

INDIGENOUS RELIGIONS AND CHRISTIANITY IN THE MODERNIZATION PROCESS OF THE PHILIPPINES

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There was until last year in the Kawasaki area in Villanueva, Misamis Oriental, a Balete tree that stood alone in the midst of that industrial complex. This tree had resisted all efforts to fell it since the very beginning. A number of lives had been lost as the Hanil, a Korean Road Building Corporation, tried to get it out the way. The folks around claimed that the environmental spirits or *engkantos* have their hospital there; hence, they would never think of leaving the place. Since the spirits were adamant, the engineers had to yield and the tree was left standing in all its splendor until a *mananambal* was called in to intercede. After the performance of appropriate sacrifices, the *mananambal* was finally able to fell the tree and a fee of ₱1000 was paid for his services. A mute testimony to the power of the "spirits" over man and his technical projects. Perhaps, too, it was a mute witness to something else. This, we shall try to isolate in the course of this paper.

As the title reads, my paper is expected to be a descriptive one, describing the roles of indigenous religions and Christianity in the modernization process.

Definition of Terms

1. *Indigenous religions* refer to the religions of the various non-Christian ethnic groups, whether they are found in the extreme north, in the central Bisayas or in the hinterlands of the south. I will not include folk Islam because that will make this paper overly long.

2. *Christianity* as used in this paper refers mainly to Roman Catholic Christianity, specifically, folk Catholicism. The rationale for this is that the greater bulk of Filipinos belong to the Roman Catholic Church, at least, nominally. Furthermore, many Protestant Filipinos go along in practice with their Catholic brethren in the observance of many folk rituals, even though, intellectually, they may not subscribe to them.

3. *Modernization* includes the following meanings: first, the secular meaning of development in the field of science, technology, industry and urbanization. This consists of a special set of

attitudes, mental and psychic, which enables man to enter into a way of life that is industrialized, highly technical, economically and socially mobile. The other meaning of modernization is more profound and might be called the Christian or humanist view. It is above all, *human* development which is achieved through growth in freedom, especially from political, economic and cultural constraints; liberation from traditional communal structures, transforming these into initiative, civic concerns for the problems of the greater majority, respect for human dignity and worth based on the belief in a transcendent being who is at once immanent, whose presence fills the person of man, the community of man, the world, the universe and to which man, as an individual and a collectivity belongs even as a man too belongs also to the universe with which he must by all means try to enter into communication and communion.

Division of the Paper

The first part consists of a description of the status of Christianity and indigenous religions in the Philippines today; the second describes modernization as it has taken place in the Philippines; the third describes the roles both Christianity and the indigenous religions play in this modernization process; and the fourth contains the conclusions.

I. Indigenous Religions and Christianity

What is the condition of the animistic religions of the various cultural communities of the Philippines today? To give an adequate answer is beyond the scope of this paper. I shall, therefore, pick but some relatively universal themes in these religions and focus analysis on them.

What are these themes?

First, the belief in the power of the spirits to touch the lives of men for good or for ill.

Second, the belief in the power of the dead, both the ancient dead and the newly dead, to also influence the lives of the living for good or for ill; and

Third, the belief that somehow or other, man can control the spirits and the soul by means of sacrifices, prayers and food taking, dancing, humble supplication, confession of faults and sins, and asking pardon for wrong done.

The Engkantos

Among the spirits who are able to touch men's lives are the *engkantos*.¹ The folks generally believe² that these *engkantos* have superior looks, fair complexion, high-bridged nose, fair-colored hair and in the past, looked like Spaniards or Americans while they now look like movie kings and queens. They are believed to be rich with palatial mansions, well-appointed furnishings, marble walls and floors. They are said to be powerful and endowed with *gahum* or *kalaki* (mana). They can cure and cast a spell. When offended, they can be appeased by sacrifices.

They may be romantically linked with human beings. The objects of their affections, who need not be very pretty or handsome, generally belong to the poorer segment of society and are almost always noted for being *boutan* (well-mannered and docile), *dili gapamalikas* (not given to cursing) and *hilumon* (the quiet type). The *engkantos* are known to be opposed to the Christian religion and practices and they dislike salt (perhaps because of its connections with exorcism and baptism?).

They are jealous lovers and jealous as well of their property. They are known to keep certain animals (birds, dogs, deer, pigs, chickens, etc.) as their *hinoptan*. They abhor noise, the reason of which is not yet clear. They are also known to be capricious.

If you brush against them unintentionally or accidentally get in their way, you will be afflicted with facial paralysis (*gitampaling* or *gilapara sa engkanto*), headache, stomachache or pains in the joints which no modern doctor will be able to cure.

They are generally believed to dwell in large trees (*balete*, *budbud*, *banyan* trees), in large boulders or in lakes and rivers.

Engkantos are generous. They lend furniture, china and silverware to their human friends. There are a number of tales telling how some folks leave written messages under a tree or outside a cave, expressing their desire to borrow utensils for a party, and then the next day, the things needed would be there waiting for the borrowers. As long as the borrowers return the things they borrow they may continue to enjoy similar favors in the future.

