmed him, the deadly winter he could not postpone, and the threat of imminent death was always with him. It has been said that fear was the primary factor for man's fight for survival. He could not understand his environment, but the most obvious explanation to him was that the environment, like him, has a will to accomplish what it intends to do. This explanation helped him to cope, the same way that modern man needs a belief formation with which to operate on.

The origins of myth and religion may be topics for speculation for us now; nevertheless their connectedness is seen in their concern for man's groping with what's real and what's ultimate for his existence. "This urge to provide an explanation, to account for the otherwise random workings of nature and history, has been felt in all human societies since they came into being. Indeed, it is this need to explain and give significance to life that makes us human."<sup>97</sup> This is how sociologists view their importance, which could not be overemphasized.

The famous astronomer Carl Sagan on contemplating the awesome structure of the universe concluded,

"How pallid by comparison are the pretensions of superstition and pseudoscience; how important it is for us to pursue and understand science, that characteristically human behavior. ... No nation, no religion, no economic system, no body of knowledge, is likely to have all the answers for our survival. There must be many

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<sup>96</sup> *Encyclopedia Americana, Mythology*, vol. 19, 706.

<sup>97</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Ancient Myths and Culture*, 2003, 135-6.

social systems that would work far better than any now in existence. In the scientific tradition, our task is to find them.”<sup>98</sup>

This contention, that scientific man is capable of “penetrating the deepest mysteries” of the Cosmos,<sup>99</sup> is a superb example of the belief on how far humanism can go. It is so optimistic about human capabilities, so enthusiastic of exploring possibilities, and boldly expecting that there could be more.

Yet this mode of thinking, even the phrases he uses, is glaringly mythical. He said, “we are starstuff pondering the stars;”<sup>100</sup> and he is looking forward to the time when “we can accomplish the integration of the Earth without obliterating cultural differences or destroying ourselves.”<sup>101</sup> The first expression refers to man’s origins and the second is clearly a utopian picture, eschatological; both are myth motifs.<sup>102</sup> Sagan’s thoughts are not at all surprising.

The dominant practical and theoretical forms of contemporary society are in a nonmythological, rational, technical language. The mythological exists as a meaning below the surface. Myth is a way of expressing in language and behavior the ultimate and comprehensive experience of reality. In the appeal to a primordial time of beginning or to an ontologically different future – a characteristic of the problematic nature of modern times resulting from a loss of faith in history as a beneficent and progressive interpretation of human time – myth is present.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> C. Sagan, *Cosmos*, 1980, 332-3.

<sup>99</sup> ‘Cosmos’ is the universe.

<sup>100</sup> C. Sagan, 1980, 345.

<sup>101</sup> C. Sagan, 1980, 337.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. R. Schmidt, 1980, 130-3.

<sup>103</sup> *Encyclopedia Americana, Mythology*, vol. 19, 706.

Sagan speaks of “hugging our infants” as an important part of the solution, since he says the neuropsychologist James W. Prescott “found that cultures that lavish physical affection on infants tend to be disinclined to violence.”<sup>104</sup> No wonder that Filipinos were able to stage the phenomenally bloodless 1986 EDSA revolution; the Filipino belongs to an infant hugging culture.<sup>105</sup> But Sagan seems to be in hot waters when he said “where infants are physically punished, there tends to be slavery, frequent killing, torturing and mutilation of enemies, a devotion to the inferiority of women, and a belief in one or more supernatural beings who intervene in daily life.”<sup>106</sup>

He seems to advocate the misconception that the presence of a feature of primitive religions<sup>107</sup> goes hand in hand with barbarism. He couldn't be more far from the truth since contrary to its connotation, the primitive man was neither dumb nor ignorant. The anthropologist Elman Service had no qualms in interchanging the labels *primitive, ancient, and preliterate* as he disagreed with the negative picture that goes with the terms as pertains to people or societies labeled as such that still exist today.<sup>108</sup> He said, “Anthropologists would deny that these

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<sup>104</sup> C. Sagan, 1980, 331.

<sup>105</sup> The anthropologist Felipe Landa Jocano speaks of the Filipino-s culture of cuddling their infants in *Filipino Social Organization: Traditional Kinship and Family Organization (Anthropology of the Filipino People III)*, Metro Manila, Philippines: PUNLAD Research House, Inc., 1998, 157.

<sup>106</sup> C. Sagan, 1980, 331.

<sup>107</sup> J. B. Noss, *Man's Religions*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, 1963, 14-31. The other features of contemporary primitive religions are recognition of the sacred; expression of anxiety in ritual; inextricable intermingling of religion and magic; belief in mana; veneration and worship of spirits; recognition of high gods; presence of types of magic; divination; taboo; purification rites; sacrifice; mythology; attitudes toward the dead: ancestor-worship; totemism.

<sup>108</sup> Such as the Arunta of Australia, some American Indian tribes, some tribes of Morocco, Bantu of South Africa, Fuegians of South

people have such a limited mental capacity.”<sup>109</sup> Likewise John Noss said, “As a matter of fact, primitive cultures are often richly developed and have much to commend them qualitatively.”<sup>110</sup> For him the primitives are not “savages,” for the latter term “suggests cruelty, amorality, and barbarism, three terms that are as far from being universally characteristic of preliterate cultures as they are of presumably “higher” literate ones.”

On the other hand, Demetrio has noted that there hardly is an experience of ‘living’ myths among the Filipino lowlanders.<sup>111</sup> Instead what there is are vignettes of some, or are simply folktales and legends. This is, he said, because the venerable *babaylan*’s rituals<sup>112</sup> are hardly ever performed among them. Yet it is obvious that myths are living in the everyday man’s consciousness. The best citation for this is the popularity of the fantasy dramas in primetime television. There are mermaids, birdpeople, fairies, humans with fantastic powers, and enchantresses. The storyline always moves along the tension between good and evil, a prominent mythological motif. In these dramas it is always an assumption that the protagonists are God-fearing characters, and the antagonists are minions of evil forces. It hardly ever happens also that the Supreme Power is featured directly

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America, the Ainus of Japan, many indigenous groups of the Philippines, etc. There could be thousands around the world.

<sup>109</sup> E. R. Service, *Primitive Social Organization: An Evolutionary Perspective*, 1962, 8.

<sup>110</sup> J. B. Noss, 1963, 3.

