A THEOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO: "BAGO MYTHOLOGY AND THE ECOSYSTEM"

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Recapitulation of the Paper

Dr. Hornedo's paper presents materials from the mixed or border culture of the Bagos; where it is currently believed that gods and humans once lived in the same world, although the gods were considered to have their distinct abodes or dwelling places from that of humans. But such 'locatable' gods were considered to be 'mobile' as well; because, when their abodes were violated, or damaged, or abused, they got offended and transferred their abode elsewhere. And, in fact, humans now suffer the dire consequences of a deserted world without these life-giving gods; wildlife has vanished and the ecosystem has been destroyed because the gods have departed.

Such current belief among the Bagos is mythically understood and narrated. That is not to say that what the Bagos narrate is fictitious or false. Dr. Hornedo then presents two Bago myths — the Myth of Lightning (ML) the Myth of the Harvest Ritual (MHR). He disentangles the components of these myths and re-states them in an attempt to show us their consistency. Aside from the myths, Dr. Hornedo also brings out other Bago data which should not be overlooked. These are much shorter wonder-stories, which we might label as "miracle-stories," such as: "the precocious strength of an infant, the red leg of a rooster, the spotless blackness of a dog, the taillessness of a pig, the unusual handsomeness (*lawlawigan* of a hero, and the deformity of appearance of an unusual healer (who cannot heal himself). "We must account for these data as well. If, as I would proffer, the myth narrates the experience of a revelation that takes place or has taken place gradually as in a historical process, these miracle stories also convey the experience of revelation that comes or has come about suddenly. Be that as it may, at the end of this paper, Dr. Hornedo repeated what he

reiterated elsewhere as a need in our modern scientific world - i.e. "a mythic understanding of science, and a scientific understanding of myth." I cannot agree with him more. Given the time I can only speak of the scientific understanding of myth from the science of discipline I am familiar with. But before I go on, I would like to make the following amplifications; so that we are sure we are in dialogue or talking terms.

First, myth is a method as science is also a method; both seek to convey some "truth", as understood from different perspectives. Myth is more concerned with revelatory experience and is more subjective, while science is concerned with discovery and is more objective; but neither is completely subjective nor completely objective. I will be strong here on the subjective, at least from the standpoint of the myth-narrator.

Secondly, both the mythicist and scientist have their limitations in having a full grasp or control of their subject matter. Either they themselves or their methods are faced with "gaps." A mythicist is faced with gaps in religious experience, whether by him/her or his/her people. What he/she has to do is to be open to experiences of other people and to what is happening in the world. A scientist also faces gaps of discoveries in his discipline and therefore aims to fill-in those scientific gaps through interdisciplinary dialogue, or by becoming a specialist. Multi-disciplinarians are rare, much less multi-specialists.

In any case, there would be as many mythical scientists as there are scientific specialists. They are recognized by the neophytes in that special discipline, like "sheep that recognize the voice of their Shepherd" as Jesus put it. A mythical scientist and a scientific mythicist may cross paths in the same person, or each person may seek to perform a dual role. However, there should be no confusion of the methods or disciplines used. And, if this is so, a mythical scientist would be a scientist open to interpretation of facts (including religious experiences) that mythicist are pointing to; and a scientific mythicist would be a mythicist open to facts of interpretation that other sciences or methods are pointing to. As John Polkinghorne, a physicist and theologian as well as a priest of the Anglican Church, says about both enterprises (in his book, *Science and Creation*),

> "... religion without science is confined; it fails to be completely open to reality. Science without religion is incomplete; it fails to attain the deepest possible understanding."

In short we all have a common task, with no uniform way of doing it. The point is that we are engaged in an activity from beyond within ourselves and what is given us. The present question is what to make of what comes to us.