The *engkantos* sometimes bring their friends to their palatial homes, entertain them, serve them delicious food and give them gifts of precious cloths, stones, or gold. They usually give those they wish to befriend a certain precious stone called *mutya* or

diamante.³ This may be carried or embedded in the forearm of the possessor.

Engkantos can be repelled by noise, salt and curses. Stripping one's clothes, or even simply wearing one's clothes the wrong side out would also drive the *engkantos* away.

Belief in Souls Returning at Night

Another theme quite common in Philippine animistic religion is the belief in the spirits of the dead who return to the living at night.⁴ The survival of the souls of the people after death is a common belief among the indigenous population of the Philippines. Birth is generally believed to follow the entrance of the soul of the ancestral infant into a fetus, thus giving it life. However, a number of Filipino ethnic groups also believe that the soul is brought into the mother's womb either by eating a special fruit or food, bathing, or being near either a tree or a bird.⁵ In like manner, it is believed that the mere fact of death releases the soul from the body, making it begin to live a life away from the body. The soul must journey to the land of the dead if he is to continue to live, and visit his relatives.

The fact of death, then, establishes a reciprocity between the living and the dead, a reciprocity that cannot be shrugged off, unlike the reciprocity among the living. Parents when alive may be neglected by their offsprings, especially when they are old. Not so after death. The children must render to them all the obsequies for the deceased before burial. After burial, the prayers and the feasts follow; then the yearly remembrance, and the sharing of the goods of the family with the dead on birthday celebrations and other big feasts.

Among many Filipinos, however, it seems that the belief in souls is closely linked with the belief in *engkantos* and vice-versa. *Engkantos* are said to be capable of spiriting away human beings into their abodes while making it appear that the bodies of their victims lie lifeless in bed. In reality, however, the "corpse" is merely a banana stalk. What has happened to the spirited victim? Is he dead or alive? He is dead to the relatives who bury his "corpse". In the consciousness of his relatives and friends, he is gone and can return no more. But he is still living with *engkantos* according to the belief of others.

It is further believed that the soul of the dead continues to hover around although the living do all they can to help it depart.

It is said that one's consciousness of the presence of the soul of a dead person is stronger than one's consciousness of the presence of a living person. Hence, by the simple act of dying, a person for whom one cared little when alive appears to acquire a certain attractiveness, a centrality, a numinosity equivalent to the quality of the sacred. The dead is both repelling and alluring. You fear him, yet he attracts you. People hold wakes to make their dead stay awhile, yet they would not want the souls to visit them. All the waking and wailing, all the rituals for the dead, bespeak this ambivalent character of the attitude of the living towards the departed.⁶

The wonder is all the more since the presence of the dead which is centered either on the corpse or on its shadowy existence (intensely sensed after burial) is not seen as beneficial. In fact, it can pose a danger and cause the death of the living. It seems that the dead seeks the company of others, especially his loved ones; thus, he roams among the living and himself becomes an instrument of death. He who washes himself while the corpse awaits burial may die. The same fate awaits one who sweeps the floor, combs his hair or takes a bath before three days are gone after the burial.⁷ The presence of a corpse in the house thus renders everyone vulnerable. Indeed, it brings home to the living the essential precariousness of human existence. This may lie deepest in the ambivalent reaction toward the dead person and may account for the feeling of fear and fondness at the same time.

There is in man, therefore, whether living or dead, an element that places him on the side of the spirits. This element becomes activated by the event of dying and partakes of the quality of the sacred.

You may have noticed that I have not distinguished the reaction of the indigenous or animistic Filipinos from that of the Christians with regards to the theme of the *engkanto* and the dead. The reason is that both equally respond to the presence of a dead one. In fact, rituals and taboos found among the highlanders who are generally animistic are also, with certain modifications, found among the lowlanders who are generally Christians. Both believe that spirits exist; that they influence human lives for good or ill; that the dead survive the living in the soul; that death is the event which brings this about; that the dead remains and returns to the living on the third, ninth and fortieth day after the burial and on every anniversary of its death thereafter; that it is present during the novena prayers and will harm the inattentive or the drowsy; and that it partakes of the food especially set aside for it.

Folk Catholicism

Today there is in the Philippines a nationwide interest in the unconscious or the subconscious. The newspaper reports of Jean Dixon's predictions as well as the national and international popularity enjoyed by Filipino *arbolaryos* and psychic healers all over the country may have helped create this climate of interest. A child prodigy who could predict future events and cure even at a distance from his patient, is a frequent topic of news, radio, and TV reporting. In Patag, a suburb of Cagayan de Oro city, there is an eight-year old girl who is said to be the Blessed Virgin Mary's special medium. A lady seeress from Masantol, Pampanga, a poor unlettered person, enjoys a national reputation for healing. The daughter of a prominent government official in Cagayan de Oro, after Ate Auring's treatment, has begun to react favorably to stimuli, although for months she had been a veritable vegetable. Ate Auring is said to die every 14th of October in her little house in Nique, Masantol, Pampanga. On such occasions, she is laid out in white on an altar, and is resurrected through the power of the Virgin of Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage, supplicated by the prayers of the faithful.

This interest in signs and prodigies is also manifested in such churchly movements as the *Cursillo*. In an intense emotional situation, the repentant sinner requests the Lord for a sign that he has been forgiven. In some cases, a sign is vouchsafed. The eyes of the picture or the statue of Jesus Christ before whom he prays is noticed to wink or move, and he feels pierced through and through by those divine eyes.