<sup>111</sup> F. R. Demetrio, 1990, 9. I think myths are also ‘living’ in the sense that they “develop and alter” in time. “The tales themselves, naturally as rich and diverse as the cultures of which they are a part, have changed as a result of differing social conditions over the centuries. As cultures merge or clash on meeting, so the myths develop and alter. Mythology is an organic tradition, living off and feeding back into the lives of the people whose existence it enhances.” *The Encyclopedia of Ancient Myths and Culture*, 2003, 135.

<sup>112</sup> The *babaylan* is the shaman. It is a Bisayan term that is widely used and generally understood in the country.

in the story. His transcendence, his being in the “heavens,” is maintained. This is a recognized attribute of the creator god *Bathala*.<sup>113</sup>

It is also suggested that the communitarian discipline that goes with the rituals of the *babaylan* is evident in the long-suffering character trait of the common Filipino.

The power to cure diseases, to penetrate the secrets of the heart, to know the names of herbs and their medicinal powers, the ability to shamanise, to commune with the spirits and the gods, to call upon them to come and be present – these are gifts vouchsafed only after long, lonesome and, quite often, fearsome initiation. ... Nor is this limited only to the religious functionaries. The community that the shaman, the *arbolaryo* or the sorcerers serve are expected to participate in the rigors undertaken by the religious leader. They must keep long vigils, observe silence for long hours, fast, keep themselves free from sexual pollution, if the medicine-man’s bag or bottle of oil and herbs is to become efficacious again. ... And all these strictures are gone through without murmuring, disgust or ill-will. Everyone seems to understand the purpose of these rituals.<sup>114</sup>

Indeed, for the Filipino, “... there are relics among our folk traditions which give us enough indication of the function and value of myths of our people in the past, and this value and function to us moderns are still intelligible. And our awareness of them can make us better human

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<sup>113</sup> “It is common to find among many primitive groups a recognition of the existence of a God far up in the sky or at a great remove, who has made everything, man, earth, sea, and sky, and who at a distance sees all that goes on among men, but, though he sometimes disapproves of what he sees, does not often interfere.” J. B. Noss, 1963, 19.

<sup>114</sup> F. R. Demetrio, 1990, 462.

beings for the meaning or truth of these myths is still valid even today.”<sup>115</sup>

Ancient myths, religion and modernity therefore are not mutually exclusive modes of human expression. The human psyche has simultaneously accommodated these three phenomena. Does modern man live within value systems that have bearing with those held by the not yet modern? Yes, he does. Has the ardor of modernity done away with myths? No, it has not. Mythical motifs are even being expressed in the setting of a technological world. Movies can again be cited as examples. Take the *Star Wars* series<sup>116</sup> – its center: the Force; the shaman: the Jedi knights; the battle is between the forces of good and evil; value system: the good is worth fighting for, there is something worth fighting for, to fight is to survive as well as to risk annihilation; the ultimate aim: an evil-free world.

Thus in the technological society of today, “it is clear that modernization in the secular sense is in full swing. And on the surface, some aspects of the humanist meaning are also encouraged. But the deepest layers of modernization as human development are not fostered.”<sup>117</sup> Note this account on the Philippines by a foreign correspondent:

In the early 1990s, Manila, especially the Makati section, had a modern superstructure of hotels and banks, supermarkets, malls, art galleries, and museums. Beneath this structure, however, was a substructure of traditional small neighborhoods and a wide spectrum of life-style ranging from traditional to modern, from those of the inordinately wealthy to those of the abjectly poor ... But in Manila, unlike urban centers in other countries, these economic divisions were

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<sup>115</sup> F. R. Demetrio, 1990, 18.

<sup>116</sup> Science fiction movies of the Lucas Film Ltd. Production released in the 1970's by Twentieth– Century Fox.

<sup>117</sup> F. R. Demetrio, 1990, 460.

not paralleled by racial or linguistic residential patterns. Manila and other Philippine cities were truly melting pots, in which wealth was the only determinant for residence. ... Whether in poor squatter and slum communities or in middle-class sections of cities, value associated primarily with rural barangays continued to be important in determining expectations, if not always actions. Even when it was clearly impossible to create a warm and personal community in a city neighborhood, Filipinos nevertheless felt that traditional patterns of behavior conducive to such a community should be followed. Hospitality, interdependence, patron-client bonds, and real kinship all continued to be of importance for urban Filipinos.<sup>118</sup>

Spain thought she was modernizing, civilizing, the Philippines, just as America did.<sup>119</sup> When Spain came, albeit accidentally, it was economic gain from prized spices she was after. I'm sure support can be found to the idea that her Christianizing, and thus her modernizing, the "natives" would be from the viewpoint of an all-powerful imperial right to dictate to anybody what was "truth" for her. Thus, the culture that she found when she came, she delegated inferior to hers. From the "natives" point of view, they may have seen the advent of technology more sophisticated than their's; perhaps in the sense that they witnessed not a few demonstrations of capabilities useful for alleviating their everyday work

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<sup>118</sup> R. E. Dolan, 1993, 94-5.

<sup>119</sup> J. W. Vander Zanden, *Sociology: The Core*, third ed, 1993, 319. "In the 1890s President William McKinley explained his decision to wage the expansionist war against Spain and seize Cuba and the Philippines as follows (quoted by McGuire, 1981:188): ...*There was nothing left for us to do but to take them all and to educate the Filipinos and uplift and civilize and Christianize them and by God's grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow men for whom Christ also died.*"

necessities, and thus they accommodated the foreigners without fuss into their living sphere. They could have been welcomed.<sup>120</sup> But was the Filipino an uncouth barbarian then? No, he was not; “While many of the details of the pre-European life of Filipinos remain unknown, it is nonetheless apparent that this early culture continues to serve as the foundation for the culture and customs of contemporary Filipinos. Before the arrival of the first Spaniards, Filipino religious beliefs, social organization, gender relations, and material culture were already well developed and exhibited strong similarities among all groups in the islands. Whether in music, literature, dress, architecture, gender relations, or political practices, the indigenous culture continued to shape Filipino sensibilities and guided the adoption of external influences.”<sup>121</sup>

Therefore it is not surprising that until today in the Philippines, in keeping with the people’s close affinity with the spiritual realm, there is a perennial “interest in the unconscious or the subconscious. ... Of late, the charismatic gatherings have proliferated in the nation’s capital as well as in the provincial cities.” What is noteworthy is that, “... It seems that this Philippine phenomenon is but an extension of the ground swell all over the world which has been gathering volume and intensity since the end of World War II, and years following the Vietnam War, and the peak of student activism in Europe and in the USA. Perhaps this is a reaction to the failure of Western leadership in upholding the values that make man what he is.”<sup>122</sup> Thus, the

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<sup>120</sup> I would put this initial non-aggression toward the foreigners down to the Filipino’s non-competitive orientation. His dealing with the foreigners was within his *sakop*/harmony virtue, though the history of Filipino revolts against Spain indicate that she was not a “weaking”. See footnote 158.