Scientific Understanding of Myth

1. Dr. Hornedo gives us one social scientific understanding of myth which I need not repeat. We can go straight to his thesis of his rendering of the Bago myths. What is portrayed in these myths - if I get Dr. Hornedo correctly - is similar to the whole biblical story from the myth of creation, the fall of humans and its consequences, and then the attempt at reconciliation by means of the ritual whereby humans imitate what the Divine did "in illo tempore." In other words, the myth is the story of 'Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained.' The two Bago myths are consistent not only in site but also as variants of a universal myth which Eliade has called and entitled his book, *The Myth of the Eternal Return.*

A scientist like Dr. Hornedo maintains a certain objectivity in relation to the data materials or object of study. By way of an input, may I comment on the more subjective aspect of the myth or mythic narrative. As I have earlier said, Myth is a method as science is also a method. It is a verbal description of the acts of the gods and therefore a means of conveying a revelation. The description, however, is not strictly objective description; rather, it is interpretative. But it is not an intellectual, or analytical, or rational interpretation; rather it is artistic, aesthetic, or poetic. Moreover, it is in the context of a ritual that a myth is actually narrated; which ritual is done whenever a moving event does happen in nature, in the life of a person, or in the major stages in the life of plants.

May I interject my observation that, among the Kankanays, there is no similar ritual customarily dome in relation to major stages in the life of domesticated animals. If there is, it is private

and very rare, mostly related to the event of birth of a lone piglet, or a three-legged calf or a tailless carabao. So that, such an owner may not really always perform a ritual at every event of birth of his/her domesticated animals. Perhaps our social scientists can help us validate whether this is so among the Bagos or other peoples and how come it is so.

Now, to get back to the issue of the subjective aspect, it is important to note the actual manner of reciting the myth in its ritual context - whether recited with temerity, inspiration, reverence, or contentment - at least in order to learn of the particular emphasis for doing the ritual then and there. The role of the myth-narrator is not that of an informant, nor that of an entertainer, to those around. His/Her words are the commentaries relative to the event - the reason for which a ritual is done - as part or probable part of eventful acts of the gods being thus narrated. Within the ritual, the myth is in a sense prophetic or anticipatative of what can and ought still to happen. And the current activity of the people is in a sense the priestly act or ceremony which engages the ritual participants into interacting, symbolizing, or imaging one to the other and one with the other to still another. Thus, the myth is not primarily an explanation of the ritual as some anthropologists have advanced. Both the myth (anticipative word) and the ceremonial acts (priestly activity) constitute the Rite. Both are directed towards giving rise to the desired orderly and eventful way of life - a life held as divinely declared and commanded, and therefore a life as part of the Divine Activity.

State another way, both prophetic word (myth) and priestly acts (ceremony) constitute the Rite, or The Work, in and by which the participants of the ritual go through a religious experience: Because of the historical event that happened, they are directed to a Divine activity (as described by the myth); confronted by the reality of it (the act or event) and of their activities; are themselves put to question and also are made to ask questions about their life or, for that matter, about all of life; and in the end, they can and ought to re-order their life activities as a way of relating to or interacting with the gods - not directly or as in a face to face confrontation but, rather, by effectually becoming involved in the Divine Activity. In that inter-relating or inter-acting, the participants are graced, or experience being graced. The Divine then is

said to become human, and the human is lifted up into a level of life or of intercommunion with the Divine.

A question we might ask here is: Does the interaction come first before the intercommunion? Does the experience of being graced come first before ritual participants are lifted up into communion with the Divine? Or, are they first lifted up into a divine level before they can relate or intercommune with The Divine? In Christian spirituality, this is the question of how Incarnation leads to Resurrection, and Resurrection to Incarnation; the former is historical and the latter theological. Also, in Christological approaches, one is the "down-up christology" approach; the other is the "up-down christology."

In any case, the point I wish to emphasize is that a scientific understanding of Myth cannot and must not overlook the actual or existential use of it and, therefore, must not minimize also the participatative - or shall we say subjective and intersubjective - aspect of a mythic narration.

2. To theologians, the primary datum of their discipline is the issue of Revelation. Accordingly, I would like to organize the main elements of the two Bago myths insofar as they throw light on the issue and understanding of Revelation. This may be a "subjective" imposition on my part, but this is unavoidable. Any scientist, once he/she gets to organize his/her materials injects a subjective element in the scientific enterprise. My organization may not be the same as that of other theologians. In any case, it is open for criticism, or for use, by anyone.