Of late, charismatic gatherings have proliferated in the nation's capital as well as in the provincial cities. Many of the practitioners are ordinary lay folk, but some of them have shown amazing powers of clairvoyance, gift of tongues, healing and even prophecy. In a provincial hospital of Misamis Oriental, it is claimed that some government physicians are successfully supplementing their profession with faith healing.

In 1972, I edited, translated from the vernacular to English, and annotated a booklet of magical prayers (or *Librito sa Orasyon*) published in 1900 and authored by Juan Calang of Surigao. It was given me by a friend, the parish priest of Surigao del Norte. For a while, the printed books gathered dust in our *bodega* (store-room). About two years ago, a friend of mine, a newspaper correspondent of one of the national dailies, wrote a news item on

it, and sent it to the various newspapers in Manila. The response was amazing. To date, I have sold more than two thousand copies, a record for publications of this nature. Orders came from all over the country, some even as far as the Batanes in the north. A third printing is now being prepared. Orders are still coming. The marvel is that the orders on the main come from the Metro Manila area, and the clients include university professors, lawyers, doctors, businessmen, policemen, the military, as well as ordinary housewives and janitors. I have even received an order from a certain Monsignor of the Philippine Independent Church. And Santo Tomas University Press requested for a review copy.

The interest in the more recondite and the unconscious is also seen in the popularity of Ananda Marga, Transcendental Meditation, various yoga practices, the occult, witchcraft, magic, and sorcery. The bookstores in Manila and other cities carry many books and pamphlets, generally of foreign vintage, on these various subjects. Of late, the most popular has been the books of Schroeder titled *Psychic Discoveries Behind the Iron Curtain* and of Peter Tompkins and Christopher Bird (Avon: New York, 1974) called the *Secret Life of Plants*.

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 the years following the Vietnam Wars and the peak of student activism in Europe and the USA. Perhaps this is a reaction to the failure of Western leadership in upholding the values that make man be. Thus, the interest in the more ancient ways of discovering the authentically human in the midst of worldwide dehumanization.

This interest in the occult and the hidden process of the mind is not really new in the Philippines. Folk healers have been existing since time immemorial. They were banned for a while during the Spanish regime but they simply went underground. The people continued to esteem and respect these ancient practices for they saw value in them. As a matter of fact, these became a foci of identity over and against Western domination in politics, culture and religion. When the sick could not be cured by modern doctors, the people resorted to remedies which they called *inato* (our own); or in the Bisayan regions *Binisaya*; that is, "Bisayan remedies." In the heart of these remedies is the native *arbolaryo*, *mananambal*, or medicine man. Central to the folk healer's healing technique is what some prominent psychologists call "the induce-

ment of altered states of consciousness."⁸ Through a deft manner of interviewing the patient, and by suggestions as well as some clever manipulations coupled with the patient's respect and trust, the folk healer is able to veritably hypnotize the patient and effect a cure.⁹

What has transpired in the Philippines is but a recognition of the valid aspects of folk healing for humanism. What is happening is a rediscovery of the values of folk religion. This seems to go side by side with the rediscovery of the elements in our culture that are truly expressive of ourselves especially in the drama, dance, and the other arts.¹⁰

Even official church authorities have begun to look kindly on the local forms of worship and religiosity. Bishop Claver and his band of younger bishops in Mindanao and the Bisayas are behind the movement to give popular religious expression its due in the life and worship of the people.

The Roman Catholic Church

The official Catholic Church in the Philippines has accepted in full measure the teachings of the II Vatican Council on the need to modernize; i.e., to give each and every citizen religious freedom to work for ecumenical gatherings between Roman Catholics and other Christian denominations; to recognize the validity of the non-Christian religions as a way to God, and to be open to the world, to secularism, to science, even to communism and the other ideologies while maintaining allegiance to the word of God and the *magisterium*.

The Catholic Church has implemented the directives of the II Vatican and established the episcopal conference of the Philippines, as well as the regional conferences for Luzon, Bisayas and Mindanao. On the parish level, it has encouraged the formation of the parish councils. The episcopal conference has given concrete directives on such issues as the Martial Law, family planning and birth control as well as on the validity of indigenous religious forms of worship and symbolism, and the need to incorporate the gospel message in them. Lay deacons have been established in some diocese, and in Bukidnon and other Mindanao episcopal regions, the barrio apostles, and the Christian community seminars have been very effective in renewing Christian spirit and commitment to disciplinship.

In general, it can be said that the Roman Catholic Church supports and approves the processes of modernization so long as the human values and the distinctive culture of the people are safeguarded and the Catholic doctrine is maintained.

II. The Modernization Process in the Philippines

Briefly, let us go over the Philippine scene and see how modernization has implanted itself there. A visitor to the Philippines cannot miss the massive government projects to industrialize the country. The press, radio, and TV never fail to remind the people of a new sugar central built, another nickel or copper mine being opened, or another banking corporation establishing a provincial branch. From Jolo to Batanes the Government is ever present: advising and directing the industrializing process. Plush hotels in many provincial cities offer to tourists the same conveniences they would have in hotels in the national capital. Mammoth government spending has raised the nation's debt to 5.8 billion dollars. And the point of no return has been reached. More and more will have to be borrowed to complete the projects begun and to allow for the possibility of payment. They say to make good such huge debts will be the task not only of the grandchildren of the Filipinos today, but the grandchildren of their grandchildren.