<sup>121</sup> P. Rodell, 2002, 9.

<sup>122</sup> I conjecture this to be the global dismay, to put it mildly, over the atrocities brought about primarily by the proliferation of wide and long-



interest in the more ancient ways of discovering the authentic human in the midst of world-wide dehumanization.”<sup>123</sup>

Indeed it has been noted also that what is happening is contrary to the 1960s predictions by the social scientists on the eventual demise of religion and the triumph of secularization.

Yet religion has not gone away. Granted, many of the great religious organizations of today may be fated to slide into oblivion. But to notice only their decline and to ignore the vigor of new religious organizations and new religions in general is to look only at sunsets and never at the dawn. In the long course of human experience, many religions have come and gone, but religion has remained.<sup>124</sup>

Sociologists have found out that,

“Although societies claim to have only one faith (and sometimes use military force to keep competing faiths out), this is never really true. ... “underground” faiths exist even in the most repressive nations, and these tend to erupt into significant movements whenever repression eases ... in time the most successful religious organizations become increasingly worldly, a process called *secularization*. As this occurs, conditions become favorable for new

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range wars of varied causes since WWI, where the Western world feature as primary players; these plus the global dynamics that if goes unchecked will result to “serious dislocations, economic warfare, violent struggles over access to vital resources, and eventual nuclear catastrophe.” R. C. North, *The World That Could Be*, 1976, 141; in here the author presents “two crude extreme projections of what the world might look like a hundred years from now,” where one is *Optimistic* and the other is *Pessimistic*.

<sup>123</sup> F. R. Demetrio, 1990, 455-7.

<sup>124</sup> R. Stark, *Sociology*, third ed, 1989, 429.

organizations to break away and restore a less worldly form of the conventional faith, a process known as *revival*. ... also wholly new religions can arise, a process called *religious innovation* or *cult formation*.<sup>125</sup>

Thus, we have come full circle. The generalization is that,

“Most men, from primitives in the jungles to members of societies far advanced in culture, do not think that man are all that matters. To think this is to run counter to a very deep feeling, namely, that man depends for life and fullness of being on forces outside himself that share in some sense his own nature and with which he must be in harmony. The harmony thus sought is sometimes a harmony in action, as in primitive religions; or it is a moral or spiritual harmony, as in the great religions of the Near East; or the harmony sought is more than a harmony, it is a complete and final identity, as in most of the religions of India and the Far East.<sup>126</sup>

Finally, Durkheim believes that, “when religion is imperiled and not replaced by a satisfying substitute, society itself is jeopardized: Individuals pursue their private interests without regard for the dictates of the

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<sup>125</sup> R. Stark, 1989, 404.

<sup>126</sup> J. B. Noss, 1963, 3. Thomas Ford Houtliff classifies religion in this manner: “Religions which stress the hereafter, such as traditional Christianity sanctify behavior – ritualistic, familial, political, economic, and the like – which is believed to insure entrance into heaven for eternal life. Religions which stress the here-and-now, such as naturalistic humanism and Ethical Culture, encourage behavior believed to insure the best chance of satisfying survival in this world. And animistic religions aim at pleasing or controlling the spirits believed to inhabit all things in order that chances of survival (physical and otherwise) may be enhanced.” T. F. Houtliff, *The Sociology of Religion*, 1958, 387.

larger social enterprise.”<sup>127</sup> The same idea stated in another way, “Indeed the lack of a common, coherent myth may be a major reason for the fragmentation and alienation so prevalent in modern society.”<sup>128</sup>

## Reflection

Genesis 2:16,17 says, “And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”

Genesis 3:22 says, “And the LORD God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.”

Thus in mythical language the Christian world is told of the cause why man is capable of knowing the good from the bad.<sup>129</sup> He imbibed forbidden substance. In the next breath it is explained that this is not how it should be. And since he is now like the gods (elohim), which is a violation of the order of the universe, then retribution must be exacted. This is the curtailment of what could have been a sure chance of an existential absolute, the chance of eating from the tree of life, immortality. Of course since this is mythical language then it must be saying not just that. Going back to that statement by Mircea Eliade, “... the “sacred” is an element in the structure of consciousness ...,”<sup>130</sup> what is interesting is the assertion that man cannot but likewise think in

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<sup>127</sup> J. W. Vander Zanden, 1993, 316.

<sup>128</sup> J. P. McAndrew, *People of Power: A Philippine Worldview of Spirit Encounters*, 2001, 14. This statement is by Thomas Berry, a Catholic priest and noted ecologist.

<sup>129</sup> The New American Bible version renders the phrase as *the tree of knowledge of good and bad*.

<sup>130</sup> M. Eliade, 1978, Preface. Also footnotes 48 and 32.

mythical terms because of the way his mind is geared to do so. He could not but do it. If it is true that, as Eliade again says, myth “implies the notion of being, of meaning, and of truth,”<sup>131</sup> then there must be a meaning of the phrase “knowledge of good and evil” more profound for the modern man, the one who has been persistently challenging the integrity of these stories, than has ever been put across by hermeneutics. For the question persists: why is it that something so life giving – knowledge – has become the cause of death?

It seems as if this knowledge points to Rationalism. With the coming of it man has claimed that he can know anything just by the power of his reasoning.<sup>132</sup> But its coming in the seventeenth century puts it very late beside the Genesis account. Nevertheless, it has been found that Rationalism is not the salvation of mankind. Benedict Spinoza, Gottfried Leibniz, Immanuel Kant, and Georg Hegel, each tried to describe how God and the universe are. The first description is, God was an impersonal principle; the second, “the evil in [the world] is an integral part of a total picture of maximum good”; the third, “dismissed all notions of revelation and all claims to know God,”; and fourth, “[God] does not exist in distinction from the world, but only as its animating force.”<sup>133</sup> All these are in violation of the age-old beliefs Christianity holds about God and reality, that God is personal, goodness is anathema to evil, it is only through revelation that God makes Himself known to us, and that He is transcendent

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<sup>131</sup> M. Eliade, 1978, Preface. Also footnote 13.