Elements of the Bago Myths

Myth of the Lightning (ML)	*Myth of the Harvest Rite* (MHR)
1. ***In Illo Tempore***	
a. "...everything was fine."	a. People had no thought of K
b. K and humans (Bangan) live in one or same world.	b. K and people live in two different worlds, but K

	is not by himself alone.
c. K takes primacy in all things, has initiative as the Active Worker: "created all things"	c. K takes primacy in all things, has initiative, "to teach the people" who are ignorant of him

2. ***Mediated Relationship Between the Divine and the Human***

a. K provides the medium: by providing *pakkawkaw* as means to approach him.	a. K provides the medium: by sending his Mother to earth.
b. Through K's active working is B's real attention drawn.	b. K's Mother appears "in a guise, "offers her service

3. ***Varied Human Responses to Divine Initiatives***

a. B steals her knowledge about K. (She did not ask for it from him; hence violated K's prerogative or freedom).	a. Negative/closed response of a group to the offer, of K's Mother; Positive/open response of a nursing mother.

4. ***Consequences of the Varied Human Responses***

a. K is taken aback by B's nearness or presence; a mix-up or confusion results: K's body gets entangled with vines, grass and dirt.	a. Humans are surprised at the nursing mother's plentiful harvest, in contrast to their own; they asked her how come.
b. The one child of K and B got to be divided.	b. The nursing mother was prodded not to be selfish of what was taught her.
c. K distances himself and the one world gets sharply divided or polarized.	c. A harvest ritual became a means of union between two worlds, K's and humans'

5. ***Continuing Divine Response/Activity***

a. K offers to take B's share of child's body; both parts are regenerated and complete	a. The Rite of Harvest, as taught, spread among the nursing mother's people.
b. B remains where she is, crying.	b. The Rite of Harvest is spread to other people.
c. There is not one child of K as before but two children hence, a higher and stronger lightning on one hand and the lower and weaker lightning on the other hand.	c. Unity of Action, from K to humans and back to K. As the Rite of Harvest spreads, the harvest becomes plentiful.

A theological schema may now be made in the light of the above mythic components. Firstly, **The Primacy of God:** God is a God-in-action; or Kabunian, as the Bagos name him, is a Tireless Worker (ML). He has it in himself all the means to accomplish his work. From beginning to end (of the myths) God has the primacy in taking initiatives to create, provide, send, teach, reconcile, transform, etc. The God of the Bagos is not a great potentate who commands by word and humans only obey. Nor is he the abstract God of philosophers. Rather, he is One who is constantly related, is engaged in relating himself and expressing or bringing about relationships between him and humans, as well as among his own creations: conscious, the not yet conscious and the non-conscious.

Secondly, **The World is an Event that God Does.** Being a God who relates, a related God, he has some companion and works in one same world with or among humans (ML) and is not alone (MHR). His body is deep in the soil without losing his transcendence. He is in a sense 'locatable' though not confinable in some space. He is definable but not confinable in human thought. Rather, he himself created the 'locations' by distinguishing or distancing himself; he distinguished himself by acting and creating others. But, while he distinguishes and distances himself from what he creates, he still continues to relate to and be with them. Thus, only God partakes of both 'spheres' (of relationship) and has the prerogative of being active in both 'spheres'. The world is

his own creation and we can say he is in the world and the world is in him. God is not a "god of the gaps," or to fill-in gaps.

Thirdly, in the relationship between God and humans, **There are Degrees of Relationship.** In spatial terms, there is nearness and distance: in personal terms, there are non-conscious and conscious, or voluntary and non-voluntary aspects. In the ML, the relationship is expressed in terms of "marriage." It is not a contractual relationship as between equals; for Kabunian has certain prerogatives, identity or privacy, which even his wife must not trespass or infringe upon.

The world and those Kabunian creates and relates to or relates with have also their given prerogatives which he respects, insofar as those prerogative given or assigned to humans (e.g. to Bangan) are used by them to relate to him and to others.

The divine-human relationship in the ML is deeper and more advanced than that in the MHR. In the MHR the beginning relationship is not conscious one. Humans had not as yet the thought of Kabunian; nor did humans know they are known by Kabunian. It must be borne in mind that there is no indication that human ignorance (in the MHR) was the result of anything wrong having been done by humans. The myth presumes a period prior to human thought (about Kabunian) and, therefore, a period prior to conscious relationship with him; at least, not until Kabunians's Mother was sent "to teach" humans how to relate back ("to do homage") to him. Though there was no conscious or reciprocal relationship, nonetheless there was a relationship at least in Kabunian's part.