The unspoken philosophy behind all this is: go modern, industrialize, and all your troubles — economic, political, educational, social, even religious — will be solved.

Meantime, a huge number of poor people are forced to relocate themselves in areas altogether alien to their accustomed way of living. Fishermen are forced to become farmers, while former farmers used to growing corn and rice are made to farm other products demanded by government programs. Massive family planning has been launched. USAID and POPCOM through the controlled press has tried to reach the barrio women. Yet the government people themselves are the first to admit that the program has not been very successful. So many babies are being born everyday.

Tourism has been boosted. The papers play up the scenic wonders of Batulao, Camiguin Island, Baguio City and other tourist attractions. Mindanao, traditionally the waif in overall allotment of the nation's wealth, has of late received a fat portion from the government coffers. The Muslim and other cultural communities are the main beneficiaries. This attention has been won at

the price of much bloodshed and animosity between army and PC on the one hand, and the Muslim rebels and the disruntled Christian civilians on the other.

Roads all over Mindanao and the other provinces are being built to subserve a future mobility of goods from the farms and the industries, as well as the easy flow of ideas and mutual interaction of people for enrichment.

All kinds of incentives are offered to government servants: enticing salary scales, generous per diems and allowances, seminars in Manila, Baguio, and Cavite, opportunities for travel and improvement. Today, to be in the government is more prestigious than before. Schools and private corporations are losing prime personnel to the city and to provincial and national government agencies. Again the philosophy behind this is: spend money to generate more money. Meanwhile, debts are piling high.

There is unmistakable evidence of cultural revival and maturity. The arts have never been so lavishly patronized as during the last decade with the building of the Cultural Center of the Philippines, the Folk Arts Theater, the National Arts Center on Mt. Makiling, the National Convention Center, and the various Museums all over the archipelago. Literature, drama, the dance, as well as the movies have shown maturity in employing native themes and motifs. Ethnicity has been underscored with the formation of the PANAMIN and other government agencies to attend to the peculiar needs of the cultural communities. The schools, trade and commerce, government services, infrastructures, hospitals, rural electrification, improved water system, transportation and travel, all have received a boost during the past years, particularly since the establishment of martial law.

It is clear then 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. We shall have occasion to dwell on this more fully in the following section.

III. Indigenous Religions and Christianity in the Modernization Process

Let us now try to tackle the heart of this paper. How have the indigenous religions and Christianity, folk and official, helped or hindered the modernization process in the Philippines?

Beliefs in the spirits, especially in the *engkantos*, as well as belief in the spirits of the dead at first blush may seem altogether unrelated to modernization. Yet, an analysis of both yields common points of contact. As will be pointed out below, these contact points lie in the psychic attitudes and habits required by modernization, and which the indigenous religions and folk Catholicism as well have been able to promote among the people.

For massive government projects to succeed, a good deal of popular cooperation is required; cooperation which concretely costs the people so much by way of suffering and hardships. For the Kawasaki Sintering Plant, for instance, to become a reality, many families had to be relocated from the coastlines of Villanueva to the highlands of Kaliyagan in the interior. The fact that a large segment of the people can be prevailed upon to do so by government agents, often without violence and bloodshed, betrays a high level of moral control as a general trait of the people. The same sacrifice has been asked of the Chico river basin dwellers, of the people in the Pantabangan area in Nueva Ecija as well as in other places where hydroelectric projects have been installed. Although protests were made under concerned civilian leadership, still the outcome has been invariably a peaceful, though forced, acquiescence to the programs of the government.

I do not mention this as a mark of approval. I only want to point out that the massive government projects for modernization on the economic and industrial levels have not met with adamant opposition on the people's part.

But some would say, there has been no opposition because of martial law, the rule of the gun. The people are afraid. There is some truth to this, but it is not the whole truth. After all, martial law in the Philippines has been quite mild in comparison with its counterparts in other Asian lands. Only in actual arrests have people been constrained at gunpoint. In the case of the relocatees, except in some cases in Metro Manila, it was the civilian government employees who did the negotiating and persuading of the people. Surely, in some cases, the civilian employees did use threat of arrest and imprisonment for non-compliance. But the non-violent nonbloody opposition, however, despite threats and intimidations, could also speak for the quality of long sufferance on the part of the people.

It is this quality of long sufferance that needs looking into. The doggedness of the Filipinos has often been symbolized by the silent strength of the water buffalo or carabao. It is more than

that, however. For the capacity to sustain suffering and pain in an attitude of patience and calm is not only physical but above all, it is mental. It is a result of spiritual discipline. The poor man's life can be a training ground for strength of character. This is where the contribution of the native religions and folk Christianity to modernization chiefly lies.