<sup>132</sup> This conjecture is safe. The Expositor’s Bible Commentary advocates the interpretation that “The inference of God’s commands in vv. 16-17 is that God alone knows what is good for man and that God alone knows what is not good for him. To enjoy the “good” man must trust God and obey him. If an disobeys, he will have to decide for himself what is good and what is not good. While to modern man such a prospect may seem desirable, to the author of Genesis it is the worst fate that could have befallen him.” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, F. E. Gæbelein: general editor, 1990, 45.

<sup>133</sup> *Eerdmans’ Handbook to Christian Belief*, 1982, 147-8.

though immanent. Rationalism has not so far rendered these beliefs obsolete. The same is true with the traditional ways and beliefs of almost all countries in Asia, many of which are highly industrialized.

Within the Christian context, rationalism has had its mark on the theologies that have emerged since the Enlightenment. In Rudolf Bultmann's *demythologization*, he made clear his belief that the essentials do not lie on the Gospel narratives per se, and that not all of these related events were historically true.<sup>134</sup> He has offered the alternative way of looking at the essentials as from the perspective that the truth lies in the way these narratives have affected the hearers. Colin Brown says of it, "What matters is not something that Jesus did objectively outside us and for us. Nor is there such a thing as an objective word of God. Jesus is a preacher of the Word, summoning man to decision, and thus enabling us 'to interpret our own existence'. Truth emerges in this subjective response."<sup>135</sup> This was Bultmann's way, it has been said, of trying to couch Christian belief into the modern rational world-view. Another notable formulation is that of the process theology/philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. It was an effort at bridging gaps within his Christian faith, and evidently between it and quantitative science. Process emphasizes that everything is an energy event that is continually becoming. God, who is himself an event, persistently influences and is influenced by these events.<sup>136</sup>

However, the advent of rationalism has enabled man to better assess his perspectives as regards to his 'existential' beliefs. For instance, a conclusion now is that, "All religions say one way or another that man does

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<sup>134</sup> *Eerdmans' Handbook to Christian Belief*, 1982, 458.

<sup>135</sup> C. Brown, *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*, 1968, 187.

<sup>136</sup> See L. S. Ford, *The Lure of God: A Biblical Background for Process Theism*, 1978; J. Cobb, Jr. and D. Griffin, *Process: An Introductory Exposition*, 1976; E. Cousins: editor, *Process Theology: basic writings by the key thinkers of a major modern movement*, 1971.

not, and cannot, stand alone. He is vitally related with and even dependent on powers in Nature and Society external to himself. Dimly or clearly, he knows that he is not an independent center of force capable of standing apart from the world.”<sup>137</sup> It has become clearer to him that he needs much more than what he can procure for himself. For most people they have found out that there are what can be called, for the lack of a more precise term, emotional or psychological needs that cannot be reasoned away.<sup>138</sup> This is also true for modern Americans. “It is true that the American religious economy is very diverse. Over 1,200 religious denominations exist in the United States (Melton, 1978). Church attendance is high – in any given week, about 40 percent of Americans attend services. Moreover, almost two-thirds of Americans (62 percent) are official members of a local congregation.”<sup>139</sup>

Granting that science as a body of knowledge and as a way of looking at the world has done much for the alleviation of human misery, say in terms of combating diseases, it also has brought about devices for unprecedented degrees of violence. Now Einstein has said that: “Concern for man himself must always

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<sup>137</sup> J. B. Noss, 1963, 2.

<sup>138</sup> Speaking on myths, philosophy professor Richard L. Purtill wrote, “The usual “demythologizer” wants to remove these “mythological accretions” and recover the historical facts underneath them (as suggested by the title of Albert Schweitzer’s work *In Quest of the Historical Jesus*). More recently, some theologians have in various ways tried to suggest that we accept the four Gospels as original myth ... The motivation for this kind of suggestion is very often the realization that a person who accepts neither gospel nor original myth lives in an impoverished world, that there is a human need that was once satisfied by original myth and is still satisfied for many by gospel, a need that can be damaging to the human personality if it goes unfulfilled. ... I think that it might be called the need for *significant form* in our experience. We want to be able to relate the things that happen to us as parts of an understandable whole.” R. L. Purtill, *J. R. R. Tolkien: Myth, Morality, and Religion*, 1984, 4.

<sup>139</sup> R. Stark, 1989, 418.

constitute the chief objective of all technological effort ... to assure that the result of our scientific thinking may be a blessing to mankind, and not a curse."<sup>140</sup> This means therefore that, since man has a choice, the invention and use of weapons of mass destruction is not an innocent result of amoral science, but is in fact within the realm of human accountability. As the physicist Jacob Bronowski laments,

"It is said that science will dehumanize people and turn them into numbers. That is false. Look for yourself. This is the concentration camp and crematorium at Auschwitz. This is where people were turned into numbers. Into this pond were flushed the ashes of some four million people. And that was not done by gas. It was done by arrogance. When people believe that they have absolute knowledge, with no test in reality, this is how they behave. This is what man can do when they aspire to the knowledge of gods."<sup>141</sup>

It was man, together with his nonscientific belief system, his dearly held set of convictions that has veered our earth toward this alarming reality.

Humanity has always acknowledged that threat constantly looms over his head. And so, realizing that he rarely lives for a century, he is pressed to find what the significance is, if there is any, of so short a lifetime of occasional ecstasies and predominant pains. The futurist Alvin Toffler offers a description of man in this plight. He says, "Individuals need life structure. A life lacking in comprehensive structure is an aimless wreck. The absence of structure breeds breakdown. ... The feeling that our lives "count" comes from healthy relationships with the surrounding society – from family, corporation,

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<sup>140</sup> *The Cosmos of Arthur Holly Compton*, edited by Marjorie Johnston with an introduction by Vannevar Bush, 1967, 65.

<sup>141</sup> J. Bronowski, *The Ascent of Man*, 1973, 347.

church, or political movement. It also depends on being able to see ourselves as part of a larger, even cosmic, scheme of things.”<sup>142</sup>

Almost a century ago an epochal event happened: “Then, in 1905, Einstein suggested that the laws of physics as we observe them may be in no way dependent upon how fast we are moving through space. It is only how fast an object is moving relative to us that, in his view, can affect the way things on this object appear to act ... The only motion that has any meaning, according to the special theory of relativity, is the motion of one object relative to another.”<sup>143</sup>

The parallelism in these two insights cannot be ignored. It's as if the two statements are in agreement with the idea that we as persons cannot have a description of how we are unless we connect it with something else. Likewise, something else will appear to us according to how we are. But much more than that, they are saying that everything is interconnected. They are saying that each is a part of another, such that the larger picture is that of a unity of interrelated and interdependent things. Nothing in this picture exists in isolation.