Fourthly, God provides the means of medium by which closer relationship can and should be made. In theological terms, **Divine Revelation is Mediated**; conversely, human knowledge of God or speech about God or relationship to him — all these are mediated. And there maybe many such means or mediation processes; some are gradual and others speedy or sudden. Here we can take account of the "miracle stories" of the Bagos. The need for any such means or medium, and the provision of it, is not because there is any "gap" in the divine-human relationship to be filled in.

To do away with the mediation process would be disastrous in the divine-human relationship, and even in any human relationship for that matter. It would violate the distinctiveness of each and the relationship of both. Either the distinct 'spheres' of divine and human activities get sharply individualistic and polarized, or the relationship of both gets confused and unresponsible.

As the ML recounts, Bangan should make her approach to Kabunian by means of the *pakkawkaw*. Compare this, conversely, with the "humming" of the Mangyan Bailan when contacting the spirits. In the MHR, Kabunian's Mother is sent as the medium to teach humans. Moreover, Kabunian's Mother presents herself "in a guise;" and she undertakes her role by offering her service to harvesters. In the end of both myths, the means or contact-point between Kabunian and Bangan (ML) is their child, who became two, which are the two lightnings. Or there is also the harvest ritual (ML) as the means of divine-human relationship or communion.

The point is that God is not directly approachable by humans. As the Old Testament puts it, man cannot see God as He is or face to face but only through a veil (cf. Exod. 3:2-3, 14:24, 33:9-10; I King 19:12, Isa. 4:5, Neh. 9:12). His presence of in an indirect way, or by circumlocution (cf. 6:24-27). In spatial terms - hence, socalled "worldviews" - there is that "sphere" beyond which humans cannot trespass to get to Divinity. Even in the New Testament, Christ is said to be the Mediator.

Fifthly, and finally, **Salvation is Part of God's Creative Purpose**. The question is, how is this salvation to be understood? Salvation is not because of the existence of a god of evil, from which God is to rescue humans. There is no dualism in both Bago myths. Also, God's salvific act is not simply a remedy which he thought of doing because of human sin or failure. If it were so, then let us sin that grace may abound. In the light of the Bago myths, Salvation is ontologically grounded, in the primary sense of salvation as wholeness of relationship or peace between God and humans. Salvation is wholistic. God loves the whole world, continuous to relate with it and with humans; he still respects the prerogative of those he earlier created and continues to recreate.

Because of the exercise of the human prerogatives (by Bangan), the world cannot be the same as before solely in the hands of God. The consequence of human selfishness or greed, his/her misuse of what was and is given by God, or his/her dissatisfaction with the 'spheres' of activity, results in the extremes of polarization on the one hand and confusion on the other, as well as degeneration of what is supposed to mature and be fulfilled. Nonetheless, God has not completely given up on the world he has created. He takes further initiative to regenerate and transform it, as he did with the innocent part of the child that remained in Bangan's hands.

If we take the two Bago myths together and allow them to interpret each other, we can come up with the following: If the ML interprets the MHR, because of Bangan's fall, the resultant understanding of the Rite assumes a highly salvific character. The harvest ritual would not only be a thanksgiving ritual but also becomes a means of reconciling, regenerating and transforming the persons involved in their relationship to God as well as among themselves within God's world. There would hardly be an understanding of Salvation as a restoration of the situation "in illo tempore." On the other hand, if the MHR is to interpret the ML, because of the nursing mother's response, the resultant understanding of the myth assumes an ontological or creative character. The ritual would not only be a thanksgiving ritual but also a fulfillment of inter-communion; so that Salvation is understood as a fulfillment, or as one becoming true to oneself as the Kabunian intended, like the nursing mother.

As a mythical character, she was not a nursing mother for nothing. What she was, as a nursing mother and moreover as grateful recipient of what was offered her by Kabunian's mother, was multiplied; not by her own power but as intended by Kabunian from the start. There was not only "the harvest rite" - taught to her and by her to others. True to herself, as well as through and in her responsive act, she has become the end and the means of a Divine Rite, the Divine work; she herself has become `a living rite,' as both the fulfilled and fulfilling person, or as end and means of Kabunian's acted will to teach the ritual to others. May I add that, among Kankanays (and also the Bagos?), a physically incomplete or deformed animal is not used for sacrificial offering in a Rite.