If there is a value stressed by these religious systems it is this: one must suffer hardships before any good can be obtained. The power to cure diseases, to penetrate the secrets of the heart, to know the names of herbs and their medicinal powers, to commune with the spirits and the gods, to call upon them to come and be present — these are gifts vouchsafed only after long and, quite often, fearsome initiation. Nor are these initiatory trials enough. One must observe strict requirements and taboos, weekly on Fridays, monthly at the waxing and the waning of the moon, yearly on the evenings of Holy Thursday or Good Friday. One must fast, kneel, or stretch out the arms for long hours in lonely caves or crowded church doors or cemeteries if one's powers are to be renewed and replenished.

Nor is this limited only to the religious functionaries. The communities which the shaman, the *arbolaryo* or the sorceress serves are expected to participate in the rigors undertaken by the religious leaders. 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. In some instances, a sorcerer may even be required to kill his own child in order to recharge the power of the curing bottle. And all these strictures are gone through without complaints, disgust or ill-will, for everyone seems to understand the purpose for all these rituals. If this regimen of discipline is not conducive to making people capable of sustaining strain and pain, what would? These psychic qualities to stand up under enormous odds when required for the industrialization of the nation seem to have a direct cause and effect link with the rigors required by the native religions and folk Christianity.

The Cenaculo

One of the practices for which folk Catholicism is famous or notorious in the Philippines is the performance of the so-called *Cenaculo*.¹¹ This is a folk drama usually performed on the streets or an outdoor stage, and climaxed by the reenactment of the cru-

cifixion of Jesus Christ. The drama is realistic. The actor who plays the role of Christ carries a heavy bamboo or wooden cross, wears a coarse black or brown garment and a crown of thorns. As he moves along, he is jeered and taunted by the "soldiers" and the "Jews" who are likewise garbed accordingly. Whenever he falls, Christ is beaten by his torturers and urged to get up. Meanwhile, the bystanders sympathize by showing visible expressions of pity and compassion on their faces. They also address words of comfort and kindness to the "Mother" who is accompanied by the "holy women" and John, the disciple whom Jesus loved.

"Calvary" is usually the front of the village or town church (in Manila, the threshold of the Cathedral), or the town plaza. Here the emotions take on a new high. As Christ is literally nailed to the cross and hoisted up alongside the "two thieves," sighs of anguish and pity emanate from the audience. In sight and hearing of a large crowd, Christ repeats the familiar Seven Last Words, undergoes convulsions, is jeered once again and challenged "to get down from the Cross, if you are son of God." He is given the bitter drink of vinegar and gall in response to his complaint of: "I thirst." For some 15 to 20 minutes the actor who is impersonating Christ dramatically simulates the death throes. In some places, they even thrust a spear through his side. The supporting actors are themselves visibly touched. Many of the women faint and are hurried away. Rare is the spectator who remains dry-eyed. It is the experience of empathy for the dying Christ that is both personally and collectively moving. This phenomenon of a public spectacle centered on man's redemption by Jesus is a potent means of consolidating Christian faith and commitment. Seeing the Savior suffer and die, witnessing the travails of Mary and her friends, the audience is given an example of heroism beyond compare.

Besides the *Cenaculo*, there are other folk institutions that instruct the people on how to face the pressures and challenges of living. The motivations behind these institutions is religious: to imitate the example of Christ suffering and dying for mankind. Among these are the *flagellantes* who either flog themselves until they bleed, or get others to do so. Another is the *pasyon* or the *pabasa*. From the start of Holy Week to the evening of Good Friday, people chant the whole history of salvation, from *Genesis* up to the Gospel and accounts of the passion and death of Christ. At the end of every main section of salvation history, a *pangaral* or moral lesson is given.¹²

Another devotion popularly inspired, but already accepted by the official Church is the *Via Crucis* or *Way of the Cross* which is performed by an entire congregation, by small groups, or by individuals, generally on Fridays and Sundays of Lent (or at any time as their devotion dictates). The prayers and instructions read reinforce the need to follow Christ. The three-hour devotion from noon until about three o'clock on Good Fridays has the same intention, i.e., to unite the people with Christ in his passion. Afterwards, there follows the chanting of the Passion account of St. John, the Prayers of the Church, the community, the nation, the entire world, the Adoration of the Cross and the Communion Service. By about five o'clock in the afternoon, the long procession of the dead Christ or *Santo Entiero* follows. Closing up the rear is the *carrosa* or cart with the *Mater Dolorosa* or Sorrowful Mother. A large crowd usually participates.

It cannot be denied, then, that the observance of Holy Week and the many devotions connected with it, both popular and official, are geared towards helping the people become strong in spirit and implanting in their consciousness what was taught even in the animistic level, that if one is to acquire spiritual growth, one must pay for it. The whole community is thereby instructed that Christ had to suffer before he could enter into glory. So, the Christian, too, must plant his steps into the bloody footprints of the Saviour if he must rise with Him.

This theme of sympathy with the Saviour is also picked up by the local and national mass media. The announcer will say for instance during Good Friday, "Radio Mindanao Network joins the nation in commemorating the Passion and Death of Our Lord Jesus Christ." The music in the air and the shows on TV screens generally inspire a religious or sombre atmosphere. Thus, the whole nation mourns and suffers with Christ. Truth to tell, there are many Filipinos who are left untouched, who could not care less whether or not Christ lived and died to save mankind. Yet, it is also true that the mass media would not pick up an event with regular seriousness year in and year out, unless there is a solid mass base. Even Philippine Airlines and the other systems of transportation join the nation in sorrow by not scheduling any flights on Good Friday.