The vital importance of interrelated and interdependent existence is clear in the atomic level. Take a gold atom, for instance. At this configuration, albeit submicroscopic now, the complete set of characteristics of being a substance called gold is present in it. These characteristics disappear once the atom is dismantled, so that the separate parts – electron, proton, neutron, and others – have the same characteristics as that of any other particle like them. It was their being together, held by forces in nature, that made them part of gold. Apart, there is no trace left of their being once part of a gold atom. The same is true

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<sup>142</sup> A. Toffler, *Third Wave*, 1980, 389-90.

<sup>143</sup> *The Cosmos of Arthur...*, 1967, 209.



with all other atoms in the universe. Thus is humanity. Statements as related to each other as these are refreshing in the midst of scurrying ideas in that they can continually bring home the realization that there is an Unshakeable Truth Transcendent yet Immanent.

The sociologist Stark is more specific with his conclusion. He says,

“So long as people want to know what existence means, so long as they are prone to disappointment, suffering, and death, the religious impulse will not be stilled. Only religions, only systems of thought that include belief in the supernatural, can address problems of this magnitude. ... No one, neither the rich nor the poor, can achieve immortality in the natural world. And both rich and poor seek to find meaning in existence. The rich as well as the poor join religions.”<sup>144</sup>

Furthermore, Smith pushes it a little further when he said, “It is one of the illusions of rationalism that the universal principles of religion are more important than the rites and rituals from which they grow.”<sup>145</sup>

The implication of this in missions is enormous. The Spaniards and the Americans did violence to our cultural psyche by rashly introducing to it new ways of thinking and feeling without the benefit of first exploring how they should fit in. The way we think and feel about ourselves has been muddled and has gone awry – like, having Caucasian-fair skin and having a good English or Spanish diction is preferable to otherwise. A concrete manifestation of this violence is the way our history was modified in the telling. “Filipino and American historians have recreated the Philippine Revolution to suit the political needs of succeeding generations, disregarding

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<sup>144</sup> R. Stark, 1989, 429.

<sup>145</sup> H. Smith, *The Religions of Man*, 1958, 4.

aspects that now emerge so clearly in Alvarez's accounts – an embittered factionalism, strong undercurrents of messianism and animism, and a violent machismo. To give their new nation Western-style heroes and heroism, postwar Filipino historians often stripped these events of their authenticity.”<sup>146</sup>

I hope that when Bronowski said, “We have to cure ourselves of the itch for absolute knowledge and power. We have to close the distance between the push button order and the human act; We have to touch people,”<sup>147</sup> he meant that none of us will ever be in the place to claim to have acquired the standard to which all knowledge must be measured against. He meant that we each one of us, are in the position to contemplate on the consequences of our dogma-dictated actions. He meant that ultimately it is the person, the people, the humanity, that counts.

Pure rationalism could be our death. It denies that aspect of our being, our nonrational intuition, that has in fact enabled us to survive in a – let's say it clear – unpredictable world. We are very much inside the system of living. We have no capability of detaching ourselves to stand from a perspective that will allow us to assess the whole picture all at once, and have a once-for-all comprehensive say about everything; like standing in a museum gallery and looking at a picture canvass and say what there is to say about it right there and then.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> S. V. Alvarez, *The Katipunan and the Revolution: Memoirs of a General*. with the Original Tagalog text, Translated into English by Paula Carolina S. Malay, 1992, back cover.

<sup>147</sup> J. Bronowski, 1973, 347.

<sup>148</sup> Science does not deny this. “Physicists believe that the universe operates according to a set of immutable laws that may never be fully revealed and that may even be fundamentally unknowable in their entirety. That belief is an act of faith as human as any and, indeed, as profoundly human as any belief that has been shared by mankind.” D.S. Saxon and W. B. Fretter, *Physics for the Liberal Arts Student*, 1971, 11.

Pure rationalism could be our death in that it offers a pseudo-freedom. Man knows that the possibilities are too vast for him to account for, yet in saying that he is capable of navigating through them he limits “reality” to only what he can systematically present to his understanding. It is as if he has just acquired for himself a way of limiting freedom.

Jesus said, “The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”(John 3:8 NIV) The element of unpredictability is part of truth.<sup>149</sup> Again physics echoes this fact. For instance, in its branch known as quantum mechanics, it has been found out that an electron’s position about the nucleus cannot be determined at the same time as its velocity<sup>150</sup> -- getting hold of either of these quantities alters the other – implying that it is impossible to have a perfect description of any particular atom at any time.<sup>151</sup>

Yet the other side of it is that God has not let us lose in a directionless sea of chaos. In John 8:12 Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” Granting that this statement smacks of myth-sense, without even pointing out features of Biblical criticism that must get into

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<sup>149</sup> I cannot help but cite as a parallel idea the sense of unpredictability in the name YHWH, the name that God made known of Himself to Moses at the burning bush, which is *I am who I am*, or *I will be what I will be* (Ex. 3:13-14). The root is actually a first person verb meaning *to be* or *to happen*, which scholars agree connote activity; it has a dynamic meaning better yet rendered as *it came to pass* or *it will come to pass*. B. W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*, second edition, 1966, 38-9.

<sup>150</sup> Velocity is speed with corresponding direction.

<sup>151</sup> This is a feature of what is called the Uncertainty Principle, usually connected with the physicist Werner Heisenberg, a contemporary of A. Einstein. James Burke put it this way, “... every description of reality contains some essential and irretrievable uncertainty and the observer, in the observing, modifies the phenomenon...” J. Burke, *The Day the Universe Changed*, 1985, 301.

the picture, what cannot be denied is that the globe, even the universe, as much as the atom, is confined within a limited system. And within this system is an awesome gamut of interactions rationalism still hopes to conquer.<sup>152</sup> What is more awesome is that Christianity, in the John 8:12 sense, claims to have conquered this system.

The elucidation to the claim to absolute truth is in the avenue of Christian apologetics, an ancient, well trod, and thriving discipline. For many, the easiest way out of this difficulty is the confession of faith, as in Hebrews 11:1 (NAB): “Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen,” taken either in or out of context. Still there are those who would challenge in the manner of the proof-of-the-pudding-is-in-the-eating argument. That is, Christianity does not cry out for rational or rhetoric defense, but begs to be lived. Any defense of it from “inside” obviously runs the risk of being called biased, and therefore contentious.