3. To mention just one inter-disciplinarian. Ian Barbour, a physicist and professor of religion, argues (in his Religion in the Age of Science, (The Gifford Lectures 1989-1991, volume I), that theology must take into account the findings of contemporary science, especially its views of creation and human nature. He repeats an old Christian claim, however, which we can question in the light of the Bago myths. Ian Barbour wrote,

> "But clearly the biblical story differs from other ancient creation stories in its assertion of the sovereignty and transcendence of God and the dignity of humanity...God is portrayed as purposive and powerful, creating by word alone,"(p.130).

In the Bago "Myth of the Lightning," Kabunian creates by act rather than by word. He is the Worker, rather than the Speaker. What then is the Bago, or the Filipino, to make of their creation and salvation myths in view of such an old Christian claim? Many biblical scholars do say that the Genesis account of creation (by word) belongs not to the infancy but to the maturity of Hebrew religion - i.e. when ethical monotheism of later Hebrew prophets became the dogma and The Law became written. In fact the Genesis myth is told in view, if not in the context, of THE SABBATH WHEN NO ONE IS SUPPOSED TO WORK. It bears noting as well that the very name of the God of Moses was and is "Yahweh," the "I am," who is known by what he gets accomplished. He is God-in-action, like the Bago Kabunian who is The Tireless Worker and who is immanent but not losing his transcendence.

One can only conclude, in the light of the practical effects upon the devotees, those who have emphasized an utterly transcendent Deity have manifested correspondingly imperialistic attitude to others and domineering competition among themselves. It is not because they have become effectually participative in God but, rather, God has been deposited so far out that the supposed devotees' are left on their own to do as they please with God's creation, sanctioned by the biblical text that humans have been given "dominion over all of creation." It is not really God who has primacy and is the center of creation but humans, who program Robots as their myth characters.

The Mythic Understanding of Science

I have been in pointing to the subjective dimension or aspect of Myth; not only because THAT is so and unavoidable but also THIS is the perspective or direction from which we and anyone can proceed to deal with what Dr. Hornedo has pointed to earlier as another need in our modern scientific world - i.e. "a mythic understanding of science," and "a" rather then "the" mythic understanding. In short, myths emerge and are told in fragmentary forms so that there is always the need to tell a relatively more embracing understanding of understandings, or what one might call "The Myth of myths," the story of all times as well as for all times, or the Myth of the Kingdom of God.

Myths are stories; they are the stories of the understanding of people about the reality or realities they face in the world. The first thing we can say (mythically?) is that there is the emergent evolution and mutation of myths; there is also interlocking and interfecundation of myths; so that the Myth is, to use the words of the Christian Liturgy, "broken but not divided;" its subject matter is recognized, apprehended or mirrored but is never fully grasped and understood. Thus, myth-making and myth-telling seems to be unending and an interminable task. The end of myth-making, as a Christian would dare say, is when "I shall understand fully, even as I am understood" - i.e. in Christ.

Thus, for example, there are the short-stories, legends, parables, or such wonder-stories of the Bagos which we labelled "miracle stories." These are part of the Bagos' recognition of a wider reality yet to be understood and integrated by them and by us into a greater and more comprehensive story, including the myths of other cultures. And in the academe or university ("uni-" "veritas"), there are distinct colleges with their departments; each of which has its experts and specialists, whose scientific theories are themselves myths. There are not only the historians of each discipline but also the common historians, as well as the interdisciplinarians. The philosopher or philosophy attempts at an all-embracing "worldviews" - e.g. ontological, cosmological, epistomological, teleological myths. The theologians also work on doctrinal myths and seek to be dogmatical.