The effect of this communal observance on the psyche of the nation cannot be shrugged off, for it is a very public event, looming large in the consciousness of every Filipino. The effect cannot be otherwise. Unlike the other religious festivities and the secular

national celebrations, the people prepare for the Holy Week which is introduced by the forty days of fast and abstinence. Although it is true that the rigors of fasting have been greatly reduced (people are encouraged to use their own judgment in substituting other acts of penitence), still the readings at masses, the sermons, the instructions on Sundays and weekdays all subserve one purpose: to prepare the spirit of the Catholic for the observances of Holy Week and Easter. Thus, despite the rampant secularism which accompanies modernization, the serious church-goer and the more traditionally oriented non-churchgoers cannot be influenced by the deeply religious motives behind all these observances. In this way both the indigenous religion and Christianity, particularly on the folk level, are strong assets in preparing the spirit of the people for the rigors and demands of modernization.

IV. Modernization Not an Unmixed Gain

Modernization in its scientific, technological and industrial aspects is not altogether a gain without the mixture of loss. To borrow lines from Philip Sherrard, because of

the strenuous activity of hard-headed industrialists and bankers, possessed by a single-minded devotion to making money and to extending their power through production and the use of complicated machines and other devices . . .¹³

the modern world has witnessed at least in some instances,

the mile after mile of workers' dwellings placed back to back where people drag out their existence in conditions of foulness and filth never known in the serf's cottage of the Middle Ages . . .¹⁴

deprived

of the most elementary facilities of sunlight and fresh air, and the cutting of all links between the city and country surrounding it; . . . the systematic defacement of the countryside itself, the spread of disease, the spread of noise . . .¹⁵

Even when the factory slums have been transformed through government housing projects into high rise apartments that now dot the countryside of modern cities like Tokyo, Singapore and Manila, we still know that people are not altogether happy. There is rampant a harsh criticism of the existing social system by a generation who were spared the anguish of war and who were born to unprecedented prosperity. These high rise blocks of apartments become the reason for the anguish. To quote from van Baal:

"There they are, everyone in his own apartment identical with all the other ones, each having his meals in the same corner, his bedroom on the same side, all alike and all isolated, the one from the other, each in his own cell in the shiny honeycomb. Our social welfare has been depersonalized. In the social machinery it is not the person who counts but the functions. The huge exchange of values and services of our social fabric has lost the power of the gift to change the interaction into partners because actors are no longer individuals, but functionaries."¹⁶

Only quite recently, Dr. E.F. Schumacher in his exciting little book *Small is Beautiful* has given eloquent witness to the irreparable losses humanity has suffered because of the "excessively quantitative orientation of modern economics, an orientation totally devoid of quantitative understanding. . . Modern man has been nurtured on the illusion of unlimited power over nature, not regarding himself as part of that nature but as an outside force destined to dominate and conquer it . . . forgetting that even if he won the battle he would be on the losing side since he is using irreplaceable capital which man has not made but simply found, treating this capital as an income item. And after we have destroyed our environment in the name of science and progress, we optimistically look up to "nature or to "science" to undo the imbalance. But already there is overwhelming evidence that the great self balancing system of nature is becoming increasingly unbalanced. And the further this process is allowed to go, the more difficult it will be to reverse it, if, indeed, the point of no return has not been passed already."¹⁷

But how can we control this life-destroying tide? Dr. Schumacher describes the task of the present generation as one of "metaphysical reconstruction". Wisdom demands a new orientation of science and technology towards the organic, the gentle, the nonviolent, the elegant, the beautiful. As humanity acquires more competence in science and technology, it must resolutely face the problem of spiritual and moral truth. In an age of giantism and its consequent violence, "there is wisdom in smallness, if only on account of the smallness and patchiness of human knowledge." The mistakes of small communities are inconsequential besides the devastations caused by gigantic groups motivated by greed and envy and the lust of power in which the future counts as nothing compared with the slightest economic gain now! We primarily and consistently cultivate greed and envy and build up a vast array of totally unwarrantable wants and this

mad drive is not slackened by the rising cost of living. "Wisdom has been replaced by cleverness and although much has been written about wisdom it can only be found inside oneself following liberation from the pursuit of material ends seeking the spiritual."¹⁸ It is sufficiently clear then that modernization in its more profound and spiritual and Christian aspects has not been subserved by modernization in its secular and technical sense.

Our modern industrial complexes, whether government owned or privately owned, are so structured after a philosophy of life that is essentially destructive of the human. For man is looked upon merely as a function, not a person. Even when much material benefits are given, the spirit remains starved. The social services no longer increase personal growth, because the sense of gift-giving has been replaced by welfare dole outs which are handed out with little or no regard for human feeling. The welfare organizations have forgotten the essential advice given by St. Vincent de Paul to his nun associates as he lay dying: "My dear sisters, in dealing with the poor, never show any impatience; that is the only way they will forgive you for the loaf of bread you give them."