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<sup>152</sup> “Through casual modeling, simulation, and forecasting techniques, the analyst or policymaker can infer with a high degree of confidence what values a given society has acted upon with some consistency over a period of 30 years or more in the past. From 1946 through 1975, for example, we can identify and plot the major trends that have taken place and can also postulate what *societal* values have prevailed and have actually been invoked. We can even test and calibrate our tools by inserting historical data for part of this period of time, such as from 1946 to 1951, and forecasting the trends (as if we had not already established them) through 1975. At that point it is possible to compare the forecasted trends with the real-world trends and calculate the error. Assuming that major trends of the past (and the values that produced them) will continue into the future, we can then make forecasts for 30, 40, or 50 years into the real future. Having achieved this baseline projection on the basis of very explicit, though perhaps unrealistic, assumptions about the future, it is possible to introduce alternate values – different overall investment patterns, demographic or economic growth rates, national budgetary allocations, income distributions, and the like – and observe the probable outcomes. In this way, thousands of alternative futures can be generated with all assumptions and each introduction of a new value recorded and made explicit.” R. C. North, *The World That Could Be*, 1976, 135.

Personally, I am an adherent of it with the original reason that I was born into it, which is also the case for the overwhelming majority of the Filipinos. My society is aware of this level of commonality, and it has been a well-tested unifying social force. Although, its being labeled as “folk” (i.e., folk Christianity/ Catholicism/ Protestantism) has not reached mainstream discussions yet, but not to imply that Filipinos would care much about this label, and so may not be even interested in fussing about it.

I believe that this claim of Christianity to truth cannot be discerned from its manifest institutions or from its dogmas alone. Like with the electron of the atom, it's as if our putting of the essentials into words and systematized thought frames have ossified the “movement” of the “spirit”, so that what we have left in hand is only an impression of what is not there anymore. Likewise, the wind must have speed and direction. Getting hold of it, arresting its material to analyze it, will nullify it. Besides, its molecular composition is so diffuse and motile all the time that empirical science will be hard put at describing it comprehensively, much less make a precise projection of it. So it is with Christianity. M. Richard Shaull writes,

“The Christian gospel does not stand over against man's self-understanding, not by absolutizing the human experience of the past but by pointing to a reality of judgment and a power of transfiguration at work in the midst of contemporary existence. In fact, Christian faith can contribute to the formation of the *new man* only when it becomes incarnate in a community that has the power to do this. ... God's action in the world has something of the quality of “mystery”; it constantly pushes beyond the limits of our human understanding of it ... the fact that the church is described more by images than by rational definitions suggests that it “is a divine mystery that cannot be circumscribed by

doctrinal or institutional measurements.” New events occur which shatter old limitations; and the work of the Spirit breaks out of the boundaries set by the institution.”<sup>153</sup>

Sagan points out, “About two-thirds of the mass of the human brain is in the cerebral cortex, devoted to intuition and reason. Humans have evolved gregariously.” He is saying that he believes it is a physiological need for humans to be together, living in close proximity to one another. We are creatures with inbuilt capacity for connectedness, and we cannot operate on reason alone. The systematization of communication symbols takes too long a time, and we cannot afford to wait for that. Personal interactions are constant and simultaneous. Our immediate survival is largely a function of our intuition.

So much so that the substance of Christianity, not being in the institutions and dogmas, is in the immediate sphere of living, in the doing. Quoting P. W. Bridgman, “The true meaning of the term is to be found by observing what a man does with it, not what he says about it.” Jesus answered the scribes when asked which commandment is the most important, “ ... ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second one is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”<sup>154</sup> Jesus was speaking of the integral man, the man who at once thinks, feels, and acts. He may be the Good Samaritan in Jesus’ parable (Luke 10:30-37).

The Filipino may not have living myths anymore if seen from the scarcity of displays of old rituals, but his myth-sense is very much palpable. Look at the way he

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<sup>153</sup> M. R. Shaull, *Toward a Reformulation of Objectives*, article. *Protestant Crosscurrents in Mission: The Ecumenical-Conservative Encounter*, 1968, 90-3. The included quote is by Paul Minear.

<sup>154</sup> Mark 12:29-31.

transforms fallible mortals into heroes, most recently manifested in the Fernando Poe, Jr. phenomenon. Again, what could be the myth-sense behind the persistent OFW reality, where it has come to be known that in the US, at least a *Filipino* is a domestic help, almost equivalent to a slave in feudalistic era?

The Filipino's longsuffering was mentioned earlier. What I want to point out now is that the Filipino's sense of self-worth is community-based, in the *iririmaw taton*<sup>155</sup> mentality, so that the suffering of a degrading label is refused of an adverse effect, at least emotional-wise. Yes, abstractly the label is degrading, but nevertheless we, as a people have collectively established a justification for our existence.

Looking at this labor and brain drain<sup>156</sup> phenomenon from another perspective, I say it is a feature of the Filipino's spirituality. It is a manifestation of his immunity to the threat of abrupt environmental, physical, as well as cultural changes. Almost everyone agrees that he/she thrives wherever he/she is in the world. I can connect this feature with the fact that our locality is devoid of geographic barriers. We have open seas, minimal mountain systems, non-abrupt and non-extreme changes of climate. All these have allowed us to own a steady and secure sense of safety. We do have tribes, so presumably tribal wars also, but these were generally unremarkably bloodthirst-wise. We do not have major tales of war. These nonbarriers connote that we were free to move about. If so then it makes sense that we as people have not played reason against intuition, we have not tried to put delineation between the two. For intuition, and therefore myths and religion, are, I believe to be

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<sup>155</sup> This is a Kiniray-a phrase; can be translated as, "we are together"; similar to the *sakop* mentality; the communal sense.

<sup>156</sup> Many have now labeled it a *hemorrhage*.