By way of a critique of present day university education, all the sciences are by and large methodological or technological. They are concerned with "ways" of doing things or "How to." Those involved in the discipline are likewise trying to sharpen their tools on how to do what they are doing. The teachers are concerned with "transfer of technology" to students. What is to be learned, or the content of learning, is "how to do things;" it is learning to learn, which is largely methodology or techniques of doing things. The whole of university education is a teacher-oriented enterprise; so that, in the end, the student tends to image the teacher-technocrat. The student is interested in what to learn; but, by the time he/she has chosen a "major," he/she has fallen into the myth of "how to." The ultimate question of "Why?" is often confused with "How?" so that what or who the student will be is to be a technocrat, technologist, or operator. It is not surprising that the actors or characters of the modern myth are Robots and Space-People, i.e. human programmed machines.

A focus of consideration for myth-making, I would suggest, is the content of learning: what is known and who knows. And this may be mythically told from both the subjective and the objective standpoints. From a subjective standpoint the content of learning includes : a. Knowing that one knows something or someone, b. Knowing that one is known by another and, c. Knowing that one is enabled or empowered to know. From an objective standpoint, the content of learning includes: a. Knowing that the other knows, b. Knowing that the other knows he/she is known and, c. knowing that the other knows he/she is empowered or enabled to know. The "Knowing" here includes various degrees and meanings of "Love" - sensation, feeling, experience, awareness, consciousness, and understanding - all the way from subhuman to human and supra-human levels of being, as would be embraced or told in a myth. In other words, "knowing" is relationship.

May I close here by beginning a myth which you can continue; it is "The Myth of the Ant." The ant is a creature constantly on the move; it travels far and wide, millimeter by millimeter, but it seems to know where and how to get back to the ant mound.

Once upon a time, an ant came out of the soil. It went out for a tri[illegible] Pressure, Force or Power that was coming its

way; because of a mass of soil being pushed by the explosion of Mount Pinatubo. It sensed Danger and had to scurry away. In its haste it felt powerless to move on, stopped behind a stone, and waited. But then that was only for a moment because, when it did recover strength, it sensed Delight for a Change. It moved on and came upon a morsel of food but did not eat it; instead, it tried to drag the morsel away. In no time there were hundreds of ants coming from different directions. They did also not eat the morsel but all dragged the morsel of food as more ants keep coming to help. They somehow knew the direction to go, where more ants keep coming to help. They somehow knew the direction to go, where more ants were coming from to extend help. The morsel of food was brought inside a mound where there was the big mother ant. It took no time and the ants were out again lining to different directions. Again the ant anticipated Danger coming closer; but it had nowhere to go; for a rolling stone fell on it and crushed it. The dead ant did not know that even the mother ant and the other fellow-ants were all killed; for the ant mound was turned over and grass was burned over it by a *kainginero*.

This "Myth of the Ant" is only one of other myths, or may yet give birth to other myths; all of which are parts of a still greater myth. It points to sensations of the reality of Danger and Delight whose mythic story have yet to be told all the way from the subhuman level to the human experience of the Mysterium Tremendum et Fascinans. It also points to the experiences of Power and Change, within and outside the creature, as well as to that of Duration and Anticipation; each of whose mythic story may be told from the subhuman to the human and supra-human levels of existence. The myth-telling goes on...

There are not only creation myths; there are also eschatological - not just about the end but from the standpoint of the End. That would require more time to discuss. Whether creation myths or eschatological myths, they are told for the present that is in need of transformation and must go on towards fulfillment as both the end the means of intercommunion between Nature, God and Humans. As a myth-narrator one contemplates Nature, engages in mental introspection/ retrospection, and understands the primacy of God; so that, in narrating the doctrine or myth of creation he/she is narrating the myth or doctrine of God from a reverse perspective.

DISCUSSION OF "BAGO MYTHOLOGY"

The centerpoint of these myths is the notion that the presence of the Divine brings blessings. When the "effects" of this divine presence are abused or destroyed, the Divine removes Itself, offended. To the environment, a significant message from these stories is that while we derive subsistence from the environment, there are limits to its exploitation beyond which man will be destroyed.

The beliefs implicit in the myths are the following:

1. belief in the sacred and secular worlds

2. the sacred dwells in the secular

3. the sacred rejects the secular when it is developed

4. the sacred commands respect for the secular, the ecosystem

5. when the ecosystem is violated, the sacred who dwells in it depart so that the ecosystem may be said to have become desacralized and divested of the sacred.

On the other hand, The Myth of the Lightning and the Myth of The Harvest reiterate a well-known theme in God-man relationship; the fall and reconciliation.