Nature for modern man has no more secrets. It no longer arouses awe and respect. Nothing is sacrosanct any more; not even the mysterious processes of human conception, birth and death. Delicacy is thrown to the winds. Ours is a very immodest and immoderate world.

The world and the universe, man included, has been flattened and neutralized, stripped of all sacred and spiritual qualities of all hierarchical differentiation. The celestial spheres are a machine. The human mind is considered like a machine "constructed out of dissections, analysis and calculations. And a world view founded on the level of the machine brings after it a mechanistic world."¹⁹

A dire result of this mechanistic view of the world was man's alienation from nature and his environment. Man no longer looked upon nature as a partner with whom he should cooperate to build life, and the things that increase and foster life, but as a reserve to be explored and exploited to build power, economic, political, military. At least this was true until about five years ago. Since then a new realization of man's harmony with the surrounding cosmos seems to be emerging in many concerned circles.

Herein lies the chance for the indigenous religions and Christianity to help bring about this metaphysical reconstruction.

Belief in Spirits Comes Out to the Transcendent

Belief in spirits keeps open a dimension of life which scientism or the over-valuation of the scientific method, extolling it as the one and only approach to reality, has tried to keep closed. For science does not recognize the dimension of the spiritual and intangible since this cannot be verified by quantitative means.

On the other hand, the Filipino animists and the Christians who still value their animistic realities do acknowledge the beyond and the transcendent. To them, the physical universe has always been (*signa rei sacrae*), "expressions of divine cosmology, symbols linking the visible and the invisible, earth and heaven."²⁰ The limbs of man's body as well as his power to think, to know, to desire and decide, the whole man himself is a manifestation, a revelation of a spirit who is one and many at the same time; and who, in his innermost being, is beyond oneness and diversity, because he lies beyond the reach of the concepts even of the most brilliant and keenest human intellect.²¹

Belief in Spirits Links Man with Nature

Even as the animist and the religious man feels that he carries within himself, especially in the event of death, an element which links him with the beyond and the sacred, namely, his spirit, so also does he believe that his body indwelt by his soul has a con-natural affinity with the world and the universe. The woodlands, the stones, the trees, the rivers, the animals, the world of light above, they all form with him an immense interpersonal reality interlinked in harmony and sympathy. That is why the animist believes in the rightness and justice of the world. When nature is laughing, he laughs with it; when it is angry, he discreetly keeps distance and studies how he might humanize it, and bring it to human level, by addressing it and offering sacrifices of food and drinks, garlands, and chants.²² Some taboos and observances may no longer be relevant or many seem foolish to us, but no one can deny that some of them are very pertinent and that the basic orientation behind them is sound. For even while man widens and deepens his understanding of nature, he should maintain a healthy respect and distance from it and must never consider himself destined to conquer and overpower it. For the world and the things in it are given to be used precisely that life, of the body

and the spirit, may grow and reach its flowering not to be made free with and plundered. Only then will his economic and industrial successes not work to his utter failure as a man.^{2 3} In other words, a religious spirit is always required even among businessmen, traders and scientists. The problem of the modern world is really this: man has become unwise precisely because he has become irreligious. And we are suffering its severe consequences. The religiosity of the animist with his beliefs in *engkantos*, the souls of the dead, and the influence these have for good or for ill on human everyday living is at least more tolerable than that of the unfeeling, unbelieving, aggressive, immodest spirit of the times which knows no distinction between the sacred and the profane, the spiritual and the material, the qualitative and the quantitative, the secular and the religious.

Because of his confusion, conceptual and moral to begin with, modern man's behavior is also confused. Because he sees no difference on the conceptual level, he sees no difference either on the behavioral level. Thus, the world is being gradually propelled to its own destruction in the name of science and technology and progress.

In brief then, this is what comes through clearly from this rapid survey: the indigenous religious and folk Christianity have prepared the Filipinos for the process of modernization understood on the plane of technology. Through the discipline these native religious forms impose, the people have acquired the mental and psychic attitudes necessary to enter and survive in an industrialized, technological and economically and socially mobile society.

What is a problem is how to achieve modernization understood as total human development through growth in freedom, especially political, economic and cultural liberation from traditional, communal structures, growth in human dignity and an openness to the transcendent being, thus making the human being a real person in communication with the cosmos and in communion with God and other human persons.

Technological economic modernization tends to misprize the human person as congenitly pointed out by Dr. Schumacher and other writers and thinkers.

There are other dangers inherent in the very structures of these indigenous religious forms. Belief in spirits while it opens out on the transcendent can also become a hindrance. A believer in the power of the spirits is equally susceptible to demonic

trickeries and illusions even as he is liable to their inspirations and instructions. And while belief in spirits may link man with nature, it can also be enslaving, so that the process of liberation becomes quite impossible to attain. Witness the many protest movements in the long history of the people of the Philippines which have littered the annals of these islands with so much blood and destruction in the name of a return to the paradisiac existence before the stratification of the classes of society or before the coming of Christianity and the white man.

The solution of these problems is not the task of this paper. Certainly religion alone cannot resolve these conflicts. Philosophy and critical attitude must constantly clarify and purify our symbols so that what is valid in folk religions and folk Christianity may be kept and developed as times and circumstances change. Science, technology and all modern aids must be harnessed to preserve these modern human discoveries and inventions from running riot and propelling man to destruction. In brief, good and responsible persons should use and direct both science and religion towards the achievement of truly human, and therefore divine ends.