God-provided faculties for humans to cope with the fluid dynamics of living.<sup>157</sup>

I say that truth is not relative. It is only that we have different and limited capabilities of perceiving it, as to where we are situated in time within our history or as to the cultures of our land that makes it seem so. So that when Demetrio argues, “It is in the peoples’ mores and manners, beliefs and basic orientations to life and reality, further specified by their peculiar cultures and traditions, that the missionary is to uncover God and His Christ to them (c.f. John 1:9),”<sup>158</sup> he directly hits the target.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Also, the Filipino is able to move comfortably within a small personal space. Living spaces are not really much, even in rural settings where ample space is available for house construction. The typical Filipino family’s dwelling space is not of the sprawling and lofty types. Doubtless this is largely due to the size that the basic building material – bamboo – can conveniently accommodate. Nevertheless, it is not a new fact that the urban dwellers is squeezed into relatively small spaces with hardly breathing rooms, yet still manage to be minimally bothered by it. This is most notable in boarding houses of students, as well as in the most popular public transport, the *jeepney*, which is like a small bus. Thus the Filipino exists within a highly dynamic sphere of interaction brought about by close bodily proximity, so much so that the reaction-response facilities must be highly sensitive and immediate. See footnote 105.

<sup>158</sup> F. R. Demetrio, 1990, 146.

<sup>159</sup> But how this should be done, that is another thing. The church people have been working on this for a long time now, with these talks on *paradigms* and *paradigm shifts* with regards to *missions* and *evangelism*. As these systematizations take time (again), meanwhile this bottom line as quoted by C. S. Lewis must be our working formula: Do not waste time bothering whether you “love” your neighbor; act as if you did. (*Mere Christianity*, 116) It should be noted though that the Spaniards, without their intention, was able to “provide lowland Philippine society with a language for articulating its own values, ideals, and even hopes of liberation. After the destruction or decline of native epic traditions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Filipinos nevertheless continued to maintain a coherent image of the world and their place in it through their familiarity with the *pasyon*, an epic that appears to be alien in content, but upon closer examination in a historical context, reveals the vitality of the Filipino mind.” The *pasyon* is a verse composition in the local tongue of the



Finally, the tension between modernity, and ancient myths and religion has been profoundly put forth with this statement:

“Social and cultural trends of the past few centuries have culminated in an age of skepticism, secularism, and materialism. For many, there is little left but a defensive scorn for the true believer. It is a scorn which, perhaps, helps to hide the self-pity that must arise among men who have lost the guideposts of the ages and, what is more devastating, are convinced that they are lost forever.”<sup>160</sup>

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salvation history starting even from Genesis through Christ’s Passion. It is chanted responsively by the people in the local community during the Holy Week celebrations. There were several editions of it by different Filipino authors and revisers. The intention was for the “Spanish colonizers to inculcate among the *Indios* loyalty to Spain and Church; moreover, they encouraged resignation to things as they were and instilled preoccupation with morality and the afterlife rather than with conditions in this world.” (R. C. Iletto, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840–1910*, 1979, 12.) So that what appeared to be an attempt at adapting the Gospel narrative to a local literary form had an ulterior motive behind it. As such, the hope of the masses for freedom from the foreign oppressors was being rekindled again and again. The result was that “From 1565 to 1898, there were hundreds of revolts and individual acts of defiance against Iberian rule. The causes of these rebellions ranged from single antforeignism to revenge against individual abusive government officials or friars, to revolt against excessive taxation.” (P. Rodell, 2002, 11)

<sup>160</sup> T. F. Hout, *The Sociology of Religion*, 1958, 387. Furthermore, the sociologist Lawrence K. Frank comments on modernity and rationalism, “All over the world today, historically developed cultures are breaking down, losing their former integrity, as people abandon their long accepted sanctions and symbol systems. To use the old expression, the “cake of custom” has been broken; and as the “unseen hand” of tradition no longer provides guidance for individual and group living, people are becoming troubled, uncertain, and anxious, facing increasing confusion and conflict which they are unable to resolve. ... Thus people everywhere are faced with the task of renewing their culture and creating an industrial civilization. This means replacing the many self-defeating patterns that have been

## Conclusion

Ancient myth, with its supernatural subjects; religion, with its dogmas and institutions; and modernity, with its systematizing everything that can be dealt with quantitatively, each have in them man's formulations of what is real for him. Over this attempt of the expression of his beliefs is the thrust toward the Absolute, the reality or the existence of which can only either be believed in or not, since no adequate instrument has yet been produced to prove its existence to the satisfaction of science, the major force of the day.

In the course of scientific research, nature has been found to be exhibiting behavior reflective of the non-surety of events from man's side, and the insistence of interrelatedness and interdependence among each other for man's grope for existential meaning. How man describes nature scientifically seems not to be in opposition to the dynamics that he experiences as a feeling and thinking social being. I am sure there are many other instances like this that can be cited, and the doing so should not come in as a surprise if the assumption is that only one Creator is responsible for all. Just as the psalmist wrote, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands ..."<sup>161</sup>

The West has not been successful in completely replacing the Filipino's core consciousness – the one where concern for community and interpersonal relationships can override the concern for oneself (*utang-*

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used for ordering, controlling, and rationalizing the nonrational human organism. The challenging creative task is to provide more fruitful and socially productive ways for coping with our persistent human predicament: each of us has to function as an organism while living as a personality in a symbolic cultural world and participating in the social order." H. Hoagland and R. W. Burhoe, *Evolution and Man's Progress*, 1962, 170.

<sup>161</sup> Psalm 19:1, NIV.

*na-loob* and *bahala-na*), the one where he is comfortable with beliefs that escape reason. With this the Filipino has remained “flexible” and thriving, like his traditional housing material, the bamboo. Rather, the rationalistic worldview, the one that came out in force during the Renaissance, has been found to be wanting in giving full dignity to man. We are now in that stage of historic time, I think, where the claims of humanism and rationalism are being seriously questioned.

God’s revelation as handed down to us in the Scriptures is incomplete, as it is, if just isolated aspects of it are deemed legitimate for consideration. In fact there is no perfect basis for concluding that the myth sense of the narratives is irrelevant for modern man. What is apparent is that man continues to deal with his world in a mythical sense, implying that myth-talk was not just a stage in the evolution of human reasoning – that is, if there is one – but is actually a facility for man’s being able to assign meanings, significance, to whatever it is he is dealing with.

As such, his primary concern is still that of life and death, in whatever parlance he might speak of them. The core of the Christian message has an excellent answer for it. It is love in freedom, as well as freedom in love. The gist of the matter is that, the bringer of the gospel and the gospel himself, whether referred to as Jesus Christ or Jesus of Nazareth, emphasizes that rationality comes second to nonrationality in this matter. His only demand was faith as that of a child’s, the one that feels and thinks and acts at the same time. As he has said, “I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Luke 18:17, NIV.

## Recommendations

Browsing through my university library's Filipiniana Collection has made me realize that my total stay in school was very much impoverished as to giving me a clear picture of who I am in connection with my own people in this particular part of the globe. I was leafing through several thin paperback monographs, belying their weight in scholarly research and worth in pointing out to me and my generation that this was how we were, this is how we are now, and hence should be of great aid in our going forth from here. These are monographs by Filipino sociologists and anthropologists, lonely sojourners in paths shunned by most of us who would not think anymore, by reasons relatively legitimate, beyond what could be put on the table day after day.

The richness of Philippine mythology was opened up to me by Fr. F. R. Demetrio, S. J.'s *Myths and Symbols: Philippines* (Revised Edition). The intricacy of popular Filipino religiosity is partly explored by several De La Salle University professors in *and GOD said: HALA!* edited by Jaime A. Belita, C. M., himself one of the contributors. Likewise the evangelical Rodney L. Henry's *Filipino Spirit World* does so, and is a rare contribution to the predominantly Roman Catholic authorships on matters of the Philippine "spirit world." Its dealing with the pertinent issues is lucid and non-evading. In the book *Elements of Filipino Philosophy* by Leonardo N. Mercado, S.V.D., the way a Filipino individual thinks and feels is explored. Here is an excellent base on which the various Filipino religious affiliations can have more meaningful dialogue, not least between Philippine Roman Catholicism and Philippine Protestantism. Understanding the Filipino psyche have important implications to our educational system, as to how lessons should be delivered perhaps for efficient learning. All books by the anthropologist F. Landa Jocano are likewise invaluable. I think all these, and many others of the same kind that I

did not come across, are must-reads for a student of theology here in the Philippines. Understanding ourselves as a nation will help us teach our young ones how to sift through unregulated foreign influences streaming into our ever evolving culture by way of media and the cyberspace, thereby ensuing perhaps the relevance or the integrity of our societal structure. This way we do not become blind to our society's needs.

Add to these is the name Jaime C. Bulatao, S. J., author of *Phenomena and Their Interpretation*. Parts of this volume is a bit more specialized in research studies exploring areas related to extra-sensory perception/paranormal phenomena among the Filipinos, and so tries to scientifically study the connection between the 'spiritual' and the physical realms in our setting. This anthropological/sociological area of the Philippines is grossly neglected despite the enormous popularity Filipino "faith" healers have around the world, even before the 1970s. Also, in *Newsweek's* October 4, 2004 issue is the article *Brain Check* written by Herbert Benson, M. D., Julie Corliss, and Geoffrey Cowley. It speaks of scientific research being done concerning the connection between the human being's physical body and the mind. *Logotherapist* Viktor E. Frankl, himself a victim of Auschwitz, was convinced of this. In his book *Man's Search for Meaning* he said, "Those who know how close the connection is between the state of mind of a man – his courage and hope, or lack of them – and the state of immunity of his body will understand that the sudden loss of hope and courage can have a deadly effect."<sup>163</sup> I might as well mention Carl Sagan's book *Broca's Brain*, exploring the human brain's structure and

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<sup>163</sup> V. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning: an introduction to logotherapy, a revised and enlarged edition of From Death Camp to Existentialism*, 1962, 75.

capabilities. All these are mentioned in connection with the statement, "... myth is ... a pervasive structural form of consciousness,"<sup>164</sup> with the conjecture that science might one day uncover a physical explanation for the persistence of man's mythical way of expressing himself. Science seems to be in the verge of systematically showing that a person's different 'parts,' – perhaps his physical, thinking, and feeling parts – have connections that can be qualified empirically. These ideas somehow advocate the Hebrew and the Filipino concept of seeing the individual holistically.

Speculations about the future of the world, technology-wise, is about as modern as imaginations can get. Alvin Toffler's *Third Wave* and Robert North's *The World That Could Be* are more than speculations about the future. Their evaluations of the way the world is going based from the past has about the same interesting endpoint, that is, that the be all and end all of all human explorations is ideally the personal human himself and his society. As expected the theological aspect of man does not feature much in these works, nevertheless their obvious humanistic concerns are valuable in the further study of man, God's most special creation.

Of what importance are the modern theological formulations therefore? The ordinary churchgoer here in the Philippines is not even aware of them. Ideas on decades-old publications have not found their way yet into the mainstream, still waiting on the bookshelves for those few who are motivated enough to search for and discover them. And even if they are found they are generally not integrated immediately into the belief

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<sup>164</sup> *Encyclopedia Americana, Mythology*, vol. 19, 706.

confession of the congregation. Nevertheless, C. P. Cavafy urges us all to:<sup>165</sup>

Let us speak, let us speak —  
silence does not suit us,  
since we have been created  
in the image of the word.  
Let us speak, let us speak —  
since within us  
speaks divine thought ...

It is a predominant ancient belief that words have power. However this belief may be explained, it must be acknowledged that these modern theological formulations, offshoots of the rationalistic fever, are now part of the integral whole. As such more formulations will be manifested using them as points of departure, or as tangential points. They have become road marks with which other perspectives can be explored.

The Filipino religiosity may be sympathetic to some of these theologies and not to others, yet precisely in this awareness about them can the Filipino be able to define his position better, and as such be more sure of how he is going and where he is going. He will use these road marks freely, being clear to him that he is as legitimate as any peoples to establish his self-defined position.

This has been possible since the beginning, even before the false myth of the superior race was destroyed. F. Boas notes, "... of the appalling monotony of the fundamental ideas of mankind all over the globe."<sup>166</sup> He said this was the reason, "The similarity of cultural elements regardless of race, environment and economic conditions may also be explained as a result of parallel development based on the similarity of the psychic

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<sup>165</sup> K. Wojtyła, *Toward a Philosophy of Praxis*, A. Block and G. Czuczka, editors, 1981, 11.

<sup>166</sup> F. Boas, 1966, 154.

structure of man the world over.”<sup>167</sup> So man, being made of the same basic stuff, being made of the same raw material, will consequently generate ideas of the same type, though expressed differently.

The author of Colossians 3:11 affirms this legitimacy to freedom of everyone as: *Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.* (NIV) The author of 1Corinthians 12:13 legitimates this possibility: *For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.* (NIV) The Spirit, this is the contention of our rational consciousness. The nonrational, however, has no problem with it. Jesus Christ brought with him the good news that there is a way out of oppressive systems and debilitating perspectives, if only we are willing to take the risk of following the leading of “the Spirit [that] breaks out of the boundaries...”<sup>168</sup> wherever we are situated.

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<sup>167</sup> F. Boas, 1966, 177.

<sup>168</sup> From footnote 153.