Conclusions

The balete tree that refused to be felled for a long while in the Kawasaki area in Villanueva, Misamis Oriental, was believed by the local folks to have been indwelt by spirits. I would rather look at it as the external symbol or objective correlative, of the protest, unspoken but real, in the psychic minds of the inhabitants of that area from the ancient past to the present; a protest against the devastation of the environment which has been permeated with humanity, understanding, gentleness, sympathy, concern, friendliness of the balete. By tearing up the area in order to give way to psychic fact that adamantly reacts to the rampant tearing up of soil, rock, trees and the thousand and one little things that make up the scenery has been dramatically symbolized by the stubbornness of the balete. By tearing up the area in order to give way to the vast and giant industrial complex, it is the people's lives that were being torn.

The very felling of the tree finally by the instrumentality of *mananambals*, or the native specialists of the sacred and of communing with the spirits, leaves something disturbing in me. It

shows that money can gradually whittle away psychic opposition. It would have been far better if the tree were standing there. At least it would symbolize the people's silent but forceful protest against the overall ravagement of nature and environment.

But this is a further idea to explore at some other propitious time.

NOTES

¹The term is interesting because it is drawn from the Spanish *encantar* meaning "to put under a spell." And the form *encanto* means "I can cast a spell on someone." Although the Spanish name has become popular (other cognates are: *engkantado* or *encantado*, or *ingkanto* (Lieban & Hart), the more ancient names to designate these spirits has come down to us from the writings of early Spanish chroniclers. One such name is *tumao* (Povedano MS, 1578; *diwata, tiao, omalagar*, Alzina, MS, Part 1, Book 3, p. 211ff). Among present day animists, names designating this physico-psychic reality are also found, like *tagbanua* among the Bukidnon of Mindanao, *diwata* among the Manobo, *tonong* among the Maranao, *panulay* in Siquijor; etc. The duplicity of the *engkanto* is well known in Philippine tradition and has been written about rather extensively by Philippine scholars. (Cf. Richard W. Lieban, "The Dangerous Inkganto: Illness and Social Control in a Philippine Community," *American Anthropologist* 64 No. 2 (April 1962), 306-312; Donn V. Hart's "The Filipino Villager and His Spirits," *Solidarity* 1, No. 1 (Oct./Dec. 1966), 65-71; and my own "The Engkanto Belief: an essay in interpretation," *Philippine Studies* 16, Nos. 3/4 (July/Oct. 1968), 136-143; and again, Lieban, "Shamanism and Social Control in a Philippine City," *Indiana University Folklore Institute Journal* 2, No. 1 (June 1965), 43-54.

²Francisco R. Demetrio, S.J., (ed.) *Dictionary of Philippine Folk Beliefs and Customs*, 4 vols., (Xavier University, Cagayan de Oro City, RP, 1970), ##1147-1232.

³Demetrio, *Dictionary*, #565; ##497-500. Cf. also Richard Arens, S.V.D., "Animistic Ritual in Leyte and Samar," *Philippine Sociological Review*, iv (October 1956), *passim*.

⁵M. Gloria, "A Visit to the Negritoes of Central Panay, Philippine Islands," *Primitive Man*, 12 (1939), p. 99.

⁶I. van Baal, *Symbols for Communication: an introduction to the anthropological study of religion*, (Van Gorcum & Co., N.V., Assen, 1971), pp. 269f.

⁷Demetrio, *op. cit.*, ##932; 1005; 1006; 2267.

⁸Jaime Bulatao, S.J., Ph.D., "Altered States of Consciousness in the Philippine Religion," a paper read in the Second National Conference of the Philippine Psychological Society, August 1976, Divine Word University, Tacloban City, RP., Typescript, 13 pp.;

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰Cf. *infra*, p. 11.

¹¹Nicanor G. Tiongson. *Kasaysayan at estetika ng Sinakulo at ibang dulang panrelihiyon sa Malolos kalakip ang orihinal partiture mga larawan ng pagtatambal ni Nicanor G. Tiongson*. (Quezon City, Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1975. 342 p.

¹²Demetrio, "Filipino Folk Memory and the Pasyon," *Asian Pacific Quarterly of Cultural and Social Affairs*, iv, No. 4 (Seoul, Korea. Spring. 1973), 53-58 p.

¹³Philip Sherrard, "Modern Science and the Dehumanization of Man." *Studies in Comparative Religion* (Spring 1976), pp. 74-75.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 75.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 75.

¹⁶J. van Baal, *op. cit.*, p. 224-225.

¹⁷Dr. E.F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful* (Blond and Briggs, London. 1977), p. 24.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁹Sherrard, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 75.

²¹Filoteo Pelingon M.S.C. & John G. Bovenmars, M.S.C., *Listen! A Textbook in Philosophy of Religion* (Jesuit Educational Association, Manila. 1973), p. 35ff; 72ff, and *passim*.

²²I. van Baal, *op. cit.*, p. 216ff, 229ff, and *passim*.

²³E. Schumacher, *op. cit.*, p. 26-27; 29-30.